

How to Prepare for a Difficult Conversation

A simple preparation sheet to help you stay calm and clear.

I. What is the real purpose of this conversation?

Write in one sentence:

The main thing I want to communicate is:

2. What outcome would feel constructive?

Examples:

- Clarifying expectations
- Setting a boundary
- Asking for respect
- Ending a misunderstanding

My outcome:

3. What emotions might come up?

Possible reactions from the other person:

- defensive
- dismissive
- emotional
- surprised

My possible reactions:

- frustration
- anxiety
- anger
- freezing

4. One sentence I want to say clearly

Example:

“I want to clarify something so we can avoid misunderstandings going forward.”

My sentence:

5. What I want to avoid

Examples:

- over-explaining
- bringing up unrelated past issues
- reacting emotionally

My reminder to myself:

6. If the conversation becomes difficult

Helpful phrases:

- “Let me pause for a moment so I can respond thoughtfully.”
- “I want to keep this conversation constructive.”
- “Let’s focus on the main issue.”