



Helpful Phrases for Difficult Conversations

Helpful phrases from 2016 Advisory Board	
Action	Phrase
Introduction + observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to talk with you about... • I've noticed... • I'm concerned about... • I want to discuss... • I have some thoughts about... • I feel I need to let you know...
Seeking input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's your view of this situation? • What are your thoughts? • Why do you think this happened? • What do you think you can do to improve? • How could you have handled that situation differently?
Accountability + support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to help you address this issue by... • How can I best support you...?" • I expect you to [change the behavior/action]... • Let's meet again [next week, month] to follow up about...



Helpful phrases from [Brene Brown “Dare to Lead”](#), [Rumble Language](#)

- The story I make up...
- I’m curious about...
- Tell me more...
- That’s not my experience
- I’m wondering...
- Help me understand...
- Walk me through that
- What’s your passion around this?
- Tell me why this doesn’t fit/work for you

Helpful phrases from [Stone, Pantone, and Heen “Difficult Conversations”](#)

Action	Phrase
Describe your feelings	It was really hard for me to bring this up, but I felt we should talk about it...
Examine identity issues	I probably feel so strongly about this because I’ve always considered myself to be...
Explore the source of your story	My reactions probably stemmed from a similar incident when...
Share the impact on you	I felt really uneasy when...
Take responsibility for your contribution	I suspect I made things worse when...



Helpful phrases from Pumble.com	
Situation	Phrase
When a conversation gets heated	Let's take a break and get back to this issue when we've thought about it and cooled down a bit.
To gather more information	Help me understand where you're coming from.
When receiving direct criticism	Thank you for being honest with me.
When someone feels upset, hurt, underappreciated, or coming to you with a complaint	How can I support you?
Presenting your viewpoint while acknowledging a different perspective	I hear your point, but I have a different view.
When you realize you've made a mistake	I'm sorry.