

Difficult Conversations

Many managers are fearful of so-called 'difficult' conversations. This activity equips them to hold effective, honest conversations with their staff.

-  1 hour + debrief
-  3-24 (1-4 teams of 3-6 per team)
-  For staff at any level
-  No computer required
-  350 ex VAT



Learning objectives

- to give participants the confidence to hold difficult conversations
- to show the importance of planning and gathering critical information
- to provide a 'road-map' to guide preparation for a conversation
- to encourage listening and empathy and setting the right tone
- to keep in mind the desired outcomes
- to remember to set follow-up dates

About the activity

Teams receive a **Profile Card** about "Aneesha", who has issues that need to be addressed by her manager - represented by the teams. Teams prepare for a conversation with Aneesha (Note: teams only prepare for the conversation - although an optional role play component is supplied). Teams have 15 minutes to think about their approach and prepare, but are given no guidance. They then make brief presentations of their plans. Did they set clear objectives for the conversation, identify specific critical events to support their views, think about the mindset in which the conversation should be conducted and identify the right tone for the meeting? Key learning points are agreed with the whole group.

Participants now receive a **Questionnaire** - to generate discussion. What does the term 'difficult conversations' mean? What is the ultimate objective of such a conversation and why do people often fear the task? The responses are discussed with the whole group and key points identified. Teams now receive a second **Profile Card**, this time relating to "Lucas" and are again asked to prepare for an interview. This time they also receive a handout, **Planning the Conversation**. Equipped with these guidelines plus the tips and techniques learned so far in the session, team plans are now more focused and better thought out. After 15-20 minutes, teams are asked to make brief presentations.

The pack contains full guidance for the debrief and includes a **Key Points Checklist** to take away. Participants leave with confidence, realising that holding 'difficult conversations' is not so difficult after all. It's all about sound preparation, some common sense rules and having a road-map for guidance.

Pack contents

- Trainer's Notes
- Profile Card: Aneesha (photo 1&2)
- Profile Card: Lucas (photo 1&2)
- Handout 1: Questionnaire
- Handout 2: Planning the Conversation
- Handout 3: Key Points Checklist
- Alternative Profile Card: Peter (PDF file)
- Alternative Profile Card: Chloe (PDF file)
- Optional Role Play: Raja - Manager's Brief, Employee's Brief & Extra Information (PDF files)

Five-year licence

Five-year licence included for repeat use with up to 24 participants per training session within the licence-holding organisation. Please ask for a discount on multiple licences for use with larger groups.

Ideally suited to

Anyone in a managerial, supervisory or team-leader role who is responsible for managing and mentoring staff. Knowing how to manage difficult conversations with staff is a key skill.

Difficult Conversations

Customer reviews

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The Difficult Conversations activity came at just the right time for us as we were designing a People Management course which included having difficult conversations. The case studies and role play generated *valuable discussions* and the delegates commented that the “Planning the Conversation” guide was a handy tool they would use again in the future.

[Julia Latimer, Leadership & Management Development Consultant, Network Rail](#)

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Northgate Activities make an *excellent* and *good value* part of a wider development programme. They are fun and highly effective. From a facilitator’s point of view they are easy to learn, adapt and deliver.

[Jonathan Aylwin, C2C Program Manager \(Global Industrial\), TE Connectivity](#)



Trainer’s role (full guidance supplied in Trainer’s Notes)

- Give a brief introduction to the activity, explaining that it has three stages.
- Issue **Profile Card - Aneesha**, to each team and ask them to *plan* for a conversation with Aneesha, about the issue described on the card.
- After 15 minutes ask for brief presentations. Discuss the point arising from their plans, as guided by the Trainer’s Notes.
- Issue the Questionnaire (2nd stage) and allow teams 10-15 minutes to work through it. Again, discuss their responses and the points arising.
- Next (3rd stage), issue the **Profile Card - Lucas** plus the handout, **Planning a Conversation**.
- Teams now plan for a conversation with "Lucas" (this time, to help, they have the handout and what they’ve learnt so far in the session).
- Ask each team to report back on their plans.
- Lead a general Debrief and summarise the key learning points that emerged.
- Issue the **Key Points Checklist** for participants to take away.

Northgate says...

The Profile Cards for *Aneesha* and *Lucas* are supplied in TWO versions. For both versions, the issue that needs addressing (the text) is identical but the images of the person are different. You can give teams different images and at the end ask how much does a person’s appearance influence our perception of the issue.

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Northgate customers

