Having Difficult Conversations

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• Telling someone they are not performing adequately.
• Telling someone that they are being released from employment.
• Telling someone you need them to do something that they don’t want to do.
• Telling someone you need them to stop doing something that they like to do; in fact, it may be something they feel entitled to do.

Types of....
Why are they difficult?

- Recipient might react badly (anger, cry, retribution).
- You might be rejected.
- You might do it badly and make things worse.
Bad news…

• No matter what you do to prepare, these conversations are never easy and they can be terribly unpleasant.
Good news....

- They can be prepared for
- They can be productive
- You will gain confidence, strength, and integrity
Previewing our time

- Preparing for the conversation
- Having the conversation
- After the conversation
Preparing

• Get clear
• Gather resources
• Develop your message(s)
• Why do **YOU** need to have this conversation?
• Why do you need to have this conversation **NOW**?
• What might happen if you **DON’T** have this conversation?

**Getting Clear**
• What documentation or policy might be relevant to this conversation?
• What other people might be consulted before having this conversation?
• What personal information might need to be considered before having this conversation?

Gathering resources
• Distinguish between what you feel like saying from what would be productive to say.
• Keep the focus on you (use “I” language).
• Find a balance of directness and compassion.

Developing your message(s)
• Messages that clearly indicate that change is necessary, what change is necessary, and how support will be available for that change.
• Direct messages without compassion lead people to feel threatened, to resist, and to hide.
• Compassionate messages that lack directness lead people to feel that change is not really necessary or expected.
• State the facts
• Ask
• Listen
• Repeat back
• Be direct and Compassionate
• Pay attention

Having the Conversation
• This is the best and most important part.
• You might be allowed a window into the mental processes of the other person.
• You might hear something that is useful.
• You might also hear how you are responsible for their behavior or other equally irritating excuses.
• Tell them what you heard them say.
• They will immediately clarify if you get something wrong.
• Make sure they feel heard.
• Ask, “Is that right? Is there anything else?”
Paying attention

- Limit small talk
- Limit distractions
- Re-direct any attempt to blame
- Resist the temptation to identify motive
- Use immediacy cues
- Manage time
• Thank you
• State the facts and expectations
• Anything the employee agreed to do
• Anything you agreed to do
• Identify a particular date
• Keep Amy Wildermuth in the loop

Writing it up
• Keep regular appointments and write up the content of each of those meetings.
• Establish a pattern of improvement or non-compliance.
• Talk to Amy Wildermuth.
• If continued non-compliance, begin disciplinary action after...talking with Amy.

Keeping it up
• You will gain confidence, strength, and integrity as a result of enhancing your ability to have these conversations.
• You will develop invaluable leadership and management skills.
• Your ability and willingness to have these conversations has a reverberating effect through your unit and your personal life.

Concluding
Final questions and thoughts?