



SELF-CONFIDENCE & COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Work Sheet 7

In this work sheet, you are going to think about communication – specifically, how to prepare for difficult conversations. Think about a difficult conversation that you need to have, or are likely to need in the future. Perhaps you were unhappy with a recent project, need to request a formal contract for a role, or want to discuss pay and benefits with an employer.

To begin, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the conversation?
 - Is it about problem-solving, learning from someone else's perspective, or airing your views?
- What emotions are connected to this conversation?
 - Being aware of them can help us be more open to active listening rather than cloud the conversation with our own feelings
- What are your assumptions about the conversation?
 - Do you assume it will have a negative outcome for you? If so, explore why to prevent you from making unsubstantiated judgements about the other person or their views
- What is the best way to have this conversation?
 - For example, in person, over the phone, with another person present as an impartial observer?

Next, write a script. Think carefully about what you would like to say. What points do you need to get across? How can you do this without bringing in emotions or judgements? Remember to use “I” statements.

Try to foresee what the other person might say (and there are likely to be many different options here), and come up with some ideas for how you could respond to them in a calm and relatively objective way.

How would you like to conclude the conversation? Is it OK if you don't get exactly what you want? What are you willing to compromise on? How would you like to feel?

Write some ideas below.

If you find difficult conversations anxiety-inducing, use the graded exposure technique to build up to them. Repeated exposure to something we fear reduces the intensity of anxiety over time, but this has to be done in a gradual way, so that you are exposed to increasingly difficult situations.

Write down the least anxiety-provoking conversation at the bottom of the ladder, working all the way up to the conversation that you fear the most. These don't have to be related to dance or work. The more you experience of these conversations, the more confidence you will build in relation to them.

