

Leadership Bites: Challenging Conversations 3

LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES

NHS

Leadership Academy

South East

Introduction

Challenging conversations can be made less so, when you know you're armed with the vocabulary to land a message well, without damaging the relationship.

Key Insight:

The words you choose to use in a challenging conversation really matter. We can change the nature, the size and the shape of the emotions felt by another. They can make the difference between progress and performance, or stubbornness and refusal

Balloons or brick walls?

Consider the characteristics and traits of the person you'll be speaking with. Are they more like a balloon (likely to pop at the smallest friction) or a brick wall (a tendency to withstand greater levels of emotional challenge).

What does that mean for the conversation you need to have with them?
Do you need to upgrade or downgrade the words that you're using?

First AID – Then CPR

When you're giving someone feedback, aim to focus what you say on Action (what they've said or done) Impact (on you) and what they could Do Next. The combination is powerful, and removes any personal remarks and judgements.

If the behaviour/ performance doesn't improve, you can increase the level of challenge. Either by adding in upgrader words, or by moving to CPR. Checking that they'd heard what you said last time, sharing the Pattern of behaviour that you've noticed and letting them know how it's damaging the Relationship as a result.

Words that show you're rational, calm and fair

- I'm listening
- This isn't like you – what's going on?
- I've noticed that ...
- I see things a little differently
- What do you think?
- I agree, that's unfair

Further learning ...

For further information and learning, as well as suggested activities, feel free to visit the [People.NHS.uk](https://www.People.NHS.uk) website or our [South East Leadership Academy site](#).



1,2,3,4 structure

“

Start by telling them what you've noticed, or by giving feedback "I've noticed ...

1

- ... recently that there have been a few more mistakes than usual
- ... that your work isn't up to your normal standard
- ... a real change in your behaviour towards me and others

2

Followed by:

- This isn't like you ...
- I'm concerned ...
- We need to get you back on track ...

And then ask for their input:

3

- What are your thoughts?
- What's going on for you?
- Tell me about it from your perspective?

4

Finish with a coach approach:

- What do you think needs to be different?
- What support do you need?
- How can I help?

”

Give it a go ...

Take a few minutes to think about an upcoming conversation you need to have with someone. Think about how you could structure it so that you get the outcome you want and need, and they don't 'lose' as a result.

1. What conversation do you need to have and with whom?
2. What do you want them to think, feel or do as a result of your conversation?
3. Are your expectations reasonable?
4. What particular words will help them to feel seen heard and understood?

Further learning ...

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Time to reflect...

Take some time to note down your thoughts on what you've learned;

What resonated?

What has made you curious?

What small changes could you make to start having an impact differently and quickly?



