

### The Tip #17

*For me, words have colour, form, character. They have faces, ports, manners, gesticulations. They have moods, humours, eccentricities and they have tints, tones, personalities.* Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904)



### The Tale #17

None of us like the difficult conversations and for some, avoidance – knowingly or unknowingly – becomes the order of the day. However, leaders cannot avoid the difficult conversations any more than we can ignore the water dripping through the ceiling. Conflict festers unless we jump in and have those conversations that make us uneasy. Mel Robbins ([here](#)) suggests:

1. Acknowledge YOUR responsibility in the conversation about to take place. (eg I am sorry I have not dealt with this earlier / There is something I have done to contribute to the problem). This helps diffuse emotion and set 'level playing field'.
2. Define the Outcome - before you go into the conversation. Stabilise your thoughts and emotions with a defined outcome (eg I want to tell you why this is not working / You are giving the (said) outcome because you are committed to their success)
3. Listen and validate - especially validate - sounds counterintuitive but it tells them you are hearing them (eg that must be really tough / or now I know why you are avoiding me)
4. Restate the outcome - keep coming back to it. Go hard on the issues not the person.

Judy Ringer ([here](#)) suggests some good conversation starters.

\* I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.

- \* I'd like to talk about \_\_\_\_\_ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view.
- \* I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?
- \* I need your help with something. Can we talk about it (soon)? If the person says, "Sure, let me get back to you," follow up with him.
- \* I think we have different perceptions about \_\_\_\_\_. I'd like to hear your thinking on this.
- \* I'd like to talk about \_\_\_\_\_. I think we may have different ideas about how to \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about \_\_\_\_\_. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective as well.
- \* In any 'difficult conversation', we all need to be aware of Behavioural Confirmation and how it influences the way people act during conflict. Remember:
- \* You cannot look at a person who seems difficult to you without also looking at yourself.
- \* Our expectations of others can cause them to behave in ways that confirm those expectations.
- \* People sense how others view them and start exhibiting the expected behaviours.

If you expect a colleague to be hostile, they are more likely to be. Behavioural expectations happen in 4 stages:

1. The perceived adopts a belief about the other.
2. The perceived treats the other according to the belief - even if subconsciously.
3. The other picks up on cues in the perceived beliefs and attitudes and subconsciously modifies their own behaviour.
4. The perceived then uses the other's behaviour as confirmation of their belief.

We can influence the other not just what we say and do, but by our beliefs and our moods. When we see someone as difficult, our own beliefs about them may be exacerbating their behaviour. We can now have an option of adopting a different belief about them.

Checking in with our own beliefs and attitudes before having the difficult conversation can make us more empathic and more ready to state what needs to be said.

Having trouble with those difficult conversations? Umring and Ahhring? Have you asked others if you are good at giving feedback? Do you get frustrated with this part of the job? Need to chat? Coaching & Mentoring (Moaching) can help. Call +61 410 586 700 **Be and Become.**

