

Starting a Difficult *Conversation*

Raise the issue without starting an argument.

The way a conversation begins often shapes how it ends. Opening with criticism or blame tends to make the other person defensive, while a calm and respectful start makes it easier for both of you to listen. This worksheet will help you prepare what you want to say, use a clear sentence structure, and open a difficult topic with your partner in a calm and respectful way.

Before you *begin*

Choose a good time

1

Pick a moment when you are both calm, not rushed, tired or hungry.

Check in with yourself

2

If you feel angry or your heart is racing, wait until you feel steadier.

Focus on one issue

3

Keep to one topic, rather than bringing up everything at once.

Know what you need

4

Be clear on what would help, so your partner knows how to respond.

Prepare what you want to *say*

The issue I want to *raise*

Describe the situation as specifically as you can, without blame.

How I *feel* about it

What I *need* or would like

A Calm *Start*

Use a clear structure to open the conversation.

I feel *your feeling* about *the situation* and I need *a positive request*

I *feel*...

Name your own feeling, such as hurt or worried, rather than blaming.

About *this*...

Describe what happened, specifically, without always or never.

I *need*...

Ask for what you would like, rather than what you do not want.

INSTEAD OF

You never help around the house. You are so lazy.

TRY

I feel overwhelmed about the housework this week, and I need us to sit down and plan how we share it.

My *opening* sentence

I feel ... about ... and I need ...

During the *conversation*

- Start with something you appreciate.
- Listen to understand, not only to reply.
- Keep your voice calm and kind.
- Feeling overwhelmed? Take a break.

Would you like more *support*?

Sometimes difficult conversations bring up patterns that are hard to shift on your own. Counselling, for individuals or couples, offers a safe space to explore what is happening and find new ways to connect.

Book a session at
www.marlynna.com

This resource is for general reflection and is not a substitute for professional support. Therapy sessions are not for emergencies. For immediate crisis support or urgent medical care, please contact your local emergency services.