COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS TEMPLATE

There are times when we need to have a serious conversation with someone whether it is our partner, a friend or a work colleague. It's one of those conversations where we need to be open and honest, not only with ourselves but also with the person in front of us. It could be about an incident, something they have said or done (or not done), non-performance or non-delivery.

Many of us are uncomfortable when it comes to situations like this. I like to call these discussions courageous conversations.

There are a number of ways you can approach such conversations but most important is that it is with the intent of a positive outcome.

They say a good manager or leader has two ears and one mouth so that they can really listen and hear what is being said by the other person before reacting to the situation.

Below are 3 approaches you can use to have a courageous conversation.

Prepare for the conversation by getting as much information and facts you will need to aid the objective of the discussion (e.g. a win-win resolution).

1. The Awareness Effect:

Make the person aware upfront that this is going to be an honest conversation by being honest yourself.

e.g: "I realize this may upset you, but I have to be honest with you about...."

By telling someone you might make them angry/defensive etc, will often prevent them becoming defensive or angry.

Give them actual examples of their behaviour/non-delivery so they know exactly what you are referring to.

State what it is you expect or need of them going forward so there is no room for misunderstanding or non-delivery.
2. The Domino Effect:

In this situation, you show how their role plays an integral part in the bigger picture (i.e. team/business/situation etc) and the impact their non-delivery has on those around them including you.

e.g: When you didn’t deliver the report on Friday as requested, I couldn’t do my work which resulted in me being late with my report to my Manager/Client.

Share your vision with them, where you see them playing an integral part and get their buy-in to your vision. Again you need to use practical, real examples so that they have a clear picture of what you are referring to.

3. The Enquiry Effect:

In this instance you need to enquire what is going on for this person that they are not delivering or not meeting your needs.

e.g: I’m so busy I can’t manage doing this too! Here you need to step into their world and get to the specifics – “what/where exactly are things busy for you?

Then brainstorm solutions/options to help them where they are struggling or having difficulty.

e.g: what needs to happen for it not to be hectic so that you can deliver on your tasks, is it the workload, lack of resources, knowledge etc?

What can they do to help the situation (e.g. if it is skills they need, what needs to happen for them to acquire these skills?).

This way the individual takes ownership and responsibility for the part they play.

What can you, as their manager/leader do, to help them in the areas they have identified they need help with? This way they will not only feel heard, but also supported by you as their manager/leader.

The overall result is a collaborative situation vs. one that is not producing the desired outcome for either side.
What is your instinctive behaviour when you have to start a courageous conversation with someone?

- Do you become defensive yourself?
- Are you able to listen objectively?
- Are you able to offer solutions based outcomes for the benefit of all involved?

Note:

What do you do if the person you are engaging with becomes defensive; acts negatively or does not want to listen?

Do not let the situation get out of control - keep your composure and do not get drawn into their reaction.

Calmly state the positive outcome you are looking to achieve (i.e. a solution based discussion) and ask them if they are willing to help find solutions.

Should the situation continue to spiral downwards, end the discussion and reschedule it for another time when you can both calmly look at the problem and find an agreeable way forward for the benefit of everyone involved.

**Courageous Conversation Template**

The key to having a courageous conversation is in the preparation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s the intention for your discussion:</th>
<th>What are the facts of the situation:</th>
<th>What’s the outcome you are looking for:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g. To make someone aware of their behavior and non-delivery</td>
<td>e.g. Did not deliver report on time, not being a team player, attitude problem. Stick to: event, behavior, concern</td>
<td>e.g. Report to be completed and delivered, change in behavior and attitude, team participation and buy-in</td>
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</tbody>
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