

Go on, have that difficult conversation

LISA STEINGOLD

THE ABILITY to have difficult conversations is not one many of us are born with – and they're not encouraged in society.

Think of how embarrassed you feel telling someone they have spinach in their teeth, never mind telling them that they're not performing in the workplace.

Think of how you might feel having a conversation with your colleague about the fact that you feel they take your ideas and present them as their own.

The truth is that many in the workplace are losing out on a more fulfilling work experience by keeping it inside. Not only that, but it has been proved that not expressing how you feel can have a serious impact on your health.

So what is a difficult conversation? It's not so much the content, as the feelings it brings up.

A difficult conversation:

- May bring up certain uncomfortable feelings.
- Generally touches important issues, but those least spoken about.



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- May deal with uncomfortable subjects such as death, loss, sex and vulnerability.
- Requires honesty.
- Requires deep listening (if we could only master that art all the time).
- Requires us to reflect upon aspects of our identity and/or behaviour, thereby triggering possible shame and/or guilt.
- May force us to re-evaluate our boundaries.
- May force us to embrace our fears.

Why on earth would one embrace fear, re-evaluate boundaries, listen, or deal with uncomfortable feelings? The fact is that better communicators experience more success in the workplace and in interpersonal relationships.

They generally respond to situations, instead of reacting, and take time to understand all the challenges involved.

Those who master the art of difficult conversations are able to take feedback and apply it with success in the future.

It's no mean feat, mind you. It requires honesty, self-awareness, an ability to be open to feedback and learning, and an ability to express oneself without fear of judgment.

What I've outlined is seemingly impossible, but, as with most things in life, practice makes better.

Once you've had that difficult conversation you've been meaning to have for some time, I guarantee you'll feel better. In fact you'll feel amazing. But don't take my word for it, go on, try it!

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