Challenging Conversation Guideline – Inappropriate Behaviour

Dr Brett Mann June 2026

1. Initiate the request for a conversation face to face or by phone call, generally not by text or email. ….*There's something it would be good for us to discuss. Can we make a time?* If the person wants to know what the issue is, mention it briefly, express appreciation for them or their role/work and confidence that*, I'm confident we can sort it out*.
2. Consider venue – usually a neutral venue ?cafe, as opposed to your office.
3. If the person has been prewarned (preferable), give brief affirmation first then raise the issue.

   OR

   If the person has not been prewarned, at the appropriate time in your meeting, ask permission to talk about whatever the issue is. *Is it OK if we talk about…*This conveys respect, you realise it's a sensitive issue and implies that you will tread gently.
4. Discuss the issue, then ask the person*, What are your thoughts about that?*
5. Connect through empathy not collusion, including for example that *this is a difficult/hard/uncomfortable conversation for us*.
6. 'I' statements vs 'you' statements: *I am concerned that…*
7. Address power dynamic – *We all make mistakes or we all have things to learn - me too*. Also, you might say, *I've been on the receiving end of difficult conversations too* and maybe*, We're all in this together* (in relation to imperfection and all of us having things to learn.)
8. Discuss and agree on the way forward/next step.
9. Finish on the positive, eg affirmation or an encouragement.
10. Afterwards, consider what follow up is needed to encourage, affirm, reassure. Sometimes no follow up is required but usually something will be appropriate. Eg It might even just be a reassuring hand on the shoulder when you are going past the person at work/church/etc.

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