

Relationships: Decision-making or Problem-solving TOGETHER

These guidelines are designed to help you have difficult conversations and talk about problems.

It's important that you agree with the other person when you're going to practice this, at a time that's convenient for both of you. It'll probably be uncomfortable, but doing it at a time when you're (relatively) relaxed and not pressured by time or other demands will give you the best opportunity for a helpful discussion.

State the issue:

- Put the issue in terms of behaviour
- Deal with big problems as smaller issues one at a time
- Check that both people agree on the statement and want to talk about it

Talk about why the issue is important. What do you need?

- Share your understanding of the issue. Include WHY it is important to you
- Explain what you would like to be taken into account when you make a decision, but don't give any solutions yet

Discuss possible solutions

- Focus on the solution. DO NOT
 - Decide who is right and wrong
 - Try to find the 'truth' about what happened
- Think about how to do things differently in future
- Try to come up with at least 3 options for solutions

Decide on a solution that is agreeable to both of you

- Sometimes no solution is perfect and you have to compromise
- Repeat your final decision in terms of specific behaviours
- DO NOT agree to a decision that
 - You will not actually do
 - Will make you angry or resentful

Decide on a trial period to test the solution or decision

- Review how the solution is working at the end of the trial period
- You may have to try the new way of doing things several times to make it work

Note: How to 'complain'

When sharing a complaint or concern, be specific about the behaviour or issue, say how you feel when it happens, and ask for what you would like instead. For example “When you go out with a friend, and don’t come home when you said you would, I get scared that something has happened to you, especially if you don’t answer your phone. What I would like is that you phone me and tell me that you’re going to be late.”

As the listener, after you’ve heard the other’s concern you can answer (yes, no, or yes with conditions). If you find it difficult to give an answer instantly and want time to consider, if necessary schedule a time to follow up with a more extensive discussion. Thank the other person for sharing if you can’t answer immediately.