

How to Handle Difficult Conversations

Step #1: Inquiry

- Pretend you're entertaining a visitor from another planet and find out how things look on that planet, how certain events affect the other person and what values & priorities they have.
- Let them talk until they are finished.
- Don't interrupt except to acknowledge.
- Try to learn as much as you can in this phase of the conversation.
- Don't rush things.
- **Tips:**
 - *We are often uncomfortable with silence. Sometimes, even when we do listen it's in order to know what to say next. Instead, be fully present to understand their perspective and points of view.*

Step #2: Acknowledgement

- Acknowledgement means sharing what you've heard and showing understanding.
- **Tips:**
 - *Check for clarity - try to explain back to them what you think is really being said and make sure they agree with you.*

Step #4: Problem Solving

- Now you're ready to begin building solutions.
- Brainstorm together, ask them what they think might work.
- If a clear solution can not be immediately found ask them if it is ok to consult with the program leads (Maddy, Courtney or Ryan), but ensure them that no personal information will be given unless you have their permission.
- **Tips:**
 - *Remember you're a team, work together to find a solution. Use your experiences to help but understand what worked for you may not work for others.*

Step #3: Advocacy

- When you sense they have expressed all their energy on the topic, it's your turn.
- Ask lots of questions.
- **Tips:**
 - *Learn how to ask questions with the genuine curiosity of a child. Try to understand more about the story behind the words; the circumstances and impact on the people involved.*

What to do in a Crisis

- Contact a Person in Authority (Ryan).
- Go to nearest hospital or call 9-1-1 if needed.

Possible crisis situations include:

- **Mental Health:** they are thinking of harming themselves or others.
- **Physical and/or Mental Abuse:** you have reasonable grounds to suspect they need help.
- **Harassment:** behaviour that demeans, humiliates or embarrasses them either in-person or through electronic

Useful tools:

- Canadian Mental Health Association
www.ontario.cmha.ca
- ConnexOntario
1 866 531 2600