



# OMBUDS OFFICE

Harvard Medical School • Harvard Dental School • Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

## Considerations When Preparing for A Challenging Conversation

1. Find the right time and place for your conversation
  - Schedule a meeting, set aside enough time, create privacy
  - \*\*\*\* Don't underestimate this investment
2. Be in the right frame of mind: do what you need to do to be relaxed at the start of your meeting
  - Engage as your best self—you can influence the meeting's tone
  - enter the conversation with genuine curiosity (vs. being right)
  - assume good intentions
  - believe in your ability/power to positively influence
  - behave professionally—always
3. Think in advance about your best approach and how to carry it out
  - Frame concerns in neutral, non-blaming language (practice!)
  - Take responsibility for your own role in the problem
  - Be prepared with the facts
  - Be ready to **listen**. Acknowledge the other's feelings, perceptions, concerns (aim for understanding)
  - Stay focused on your goals
4. Stick with your plan *and* show some flexibility as warranted
5. Summarize your understandings at the end of the conversation
  - Follow up with an e-mail of your understanding of the agreement and invite feedback/commitment
6. Seek help when you need it
  - The Ombuds Office offers a confidential, independent, informal, neutral setting in which to identify your issues, goals, and options—you'll decide what's best for you
  - The Ombuds Office offers coaching, mediation, shuttle diplomacy, education about resources, policies and procedures