

OMBUDS OFFICE

Harvard Medical School
Harvard Dental School
Harvard 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



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