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