

Having the right conversation

This session will support leaders with planning and approaching difficult conversations of a number of different types through practice scenarios.

Duration: 1.5-2 hours Serves: 8-12

Key learnings from this session:

- learners will increase their confidence when approaching difficult conversations
- learners will build a supportive network between them to continue learning and sharing after this session
- learners will have a better understanding of planning and approaching difficult conversations
- learners will feel more prepared to have difficult conversations

Tips for facilitating this session

- use your facilitation skills to make the session flow and make it relevant for your audience
- add in your own scenarios and storytelling to bring your session to life
- coming up with a mnemonic is almost secondary to having a constructive and supportive conversation

Things to prepare before the session:

- take some time to consider the group you'll be delivering to
- pick the right scenarios from the scenario library and think about how you can bring that story and conclusion to life
- a way of making and keeping notes for the group
- consider having a way for the group to collaborate easily in your back pocket

Handouts for this session:

None

What you'll need on the day:

- Copies of the scenarios relating to the topics you have been asked to discuss
- Current topics cover
 - Absence
 - Paragon Live

Module context and outline

Context

This session is designed to provide a framework for an open and non-judgmental conversation about those tough conversations that they need to have as people leaders.

It's important to note the following:

- People may have been to this session more than once in different guises, meaning the context of the session (be it about absence, performance management or change) is key. While all difficult conversations have similar components, they equally require different approaches - it's your role to draw these core components and differences out to support learners.
- The conversation between the learners is more important than necessarily coming up with the perfect mnemonic or framework - if the conversation is supportive, exploratory and focussed, allow it to flow.
- The psychological safety of the group is important, we want them to be able to share any conversations that they've had in the past, or are planning at the moment, to get the most out of the session.

The difference in this session comes from the practice scenarios, there are a number of different ones, from absence to performance management.

They are available here: <https://>

Outline

Time	Section	Objective	Materials
5 minutes	Welcome and intro	Learners are welcomed to the session, and briefed on why they're here	Scenarios from library
5 minutes	What is an mnemonic?	Learners know what a mnemonic is	
20-30 minutes	Keywords	Learners have the opportunity to explore the difficult conversation topic together	
30 minutes	Build it	Learners build their own mnemonic	
30 minutes	Test it	Learners test their mnemonic on two scenarios	
15 minutes	Review it	Learners review and refine their mnemonic	

Welcome and intro

Objective: Learners are welcomed to the session, and briefed on why they're here.

Time	Notes	Materials
5 minutes	<p>Introduce yourself and welcome the group to this Having the right conversation session.</p> <p>Cover your usual housekeeping.</p> <p>Overview and learning outcomes Explain to the group that they are there to give them the opportunity to explore difficult conversations from a practical aspect, and to connect with each other in a supportive way to help them in the future. Encourage them to build relationships, ask questions and to use this opportunity to share and experiment.</p>	

What is a mnemonic?

Objective: Learners understand the purpose of mnemonics.

Time	Notes
5 minutes	<p>Mnemonic (pronounced new-mon-ic) is a very general word. It's simply a device which helps us to remember something. The word comes from the Greek mnemonikós, which refers to the mind.</p> <p>Common kinds are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> acronyms, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the GROW model for coaching (Goal, Reality, Options (or Obstacles) and Will (or Way forward) the STAR model for interviews (Situation, Task, Action, Results) sentences, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My Very Excited Mother Just Served Us Nine Pies (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto - the planets of the solar system (well, planets and Pluto!)) Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet - colours of the rainbow) Rhythms and rhymes, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November, All the rest have thirty-one, But February's twenty-eight, The leap year, which comes once in four, Gives February one day more. Models and frameworks, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E2C2 (Evidence, Effect, Change, Continue - a method of giving feedback) <p>Ensure that the group are comfortable with what mnemonic is and then move into the main part of the session.</p>

Keywords

Objective: Learners explore some key principles which will support their conversation

Time	Notes
20-30 minutes	<p>Explain that we have a lot of mnemonics which could help them with these kinds of conversations, but that it is far better for them to explore making one of their own. It will help them to remember some of the core principles of how to approach this kind of conversation, as well as giving them a practical tool they can use in the future.</p> <p>Make a start by opening up the topic to the room and pulling out keywords. Perhaps start by asking the group if they have any difficult conversations on this topic coming up, or previous experiences they're willing to share and reflect on. Or you could ask them to talk about their fears around difficult conversations and how they might plan for this.</p> <p>Some common fears might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> their team member's reaction getting it wrong issues around policy and process (possibly causing an obstacle, getting them wrong, or not being able (or maybe wanting) to follow them for some reason) <p>In each case, ask the group to think about what they might do in the future to make it better or easier.</p> <p>In each case, let the group come up with the solution themselves but if they need prompting, they might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> think about what they know of the individual involved and how they might react to the conversation - better allowing them to plan consider that mistakes are a learning process through review and reflection speak to other leaders and ER Services about policy and process <p>As an example here, the keywords might be 'plan', 'review', 'reflect', 'policy' or 'process'.</p> <p>As the conversation continues, carry on pulling out these keywords.</p>

Keywords

Time	Notes
	<p>Gradually move the conversation on from their fears to how they might plan a conversation of this nature. Again, note the keywords that come up.</p> <p>For example, when talking about absence triggers, they might want to consider things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the colleague's personal life if there are any underlying issues which might impact absence (for example, undisclosed disabilities) the change in behaviour needed (if any) Co-op's absence policy next steps <p>Or if thinking about giving difficult feedback, they might want to think about things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> making the conversation about the behaviour not the person giving evidence to back up the feedback making suggestions about how to improve agreeing a way forward framing the conversation constructively when/where the conversation needs to happen who needs to be present

Build it

Time	Notes																																												
30 minutes	<p>Now, using the keywords that they've talked about, the group can start to build the mnemonic. Share the keywords you've pulled out of the conversation so far (you might want to do this on a whiteboard, or a Teams document).</p> <p>From there, the group can start to assign words, or phrases.</p> <p>The group might have difficulty getting started, if so, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> give them a starter - for example, most difficult conversations come with an element of planning, so they could start with a 'P' for 'plan' suggest other mnemonics that you've come across in the past for them to build from give them some kick-starter words - here are some examples: <table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: left;"> <tr> <td>Action</td> <td>Listen</td> <td>Evidence</td> <td>Experience</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Change</td> <td>Challenge</td> <td>Impact</td> <td>Think</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Plan</td> <td>Do</td> <td>Feel</td> <td>Determine</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Choose</td> <td>Process</td> <td>Respond</td> <td>Feedback</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Receive</td> <td>Give</td> <td>Acknowledge</td> <td>Echo</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reflect</td> <td>Observe</td> <td>Evaluate</td> <td>Consider</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Information</td> <td>Inform</td> <td>Review</td> <td>Check</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inquire</td> <td>Closed questions</td> <td>Open questions</td> <td>Honest</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Behaviour</td> <td>Future</td> <td>Focus</td> <td>Improve</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ask</td> <td>Decide</td> <td>Constructive</td> <td>Open</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transparent</td> <td>Authentic</td> <td>Inclusive</td> <td>Empathy</td> </tr> </table>	Action	Listen	Evidence	Experience	Change	Challenge	Impact	Think	Plan	Do	Feel	Determine	Choose	Process	Respond	Feedback	Receive	Give	Acknowledge	Echo	Reflect	Observe	Evaluate	Consider	Information	Inform	Review	Check	Inquire	Closed questions	Open questions	Honest	Behaviour	Future	Focus	Improve	Ask	Decide	Constructive	Open	Transparent	Authentic	Inclusive	Empathy
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Test it

Time	Notes
30 minutes	<p>Once the group have come up with a working model, explain that they're going to give their creation a try with a scenario.</p> <p>The idea here is not to role play, but you can run the scenarios like that if you feel the group would benefit from it.</p> <p>The scenario gives the group an overview of a situation on which they can use their mnemonic to plan and execute a conversation. Depending on how effective their approach is, you will have extra information which you can give them which might guide them further.</p> <p>If the mnemonic works well, then the group should have a full picture at the end of the scenario and a clear plan of what happens next.</p> <p>Once you've completed the first scenario, give the group any information that they missed. Give them the opportunity to reflect, review and refine their approach.</p> <p>For the second scenario, you'll have a choice between a 'moderate' (level 2) or 'complex' (level 3) scenario - use your judgment about which one to choose. After all, the key to this session is not necessarily to come up with the perfect mnemonic but to explore how to navigate these difficult and challenging situations. We want the group to go away with increased confidence, not questioning their abilities.</p>

Review it

Time	Notes
15 minutes	<p>Again, after they've prepared and walked through the second scenario with you, give them the opportunity to reflect, review and refine. They might want to dissect and dwell if the conversation didn't achieve the results they wanted. Instead, try to steer them towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using the space and time to share concerns and build plans for future conversations • building a network between the group so that they can continue the conversation after this session • seeing the improvement they've already made to their mnemonic and how to continue refining after this session • building confidence in what they bring to the table as a leader • signposting to further support, such as the People Collection, Cool to be Kind, Boost/Excellence programmes and LeaderShift <p>Discuss with the group that they're not going to come out of this session with the perfect framework for every conversation of this kind, and there will be times when it doesn't work, or the conversation doesn't go how they would have wanted. It's important to acknowledge that even the most prepared person can make mistakes, or have conversations take a turn that they didn't expect.</p> <p>Remind the group that this isn't the 'be all and end all' of good conversations with their teams and others - and to take the time to reflect and think on what went well, what didn't and why every time they have a conversation with a challenging aspect.</p> <p>Make sure that the group are able to remain connected in some way if they would like to, perhaps exchanging email addresses or setting up a chat in Teams.</p> <p>Thank the group for coming.</p>