

# DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS MANAGING EMOTIONS

As executives, team members, and collaborators, our ability to facilitate a difficult conversation depends almost entirely on how well we handle our emotions during moments of conflict while acknowledging the emotions of others. This second installment of our “difficult conversations” series takes a deeper look at how we can effectively express and recognize our emotions in this context. Susan David, co-founder and co-director of the Institute of Coaching at McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School, suggests that the following principles of emotional intelligence can help us [navigate our emotions in difficult situations](#). (Remember, these principles apply to *your* emotions as well as *theirs*!)

- **Recognize the emotions you and the other person are experiencing.** Are you aware of your emotions during the conversation? Put yourself in the other person’s shoes, can you sense how he or she is feeling? What might be at the root of those emotions?
- **Assess the impact of emotions on your behavior.** If you’re feeling frustrated, are those negative feelings impacting your body language, tone, or word choice? In turn, how might that negative energy affect those around you? Shifting your mindset and engaging with respect and warmth can change the entire tone of the conversation.
- **Understand how the other person’s emotions may be affecting your conversation.** Asking open-ended questions can help you understand how the other person is feeling, identify and validate their emotions, and build the trust that is essential for open communication.
- Using the above principles as your guide, **manage the conversation to achieve your goals.** Realizing a positive outcome may mean letting go of blame, anger, or other unproductive emotions. At times, powerful emotions cloud our thought processes, and it is important to limit the current conversation, move to a more casual environment, or plan to continue at another time.

In charged situations, channeling emotions productively while accepting the other person’s perspective and feelings can make all the difference.

***Need Coaching to manage communications in emotionally charged situations?***

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