Lake Region State College

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: SUPERVISOR SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

LEARNING SUMMARY

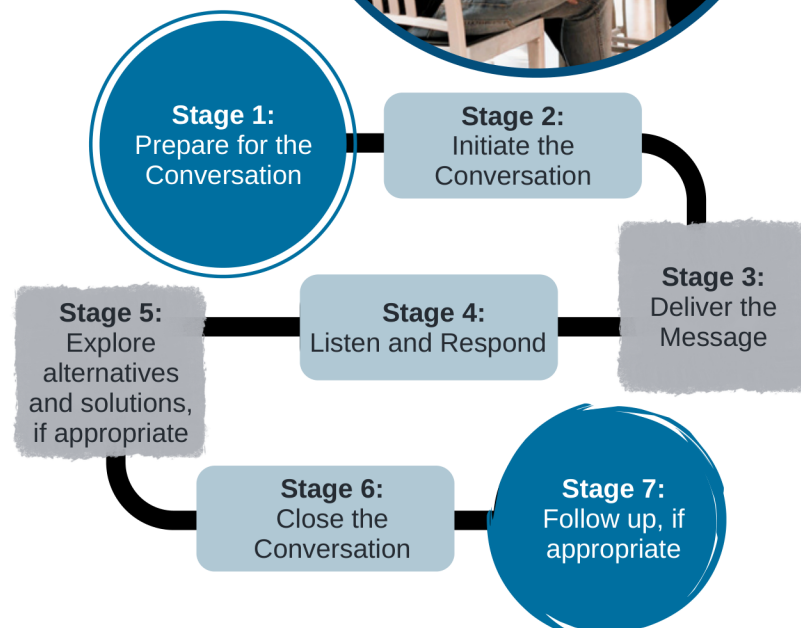## WHAT MAKES CONVERSATIONS DIFFICULT

- Fear of hurting people's feelings, making them angry or upset, disappointing them, not being liked, or not being respected
- Feeling of being powerless or not being in control of the situation
- Fear of embarrassing yourself or being seen to fall short
- A reluctance to engage in conflict

HOW TO HANDLE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

- Prepare yourself.
- Make sure you know what you want to achieve.
- Choose the right time and place.
- Deliver the message promptly and clearly.
- Focus on the facts and tell the truth.
- Try to see the situation from the other person's point of view.
- Listen actively, empathize, and acknowledge, respect, and validate the other person's feelings.
- Don't take people's reactions personally.
- Stay calm and manage your own feelings.
- Be open-minded and willing to negotiate (when appropriate).

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

- Figure out what's going on - whether you need to know more and what the stakes are.
- Think about the other person's point of view and how they might feel and respond.
- Consider how you feel about the situation and how you will manage your emotions.
- Consider your relationship with the other person.
- Think about your objectives for the conversation and what your ideal outcome will be including the outcome you would accept.
- Think about when and where you will hold the conversation.

Stage 1: Prepare for the Conversation

Stage 2: Initiate the Conversation

Stage 3: Deliver the Message

Stage 4: Listen and Respond

Stage 5: Explore alternatives and solutions, if appropriate

Stage 6: Close the Conversation

Stage 7: Follow up, if appropriate

TO DELIVER A DIFFICULT MESSAGE

- Be clear and specific and focus on facts; give examples when possible.
- Be sincere, tell the truth, and provide accurate information.
- Learn more by asking questions.
- Let the other person ask questions; answer them honestly and briefly and explain why if you can't.
- Stay calm and use positive body language.
- Avoid distractions.
- Take responsibility when warranted.
- If appropriate, reframe situation in a positive light, but don't lie.

CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE!

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