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Having Difficult Conversations

Sometimes in life it's necessary to have difficult conversations— at home, school, work, with friends, roommates or in your relationships. Though it's a natural part of life, it can be tricky to collect your thoughts, say what you really mean to say and have a productive conversation.

Below are some tips to help you have effective conversations with others, even when the topic is complicated, heavy or just all-around difficult.

Tips for Effective Conversations

If you know the conversation is coming, spend some time preparing yourself for it. You don't need to write every word you plan to say, but spend time brainstorming your main points. Ask yourself what you want to accomplish from the conversation.

Try not to label the conversation as "difficult" in your mind, or you might cause yourself unnecessary stress and anxiety. Instead, focus on how you'll feel after the conversation is over. You'll likely feel relieved and glad that you found the courage to have it.

Don't assume you know how the other person feels or what they are going to say. They have their own perspectives and emotions entirely different from yours.

When possible, try to have the conversation in person. Although so much of our communication is done electronically or on the phone, many nonverbal cues get lost, such as body language, tone and facial expressions. This can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings.

In the moment, try to stay calm, focused and don't forget to breathe. If you are nervous, taking deep breaths beforehand can help to calm your nerves.

Stay open to how the conversation naturally evolves based on the other person's thoughts and how they respond to yours.

Try to be an active listener during the conversation and really consider what the other person is saying. This will facilitate a more productive conversation and encourage the other person to actively listen to you as well.

Be direct in a tactful way. Don't expect others to read your mind. They won't know how you feel unless you tell them.

If necessary, take a break from the conversation and regroup later. This will give both parties time to calm down, reflect, and consider the best approach.

WellConnect's trained counselors are available to help if you or a fellow student prepare and facilitate these difficult conversations. You can contact an experienced counselor through your student assistance program, schedule an appointment and get access to additional support resources. Through a combination of counseling and education, you will experience quality emotional support from wherever you are and with a flexible schedule that supports your academic needs.

WellConnect provides confidential consultations with a licensed professional for faculty and staff regarding student problems or concerns. In addition, our team is available to discuss behavioral and classroom management issues.

If a student comes to you with a situation and you're not sure what to say, please call our 24/7 FAST-Line at 844-208-7070. The FAST (Faculty Administrator Support Team) Line can be a valuable resource for navigating complex, sensitive or high-risk student situations. Our counselors will consult with you on the situation and help you develop a plan to assist the student. Of course, you can give the student the WellConnect student number, 866-640-4777, and encourage them to call, or even dial the number and hand the student the phone in a location where they will have privacy while talking to a WellConnect counselor.

Working collaboratively, we can help students achieve their personal, educational and career goals.

[WellConnect is here for you and your students.](#)

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