

Dealing with Difficult Conversations & Challenging Behaviours

RANCH Network Manager's Community of Practice -
25 JUNE 2024

SOPHIE GALE

What we will cover today

- ▶ What do we mean by difficult conversations and challenging behaviours?
- ▶ Why do we need to address these conversations and behaviours?
- ▶ How to address these conversations and behaviours?
- ▶ Follow up/resources

Support



NHV Assist - Phone: (03) 9602 1228

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Group Agreement

- ▶ **Confidentially and sensitivity to others** - this is a learning environment, not a therapeutic environment – have open conversation but don't share your own or other people's personal details.
- ▶ **Step forward and step back** – offer your contribution and allow space for the contribution of your peers
- ▶ **NSQs!** – there are no silly questions.
- ▶ **Listen to others** and challenge respectfully
- ▶ **Facilitator can move the discussion on** – only have a limited time.



What are some examples of difficult conversations and challenging behaviours?

Why do we need to have difficult conversations with staff??

- ▶ Resolve issues early before they escalate
- ▶ Maintain a safe working environment – employers now have legal responsibilities to ensure workplaces are psychologically safe and free from mental health hazards (Work Safe)
- ▶ Help with smooth running of the operations of the House
- ▶ So you can all do great work together!

Do you avoid having difficult conversations with staff?

- ▶ I don't have the time or energy for a confrontation
- ▶ It will work itself out
- ▶ Its not that important
- ▶ This person is really fragile – it will make things worse (I don't want to make them more unhappy)
- ▶ I can't see the point – we have nothing in common, this person is too emotional/unreasonable/angry.

Having difficult conversations - your role as a manager

- ▶ Role model – Respectful, professional, empathetic
- ▶ You are accountable for organizational outcomes
- ▶ Provide clarity about tasks and expectations of behaviour
- ▶ Support staff to do the best they can in their role

Understanding Emotions!

Preparing for a difficult conversation...

- ▶ What do you want to achieve/what's the outcome
- ▶ Have the conversation sooner rather than later – don't put it off!
- ▶ Engage with the person calmly – indicate what you want to talk to them about, indicate your positive intention, invite them to meet at a mutually agreeable time, they can bring along a support person.
- ▶ Allow enough time, make sure its in private and you won't be interrupted, face to face is best (Teams call if not possible in person).
- ▶ Work out what you're going to say – notes not scripted. Facts not feelings.
- ▶ Bring supporting documentation if needed – e.g Code of Conduct.

Handling the conversation

- **Step 1 – State the problem** and provide examples. State the impact that the problem is having on the business.
- **Step 2 – Listen and question.** Put aside your view and let the employee explain their side of the story and motives. Try to understand their point of view.
- **Step 3 – Acknowledge** the employee's feelings and view of the situation. Confirm and clarify your understanding of what they have said and validate them where appropriate.

Handling the conversation cont...

- **Step 4 – Reassess your position.** After the employee has put forward their point of view, it is your turn to clarify your position without minimising theirs. What can you see from your perspective that they've missed? Has your position changed based on the information they provided?
- **Step 5 – Look for solutions.** Work with the employee to develop solutions. Agree on a way forward.
- **Step 6 – Close the conversation.** Clarify and document the agreed actions and next steps. Thank the employee.

Follow up...

- ▶ Document the conversation and the outcomes
- ▶ Reflect
- ▶ Follow up with the staff member.

Key messages

- ▶ Having difficult conversations is tricky – its normal to want to avoid them!
- ▶ But...having difficult conversations with staff is part of your role.
- ▶ Communication needs to be **respectful, professional and empathetic** – try to manage your emotions, be patient and sympathetic if the staff member is emotional.
- ▶ Try to see things from their perspective.
- ▶ You are a mentor and a role model.

Your reflections/questions

- ▶ How will you use these skills going forward?
- ▶ What is your main take away?
- ▶ Still have questions/ not sure?

Resources

- ▶ Difficult conversations in the workplace – manager course; Fair Work Ombudsman - <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/online-learning-centre/difficult-conversations-in-the-workplace-manager-course>
- ▶ Preventing and managing work-related stress – workSafe - <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/preventing-and-managing-work-related-stress>
- ▶ NHV Assist – Difficult conversations (Word Document)
- ▶ Kaz!



Thanks!

Any feedback?

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