

WHY HAVE TRICKY CONVERSATIONS?

Isn't it easier just to avoid talking about it?

Tensions are a natural part of our everyday lives. They can involve uncomfortable feelings such as frustration, irritation, stress, confusion or "stuckness".

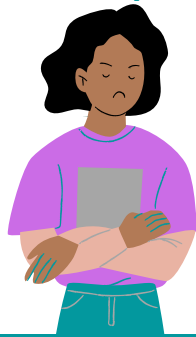
It often seems easier to suppress these negative feelings instead of working to sort them out.

But, if we ignore them, they can lead to painful and/or destructive conflict for all concerned.

A tricky conversation could help you work through conflict, & improve a relationship.



Keeping quiet only allows the tension to remain. Often this gets worse over time.



USING THESE TOOLS IN A TRICKY CONVERSATION COULD HELP YOU...

- Tackle tensions confidently
- Feel empowered
- Communicate openly
- Understand others better
- Have greater empathy for others
- Feel happier and better understood

LET'S TALK

LET'S TALK is a Frome community group whose members had some simple training in Restorative Conversations and learned some skills which have made a big difference.

This leaflet explains some of those skills so that you can use them too. They might help you change a difficult conversation into a useful one, or help you work through something uncomfortable with a family member or a neighbour.

If you'd like to know more:
bit.ly/lets-talk-frome



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LET'S TALK

TOOLS FOR TACKLING TRICKY CONVERSATIONS



BEFORE YOU DIVE IN...

It can really help to talk to someone else first.

Choose someone who is not involved in the situation, who can listen, and help you understand how you're feeling, why you want to have a conversation, and what you want to say.



TIPS TO TACKLE A TRICKY TALK

1. TAKE A BREATH

THIS WILL HELP YOU TAKE A MOMENT FOR YOURSELF

Starting a tricky conversation when you're feeling uncomfortable or triggered doesn't help.

Stop what you're doing – put things down for a moment

Take a few deep breaths

Observe what you are feeling

Proceed with care & consideration

2. USE "I", NOT "YOU"

THIS WILL HELP YOU DESCRIBE HOW THE TENSION IS AFFECTING YOU

Starting a conversation with phrases like "You always" can make the other person feel blamed or attacked.

They'll probably respond defensively or angrily and the conversation will quickly become an argument, where it's likely neither of you will be happy with the outcome.



3. LISTEN WELL

THIS WILL HELP YOU REALLY ENGAGE WITH WHAT'S BEING SAID

Often what we really want is to be heard. We want to be listened to and understood.

Listening well (also known as active listening) builds trust and empathy.

ACTIVE LISTENING TIPS

- Allow silences – don't try and fill the space
- Avoid jumping in with your own ideas & opinions or solutions
- Use body language to show you're listening (eye contact, smile, lean in etc)
- Reflect back what someone has said & check you've understood
- Ask open questions: ones that can't be answered with yes or no
- Ask them to clarify if you need to

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Once you've thought about all these tips, it's time to plan how you're going to approach the conversation itself. Try these four steps...

1. **OBSERVATION** - Make observations about the situation without introducing any judgement or evaluation
2. **FEELINGS** - Say clearly how you feel in relation to your observations
3. **NEEDS** - State your own needs/values clearly and honestly
4. **REQUEST** - Clearly request specific & concrete actions that would enrich your life.

EXAMPLE...

"When you didn't come home at the time we agreed I felt really **anxious**. I need to know that you are safe and to feel confident that the agreement we made is kept. In future, can we agree that you will **contact me** if you're going to be late?"

OBSERVATION (points to "When you didn't come home at the time we agreed")

FEELING (points to "I felt really anxious.")

NEEDS (points to "I need to know that you are safe and to feel confident that the agreement we made is kept.")

REQUEST (points to "contact me if you're going to be late?")