

## COMMUNICATION EXERCISE FOR ASSERTIVENESS AT WORK: PREPARE FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

Thank you for downloading this worksheet. This is Alessandra, [FindYourWay Coaching](http://www.findyourway.company) founder!

It is my pleasure to give you an assertive tool I created, that will help you practice an alternative communication skill. Usually, when I work with my clients, one of the first things that come up is how to have more compassionate and mindful communication at work. Perhaps due to a conflict, or simply because they have been told to be more assertive. In fact, misunderstandings, keeping conflicts silent and negative exchanges are bad for our mental health. [Evidence](#) shows how assertive communication decreases anxiety when it comes to work conversations.

I work with many companies, academic institutions, and individuals, and 90% of participants report having less stress after having engaged with our assertiveness training.

In this document I will show you how to prepare for a difficult conversation with managers, colleagues and team members to tell them if something is bothering you. I find that truthful conversations at work do not happen regularly, since we are often driven by fear of speaking up. Here, we see how we can get around it by adopting a new communication style.

For any questions, reach out to us: [info@findyourway.company](mailto:info@findyourway.company)

Here you can visit our signature training [on assertiveness skills](#)

## **DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS EXERCISE**

### **HOW TO PREPARE FOR A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION WITH MANAGERS/COLLEAGUES/TEAM MEMBERS**

#### **PREPARATION STEP 1: CONNECT TO THE FEELING AND FEARS AROUND THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATION**

Usually difficult conversations are dreaded because we fear the worst will happen: there will be a conflict, or a strong disappointment or a very extreme situation, like being fired at work for speaking up. Sometimes it is totally not the case. You will see how liberating it is to be able to communicate, provided you prepare for it.

- Note down what are the feelings connected to this difficult conversation you plan to have.
- Ask yourself: What is the worst case scenario and how likely is it to really happen? This helps you to tackle the fear behind the conversation.

#### **PREPARATION STEP 2: MAKE A CONSCIOUS DECISION OF WHAT TO TACKLE FIRST**

Be clear on what the conversation is about. Is it a request to someone to stop doing or change something? Is it a request of help, like tackling heavy workload, or is something that could drastically affect a relationship? If there are multiple items, decide what to tackle first. You could start with how the situation makes you feel and what is behind the need of changing something.

#### **PREPARATION STEP 3: THINK OF THE WORDS TO USE AND HOW TO HAVE AN EMPATHIC ASSERTIVE CONVERSATION**

If you are feeling frustrated, that is likely to be reflected in your communication style. You might use YOU statements, such as “you are doing this and that”, which make the interlocutor very defensive and might get us nowhere. Think to articulate your message with I STATEMENTS instead. “I feel, I think” are much more powerful and assertive than accusing somebody.



**NOW! TIME TO TALK! WE WILL USE A CERTAIN STYLE, CALLED NON- VIOLENT COMMUNICATION.** Its framework has 4 parts, and the acronym is called OFNR (observation, feeling , need, request).

Before using it, start with an **assertive introduction**:

**INTRO:** *I feel it is time for me to bring a few thoughts forward. How would you feel about having a conversation?*

POTENTIAL RUDE ANSWER REACTION : If the person dismisses you, with a sentence like „Yeh, ok, but make it quick. We have work!“ You can always say: „**There are a few things I need to cover, so it won't unfortunately be that quick. Please do let me know when you can spend a bit more time on this. Thank you.** “

### **Now the OFNR!**

**OBSERVATION:** (to back up your core complaint and request, you need to BE CLEAR about the episodes that trigger your problems!): *The other day, and it has happened repeatedly in the last month too, you have interrupted me in several meetings in front of my team members, and I have had no time to finish explaining my ideas.*

**FEELING:** *This left me feeling very frustrated, since I was keen on making y my contribution.* (Yes, it's hard to talk about feelings, but it is necessary if you want people to connect with you!)

**NEED:** *I need to feel I am listened to, and that I am part of something* (the need behind the feeling)

**REQUEST:** (it needs to be specific! Not just „I need to never be interrupted, because it is rude! “This is clearly true as well, but it might not reach our interlocutor):

*I would like to have the opportunity to finish my sentences, and in case you don't find yourself in agreement, would you mind explaining me why on the spot? After having explained my idea, I'd be always happy to have your feedback.*

**CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE GOT PAST THE HURDLE OF TALKING. BUT WHAT IF THE OTHER PERSON IS NOT ASSERTIVE?**

**BREATHE. STICK TO YOUR VIEW OF HOW YOU FEEL AND WANT TO BE TREATED. BE KIND. WALK AWAY IF NECESSARY. GIVE IT A REST, AND MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS.**



**WANT MORE SUPPORT AND TOOLS? HERE'S HOW YOU CAN DO IT:**

- HAVE A LOOK AT OUR SIGNATURE TRAINING ON HOW TO HAVE [HEALTHIER COMMUNICATION AT WORK](#)
- GET INFORMED ABOUT OUR [INDIVIDUAL COACHING SESSIONS](#)
- SUBSCRIBE TO OUR BIMONTHLY [NEWSLETTER](#)
- [SCHEDULE A FREE 30 MIN CALL](#) WITH ALESSANDRA

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**TEAM COMMUNICATION**

The marketing team of a large medical company in Switzerland has faced challenges because of remote work communication. Many of them are not in the same place, and struggling to communicate properly. On top of that, there were many different cultures, where more indirect or direct styles were mixing. At the end of the assertiveness training, people were feeling more relaxed about communicating with each other and giving feedback through the I statements had become a rule.

*The manager of the team was able to create a safer space for each one to express themselves.*

**INDIVIDUAL COACHING**

Manuela was a business owner facing a lot of challenges because of taking up a new family business. She felt overwhelmed, was close to burnout and was facing difficulties communicating with her staff about what changes to make. They were too used to the family business «traditional» rules, and she struggled to make changes.

*After assertive communication sessions and coaching, she was able to communicate her needs and how she felt without having conflicts with staff. She was dealing better with difficult conversations and was able to identify the stressors and take more time for herself.*