

Difficult Conversations

by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen

A printable to-do list of the most effective habits from this book. Check one off each day you do it.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

⁰¹ **Write the three conversations**

Before the hard talk, make three short columns: what happened, what I feel, and what this threatens in my identity. Do not open the conversation until each column has at least one honest sentence.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

⁰² **Replace blame with contribution**

Take your first accusation and rewrite it as a pattern: what they did, what you did, what the situation rewarded, and what you want both people to change next time.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

⁰³ **Separate impact from intent**

Use the sentence: 'The impact on me was X. I realize I do not know whether that was your intent. Can you help me understand what was happening for you?'

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

⁰⁴ **Name one identity fear**

Privately finish this sentence before you talk: 'What scares me is that this means I am...'. Then remind yourself of a more complex and generous truth.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

⁰⁵ **Open with a learning stance**

Start with: 'I have a story about what happened, and I want to check it with you.' It signals truth, humility, and seriousness in one sentence.