



Preparing for the Conversation

Important conversations go better when we walk in curious rather than armored. This isn't about winning. It's about getting clear on what matters to you, making a real effort to understand what matters to the other person, and arriving with ideas that could work for you both. Give yourself 15–20 minutes. Write freely; no one else needs to see this.

CONVERSATION WITH

ABOUT

WHEN

1 What matters to me

If the other person said yes tomorrow, what would I ask them to do? Name more than one possibility. Then go a layer deeper: *why* does each of these matter to me? What am I really hoping for?

2 What I'd like to understand

What information would help? Where might I be assuming rather than knowing? What questions would I like to ask them, and listen to the answers?

3 Their perspective: the generous read

This is the heart of the worksheet, so be as generous as you possibly can. Imagine the other person is reasonable, well-intentioned, and doing their best with what they have. What might they be hoping for? Worried about? What pressures or responsibilities could they be carrying that I can't see? If someone who loves them described this situation, what would they say?

What they might care about most (their interests, not just their position)

The most generous explanation for how things have gone so far



4 Fair ground

What standards might we both see as fair? Consider policies, precedent, shared values, or what a respected, neutral person would consider reasonable.

5 If we don't agree: my options

What could I do if we don't find a path together? * Knowing this isn't a threat; it's steadiness. It lets me listen openly instead of anxiously.

6 If we don't agree: their options

What could they do? Be generous here too: what might they reasonably feel their choices are, and how might those feel to them?

7 Possibilities

Brainstorm ideas that could meet *both* of our interests. Don't judge or edit yet; quantity first. The best solutions often come from combining or building on each other's ideas.

8 How I'd like to begin

Write your first sentence or two. A good opening names the shared goal and invites their view. *For example: "I'd like us to figure this out together. Can I share what's on my mind, and then hear how it looks from your side?"*

9 If I hear "no," stay curious

A "no" is usually a no to one idea, not to the relationship or to finding a solution. Try:

- "Help me understand what concerns you about that."
- "What would work better for you?"
- "What's most important to you here?"
- "If we could solve for that, would this feel workable?"
- "What would need to be true for you to feel good about this?"

10 Moving forward

Before you part, summarize together: what you agreed to, who will do what, by when, and how you'll check in.

* Often called your BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement), a concept from Roger Fisher, William Ury & Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes*.