

Set Intent.

A hard conversation goes sideways when you lose the thread in the heat of it. What is missing is a container that holds the conversation you want to have: a clear beginning, a middle, and a definite end you decide beforehand. One level below that outcome sits your emotional intent. How do you want to feel throughout and at the end of this conversation, and how do you want them to feel? Settle that first. You cannot lead them anywhere yet.

How do you want to feel throughout and at the end of this conversation?

How do you want them to feel?

THEN FRAME IT, IN FOUR STEPS

1

Set the topic

Name it plainly.

2

Set the destination

Where you're heading.

3

Set the route

How you get there.

4

Gain agreement

Invite a clear yes.

The four steps.

Start by answering the **Ask yourself** questions. Then, based on what you clarify, finish by filling in the **conversation points**.

1 Set the topic

ASK YOURSELF

What exactly do you want to talk about? Narrow it to one sentence.

Where have you been softening it, and what has that cost you so far?

CONVERSATION POINTS

“Hey _____, I want to talk about _____
_____”

2 Set the destination

ASK YOURSELF

What does a good ending look like? What is agreed, decided, or committed to?

If they steer it somewhere else, how will you invite it back?

CONVERSATION POINTS

“By the end of this, I’d love for us to agree on
_____”

The four steps. *continued*

3 Set the route *Say how you want to get there. What matters to you?*

ASK YOURSELF

What matters to you about how this goes, not just the outcome?

What might they be feeling coming in, and what would help them build this with you?

CONVERSATION POINTS

“It’s important to me that _____

To get there, I want to hear what you need from me. I also want to hear what you need for us to come to that agreement.”

4 Gain agreement

ASK YOURSELF

Once they say yes, what is your first line?

CONVERSATION POINTS

“Are you up for this? Are you willing to do this with me?”

Clarity as a gift. What if this were the best difficult conversation they ever had, and you made it possible?