

7 Ways to Say Something Difficult

Got something difficult to say? Not sure how to broach the subject? Whether you are trying to tell someone something on a one-to-one basis, or you are speaking to a group, finding ways to get ideas and concepts across to your audience, particularly if they are difficult to say or potentially hard to understand, can be a challenge.

Here are some thoughts on ways to explain something difficult. You could:

1. **Use a metaphor.** A metaphor is a comparison between two objects or ideas. Metaphors can be really useful when you need to convey an idea that may be difficult to grasp or you want to discuss something without approaching it directly. A good example might be Shakespeare's "As You Like It" where he compares the world to a stage and its human inhabitants players entering and exiting upon that stage. Reality TV shows often refer to the contestants "journey" through the competition.
2. **Tell a story.** Stories have been used by civilisations for years to convey ideas, thoughts, histories and values in words, images and sounds. Stories have been shared in every culture as a means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation and in order to instill moral values. Crucial elements of stories and storytelling include plot, characters and narrative point of view. Good examples might be fairy stories or the bible. Stories are much beloved of trainers and teachers to convey ideas and concepts that are otherwise difficult to get across.
3. **Draw a diagram.** They say that a picture can tell a thousand words, and certainly they can be very valuable when you are trying to portray a complex concept or idea. Diagrams are particularly helpful when ideas are technical or you need to show a process flow or connections between ideas. Or if you have complex data to show, show a graph not the basic numbers and keep it simple!
4. **Find the right opening.** Whether you are talking to one individual or a crowd, finding the right opening can be essential to get people on your side. Need to be persuasive? The a cooperative opening might be what you need. A few examples might be:
 - "Let's see if we can....."
 - "Why don't we try this a different way....."
 - "Have you got any ideas on..."
 - "What would you like to do about this..."



5. **Say what you think.** Difficult conversations can sometimes be when you have to discipline someone or ask them to change the way in which they behave. In these cases, it is a good idea to start with "I". In these cases you are taking responsibility for your own thoughts and actions and inviting the other person to consider their own thoughts and position. Examples are:
 - "I think..."
 - "I would prefer..."
 - "I cannot..."
 - "I feel..."
 - "I want..."

6. **Empathise with the other person.** Empathising with someone can put you in a stronger position when you have to say something unpleasant or unpalatable. Combine with the "I" word it can be a powerful opening. Examples might include:
 - "I understand that this may not be very important to you but..."
 - "You may be too busy now, but..."
 - "I appreciate that this is difficult for you..."
 - "I can see that you seem worried..."

7. **Learn to say "No".** We all have difficulty saying No sometimes so having a few ideas up our sleeves can be very useful. There are in fact, lots of different ways to say "No" without having to use the word. For example: "I am not the right person to deal with this..." or "Now is not the right time for me..." or "Please come back to me when you have the answer."
As an exercise why not sit down and work out 3 ways of saying No right now?

There are all sorts of reasons why you might have something difficult to say and these are just a few thoughts on how to tackle them.

Berry Winter

JamBerry Ltd

