

Why You Should Be Brave at Work

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Sometimes when we disagree with a coworker or a boss, it's best to drop it or come to a compromise, even if we don't want to. But sometimes it can feel important to work through conflict, especially if you feel your solution would be the best thing for your team.

So if you've [decided that working through the disagreement](#) would be productive—meaning having the conversation would improve the functioning of your team—what's the best way to approach that conversation?

[Joel Garfinkle](#), an Oakland, California-based executive coach and author of "[Difficult Conversations: Practical Tactics for Crucial Communication](#)" thinks bravery is key. He sees fear holding back many of the professionals he coaches in all sorts of workplace situations, from conflict resolution to salary negotiation.

It's worth working through a workplace disagreement "when its going to impact your ability to get work done, to do your job well," "if you're going to be interacting with this person a lot" or "if this person has influence in the company and their opinion matters," he said to Rewire.

"The key thing is not being afraid to have a heart-to-heart and explain the situation as a whole," Garfinkle said. "You want to have the awareness and the commitment to say, 'This relationship is important enough (to salvage)' and be willing to have that conversation."

Do a little homework

Just like you'd want to go to any meeting prepared, you should prepare for a difficult conversation.

When we're locked in disagreement with someone, we can feel "triggered, charged, frustrated, irritated, angry," Garfinkle said. Step away, decide if it's worth talking through with the person and then set up private time to talk. Then, figure out what was really going on in that heated moment.

"It can be very helpful to be more objective about the situation and systematically break down what is the problem," he said.

Be specific. Figure out:

- 1. What impact did the situation have?**
- 2. How do you feel about the situation? How do you think the other person feels about it?**
- 3. What assumptions are you making about the other person?**

Oftentimes, people go into this kind of discussion with their mind made up, Garfinkle said.

"They lose objectivity and they're telling themselves stories in their head that they think are true and they may not be true," he said. "They're taking their assumptions about the situation and projecting it onto the person. It makes it difficult to know what's really happening here."

- 4. What do you want to accomplish when you meet with them? What is the desired outcome you're trying to reach?**

"If you can be clear on that, that's going to drive the desire to have the conversation, more so than the fear that

you're going to (get your feelings hurt) or you'll feel rejected" if the outcome isn't what you wanted, he said.

Let the other person talk first

Once you're in the meeting, resist the urge to blurt out what's on your mind. Instead, wait to hear what they have to say before jumping in. It might surprise you or alter your perspective.

"Even if they have a different communication style, you still want to try to begin by understanding what they're going through and what's their point of view," Garfinkle said. "At the beginning of the conversation you want to share your opinion first and foremost because it's on your mind—temper that."

Once you're talking, keep the conversation going using open-ended questions: "I didn't realize you felt that way; can you expand on that?" and "How did you reach that conclusion?" for example.

"If you start by doing that, they start to feel less defensive, more open, and they'll be able to hear you more effectively."

Challenge yourself to be brave

In Garfinkle's experience, fear puts the kibosh on experiences that could help you grow as a person and as a professional.

"Being afraid that you're going to be rejected, that someone's not going to like you—that's the fear that gets in the way of even trying to have the conversation," he said. "Whether it's, 'I need to critique someone's poor performance and I don't want to hurt their feelings,' or 'I had my feelings hurt and now I seem like I'm really needy and come across like I'm not strong,' or 'I want to ask for a raise or a promotion, but am I worth this? Can I communicate my worth and my value?'"

Pushing yourself past these fears is the only solution, Garfinkle said. Be confident that you deserve to ask for what you need.

"Challenge the boundary you set for yourself," he said. "You will be rewarded every time for having the courage to speak up."



By [Katie Moritz](#)

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