FREE WORKSHEET · CONVERSATIONS

Starting a Conversation That Matters

How to open, hold and close a conversation about how you work and live together

Most of us talk all day about what needs doing, and hardly ever about how we are doing it together: who speaks up, who carries what, how pressure lands, what goes unsaid. Those are the conversations that change how a working day, or a home, actually feels.

The conversation sheets in this topic each give you one opening question and a few to go deeper. This guide is about the part around them: picking the moment, starting well, and finishing with something you both, or all, agree.

IF YOU NEED HELP NOW

If there is an immediate risk to life, call **999**. The Samaritans are available free, 24 hours a day, on **116 123**. In England, NHS 111 (option 2) connects to an urgent mental health service.

01

Choose the moment

- Pick a time when nobody is rushing, tired or in the middle of a problem.
- Say what you would like to talk about in advance, so nobody feels ambushed.
- Keep it short: 20 to 30 minutes is plenty. You can always come back to it.
- If it is a group, choose one topic, not several.

02

Open it well

Say why you are raising it, and make it clear it is not a complaint dressed up as a question. Then ask the opening question, and let the other person answer first.

> INSTEAD OF
>
> "We need to talk about how things are going."

> TRY
>
> "I'd like us to talk about how we work together. Nothing's wrong, I just think we'd both find it useful."
>
> "Can I ask you something I've been thinking about? There's no right answer."

03

Listen more than you talk

> THE PRINCIPLE
>
> Ask, listen and say back what you heard. Do not defend, explain or solve.

If something you hear is about you, thank them for saying it. The moment you start explaining why things are the way they are, the other person stops telling you anything useful.

Silence is usually thinking. Count to ten before you fill it.

04

If it gets heavy

If someone becomes upset, pause. Ask what they need: a break, to stop for today, or to keep going. Do not push for an explanation. Come back to it later, and check in with them afterwards.

05

Close with one agreement

- Agree one thing, not five. One kept agreement makes the next conversation easier.
- Write it down somewhere you will both see it.
- Put a date in the diary to come back to it, a few weeks out.

If you lead a team and you are part of what people need to talk about, it can go better with someone from outside. The Performance Club runs these conversations with teams.