

Difficult Dialogue Planning Worksheet

This 5-step worksheet uses some of the principles from Cy Wakeman's book "No Ego". Use this to plan **clear and effective conversations**, especially when stakes are high, emotions are present, and when drama, defensiveness, or victim thinking is creeping in (including your own).

Step 1: Separate Reality from Story

- What was the observable reality? List the facts only.
- Example:
 - Facts: Three deadlines were missed in the last six weeks.
 - Ego/Emotional Narrative: "I'm being set up to fail."

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Step 2: Self-Reflection

- What outcome do I want that is actually within my control?
- What story am I telling myself about their intent?
- What emotion am I bringing into the room?
 Frustration Fear Disappointment Anger Other: _____
- How might my emotions distort my message?





- What's at risk if I avoid or mishandle this conversation?

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Step 3: Identify Accountability vs. Blame Language

- Blame Language: "If they had responded faster, I could've delivered."
- Accountability Reframe: "What could you do differently next time if responses are delayed?"

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Step 4: Plan Your Delivery Using the SBI Framework

- **Situation (specific, observable context):** When/where did this occur? Be precise.
- **Behavior (what they did or said):** Describe only what an outside observer could verify.
- **Impact (effect on you, others, or the work):** Why this matters. Include business, relational, or trust impact.
- Replace drama with a solution question.
 - Instead of "Why does this always happen?"



- Ask: "What's within your control that you haven't tried yet?"

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Step 5: Commit and Close

- Set and document future expectations.
- Define what success looks like.
- Close with ownership (who will deliver what outcomes, who will support, and assign clear timelines).

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