

The 5-Minute Manager Pre-Conversation Checklist

Complete this before every difficult conversation · From *Leading With Clarity* by Kris Cooper MA, HRM

"*Stop rehearsing conversations at 2am. Use this instead.*"

5-min prep · Better outcomes · Less anxiety

1 CLARIFY YOUR PURPOSE

- Why are we meeting?**
State the reason neutrally — no blame language.
- What does success look like?**
Define the ideal outcome before you walk in.
- Is this about behavior, performance, or both?**
Be precise. Mixing them clouds the message.

2 GROUND IN FACTS ONLY

- What did I directly observe?**
Dates, behaviors, outcomes — no assumptions.
- Can I separate fact from interpretation?**
"They were late 3x" vs. "They don't care."
- What story am I telling myself?**
Challenge it. What else could explain this?

3 MANAGE YOURSELF FIRST

- What emotion am I bringing in?**
Frustration · Concern · Disappointment · Urgency
- Am I regulated enough to listen calmly?**
If not — reschedule. Tone sets the ceiling.
- Am I focused on impact, not intent?**
Don't assume motive. Stay with outcomes.

THE GOOD-BAD-ACTION FRAMEWORK

GOOD → Acknowledge a genuine strength or contribution.

BAD → State what fell short using observable facts.

ACTION → Provide specific examples of what better looks like.

4 PREPARE FOR THEIR REACTION

- Which reaction is most likely?**
Defensiveness · Shame · Disagreement · Silence
- What is my planned redirect if they shut down?**
"This is about behavior, not your worth."
- Am I ready to ask before I tell?**
"How are you experiencing this?" — ask first.

5 DEFINE THE ASK & SUPPORT

- What specific change do I need to see?**
Observable · Measurable · Time-bound.
- What support am I willing to offer?**
Resources, coaching, adjusted timelines.
- Is ownership clearly on them — not me?**
Support ≠ rescue. They own the outcome.

6 LOCK IN FOLLOW-THROUGH

- When is the follow-up check-in scheduled?**
Don't leave the room without a date set.
- What will I document same day?**
Facts, agreements, next steps — neutrally.
- What early signal shows this is working?**
Watch behavior, not reassurance.

FINAL CHECK BEFORE YOU WALK IN

- I am calm enough to listen without interrupting
- I am clear on facts and impact — not intent
- I am ready to hold expectations respectfully
- I am open to information I may not expect

Want the full framework + scripts? Get the complete guide at leadingwithclarity.com

From: *Leading With Clarity — A Guide Through Tough Conversations* Kris Cooper MA, HRM · Leadership Coach & Employee Relations Specialist