

# HOW TO HAVE A COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION 2.0

*(UPDATED MAY 2021)*

The basis for a courageous conversation is choosing to bring up the things you're most nervous to share with important people in your life, where not sharing is self-denying and even riskier. And, to speak lovingly—without blame, making others wrong, or attacking anyone, but also without minimizing or dismissing your own feelings, needs or experience.

Having these open conversations with the people closest to you will create opportunities for you to embody self love, healing, wholeness, and liberation.

Courageous Conversations are A PRACTICE in embodied healing and self liberation

This practice is largely about doing your very best, showing up with beautiful intentions when you are also feeling clear about where you stand and have a desire to have better connection and relationships with someone. Just because that's what you want, doesn't mean other people will be ready for it, however, it's always much more worth a shot than stifling your voice or your feelings.

Remember, intent and impact are not always the same thing.

It's VERY common to feel nervous or anxious about having the conversation you work through in this sheet - whether or not you actually have it is up to you, just know the outcome is always exactly what's needed. That includes if the conversation doesn't go "well."

## **The Conversation Framework**

The general path a courageous conversation will take includes the following elements in this rough order:

- Pre-conversation journaling
  - Set up/schedule the conversation
  - Intro the actual conversation - set some ground rules and an intention for the conversation
  - Share don't want/afraid that
  - Share do want/desired outcome
  - Describe your experience (if necessary)
  - Ask if they have anything to share
  - Make your ask/present your solution
- Establish expectations/agreements, boundaries, or how both want to do things differently moving forward.

### **STEP ONE: Pre-Conversation**

Sometimes, in the heat of a moment loaded with fresh emotion, we say things we don't mean. Taking the time to get clear and honest with yourself first ensures you're more likely to say things you truly mean, from a place of considered feelings, clarity and calm.

#### **Answer the questions below:**

What's going on between me and this person that isn't OK with me right now?

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What are the things I'm feeling that I don't want to feel? (Before, during, and after)

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How do I want to feel in relationship with this person? (Before, during, and after)

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The thing I'm most afraid to say to (friend, family member, partner, co-worker, etc) is ...

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What I don't want to happen is... (What I'm afraid of is...)

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What I do want to happen/My desired outcome is... (there could be more than one, you might want to rank them - what's ideal? What I'm OK with)

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What support do I need? (this may or may not relate to the person or conflict)

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What change am I trying to create? (Internal, external, in an environment, situation, experience, relationship, etc)

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## **STEP TWO: Setting Up the Conversation**

Depending on who this conversation is with, and your relationship with them, you may want to set it up ahead of time. You might be able to just bring it up while you're together sometime soon. It's your call. This section assumes you're scheduling it in advance.

A lot of us (humans) are wired to immediately assume something is wrong when someone asks, "Can we talk?" You want to be received fully, and have the person you want to talk to show up to the conversation without feeling dread, worry, or assuming the worst. That said, be sure to have the conversation in a place where you can both feel as safe as possible. A crowded Starbucks or other public place might not be the best choice. Make sure you have privacy and give yourself and the other person dignity and also the ability to focus and hear what's going on.

Use this script to set it up (this can be a text or email if you want, but the actual conversation needs to be a real live conversation, meaning over the phone or in person).

*Voicenote option* “Hey, I wanted to catch up and chat with you, let me know when you might have some time...” OR offer two times... ie “are you free at all Thursday or Friday for like like 20-30 mins?”

1. “Hey (name), I’ve been working on some personal stuff/I’m working through some things/ I’ve been thinking about some things lately/I’ve been reflecting on our (environment, systems, team communication, team dynamics...etc if it's work related) lately, and there are a few things I’d love to share with you. Would you be up for a chat?”

### OPTIONS FOR CONTEXT:

1a. [Nothing’s wrong], I’m noticing some areas where I’d like to show up better, and toward that, I would really value your thoughts and feelings.”

1b.” A few things have been feeling off between us lately and I wanted to talk it out with you.”

1c. "There’s a few stories I’ve been telling myself and I wanted to check in and see what's true and what's not, or if my expectations or assumptions might be off...”

1d. (At work) “There are some things I've been noticing that I think could really help me do a better job/improve my performance here that I'd like to run by you.”

### **STEP THREE: Conversation Script**

The purpose of a script is to eliminate the chances you’ll overthink this, especially at first while you are practicing and learning. You obviously don’t have to follow this verbatim. In fact, I encourage

you to make it your own. This just gives you the model so you can get to the conversations, and worry less about what to say.

### **1. Open up:**

“Thank you so much for taking the time to chat with me, (Name), it means a lot. Like I mentioned, [insert whatever lead ins you used to set up the conversation]. Here’s what’s going on...”

**NEW #2 - set the shared intention.** Here you share your desired outcome with minimal detail b/c you’ll get to it - just state what you would like the intention or outcome of the conversation to be...kind of like a summary of your notes

Example: This relationship matters to me and I want to preserve/improve it... (credit to Makeda Pennycook for this phrase)

**2a. Set the agreement that one person speaks at a time with no interruptions. “I do want to ask for the sake of a productive conversation that no one interrupts. Can we promise to let each other finish our thoughts without interruption?”**

**3. Share the fears, don’t wants, do wants, and desired outcome you wrote down in Step One:**

Lead in: “I’m a bit nervous/afraid to share this with you, because I don’t want (insert thing you don’t want to happen, thing you’re afraid of). What I do want is (insert thing you do want to happen, your desired outcome).”

Then share.

**4. Describe your experience:**

I can't fully script this out for you, because I don't know what your situation or experience is. Use these prompts to navigate your way through sharing your experience in a way that—this is important—doesn't blame them, shame them, or make them wrong. Your goal is simply to clearly communicate what's going on with you.

Whatever is the issue or experience you're addressing, describe:

- What feels good about it, and what doesn't?
- What's making you comfortable or uncomfortable?
- What you want to be available for, or no longer want to be available for?
- What hurts your feelings?
- How do you want to feel?
- What do you never want to feel again?
- {If you need to own something or take accountability/responsibility} What have you been doing? (This is a great place to bring up expectations or introduce the idea that you are trying to change some part of yourself if that's relevant/accurate.)
- What do you want to do differently?

### **5. Be as specific as possible:**

Again, you make this all about you in this conversation. Start addressing behaviors or scenarios with the other person, instead of attacking their character. Use statements like:

- “When this happens I feel...”
  - “My feelings get hurt when...”

- “When you say things like ... I assume it means...” • “I realized I’ve been having an expectation that...”

## **6. Check in - Thank them for listening and ask if they have anything to share:**

“How is all of that landing for you?”

or

“What’s present for you after hearing all of that?”

Or “does that make sense?”

If they choose to answer right then (some people might want to sit with things and revisit later on, which is 100% respectable)-- listen, like REALLY LISTEN to what they have to say. The same way you want them to listen to you. In fact, if they aren’t the best listener, the best thing you can do is demonstrate really present, active listening when it’s your turn. Do your best to hear what they are saying, keep your heart open, breathe, and not take anything personally.

## **7. Make your ask/present your solution.**

“I’d love to share what I’d like to experience instead hear what you’d like to experience instead, and come to an agreement that feels good to both of us, cool?”

Maybe this happens in the moment. Maybe it doesn’t and you need to schedule a time to follow up.

Verbally confirm any new agreements to be certain you’re both on the same page moving forward OR agree to another conversation to do that if they want some time and space to process and consider what you’ve discussed.



“To be clear, moving forward, we both agree that...(insert whatever you agree upon, edit if need be). Thank you so much for doing this with me, (insert something you genuinely appreciated about the experience or the way they showed up for it) I know it’s not easy and it really means a lot.”

Be sure to acknowledge and appreciate them for having the conversation with you.