

Crucial Conversations Tips:

1. **Get comfortable being uncomfortable**

Difficult conversations are a normal part of coaching, the more we have them the more confident we become in our ability to handle them effectively. Have them more often so they become a regular part of your coaching.

2. **Prepare participants and parents/carers**

Provide informal and formal feedback to participants on a regular and consistent basis; ensure they have a clear understanding of what is expected from them and what they can expect from you. Then it won't be such a shock when further conversations take place.

3. **Don't put difficult conversations off**

Putting off the inevitable will only make the situation worse and potentially damage your relationships with your participants, parents/carers, or other coaches.

4. **Manage your emotions**

If it's a spontaneous conversation we often feel unprepared for it. Don't take things personally, panic, or become defensive. If you need time to reflect and consider the points, ask for time to do this and ensure that you follow up.

5. **Do the groundwork**

If it's a planned conversation, plan for it. You plan sessions to ensure a successful outcome, the same should be done for conversations and meetings. Why not practice with a colleague first?

6. **Stay on track**

It's easy to get drawn into irrelevant issues or allow others to hijack the conversation. Make notes on the points you want to share and avoid being drawn into different points or issues.

7. **Be consistent**

Crucial conversations can be awkward and uncomfortable and can affect how you may normally communicate. Try to maintain your normal style of communication to avoid confusion and any future misunderstandings.

8. Show heart and empathise

Coaches inevitably need to have crucial conversations because they care; ensure that you show that through your communication. Crucial conversations are difficult for all involved particularly if the other party is receiving bad news. Acknowledge this and be empathetic.

9. Listen

During crucial conversations, it's important to really listen by demonstrating active and reflective listening. Acknowledging the other person's perspective on the issue will ensure that they feel heard and understood by you.

10. Reflect

It's important to reflect on crucial conversations that you have with participants, parents/carers, or other coaches in your team.

- Did the conversation go as planned?
- Did you achieve your initial outcome?
- Do you need to follow up the conversation?
- How did the conversation affect your relationships?
- Who do you need to inform about the conversation?
- What did you learn and what might you do differently next time?