

How to Lead Into a Dreaded Conversation

You know you've been meaning to talk to that staff person who hasn't been doing what you want. But you don't want to offend her, you don't want to make him feel bad, or is it you dread the "cringe moment"? That's just before you say something you know they aren't going to like. You need to get it over with. Say the worst thing first. Cringe fast and cringe early. It's a simple move that few of us make consistently, because it requires emotional courage. At least the first time. After you get it over with, people will be interested in hearing the rest. Or, they may surprise you with instant agreement and there may be little more to discuss. Here's what I've come to realize: I almost always overestimate how difficult it is for the other person to hear what I have to say. People are resilient. I'm usually more uncomfortable delivering a difficult message than the other person is receiving it. Next time you have a conversation you're dreading; lead with the part you're dreading. Get to the conclusion in the first sentence. The more you do it, the easier and more natural it becomes. Being direct and upfront does not mean being callous or unnecessarily harsh. In fact, it's the opposite; done with care, being direct is far more considerate.

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