

MANAGING STRESS DURING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

It's hard to keep calm and explain yourself when a conversation is challenging. Here are some tips to take personally when you find yourself in that position.



Plan Ahead

Think about what causes you discomfort during a conversation and have a plan for dealing with stress. Know your body's signs for when you start to feel "worked up". It will help you manage the stress before you reach your limit. Take note if your heart rate goes up, you feel warm, or uncomfortable in any way. Remember that this is your body's natural response to stress and you can work through it.



Slow down your breathing

Irregular breathing disrupts our thought process, making it harder to form ideas and share them, especially if we're out of breath! Slowing down your breathing helps you reconnect with your thoughts and can lower heart rate, making you feel less stressed overall.



Remember Intent Vs. Impact

No matter how we express ourselves, it will have an effect on those listening. If someone's words offend or hurt you, explain to them how their words impacted you and ask if that was their intention. Often times the speaker's desire is to be understood, but stress and other factors can lead to hurtful exchanges. It's important to keep in mind that words can hurt more than we intended and separate the intent from the impact it had on us.



Accept It

When faced with someone who disagrees with you, accept that your experiences and values have led you to different beliefs. Be confident that your opinion is valid, but be open to hearing where your scope of understanding might be limited. Accepting your differences and talking about them is the first step to finding common ground.