

HOW TO HAVE IMPOSSIBLE CONVERSATIONS

THE FUNDAMENTALS



BE A CONVERSATION PARTNER

- Have a goal for the conversation
- Assume best intentions in your conversation partner
- Use the conversation to invest in your relationship
- Start the conversation with a willingness to learn
- Listen more than you speak

ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

- Define terms and avoid using jargon
- Ask for examples and explanations
- "That's an interesting perspective, what led you to that conclusion?"
- Focus on contribution rather than blame
- "What factors have contributed to [X]?"



DEEPEN THE CONVERSATION

- Focus on ideas and beliefs rather than people
- Ask where you can find more information on a particular idea or which experts agree/disagree with certain ideas or schools of thought
- Follow Rapoport's Rule: Before a rebuttal, restate your conversation partner's position and list points of agreement

IMPROVE YOUR DIALOGUE: FOCUS THE CONVERSATION

- "I wonder if we can get around our disagreement by looking at this another way"
- "Ultimately our shared goal is But we don't see eye-to-eye on how we get there. Can we talk more directly about the ways we can achieve a balance?"
- "That's an interesting perspective. What leads you to conclude that?"
- "These issues are really frustrating, I know. They get to me too."
- "I'm skeptical" instead of "I disagree"

