



Managing Difficult Conversations

with Emotional Intelligence

3-hour Workshop Agenda

Part 1: The Inner Script

Why difficult conversations trigger us, and how to lead ourselves first

Participants explore what happens internally during conflict, why avoidance is so common, and how emotional intelligence helps leaders respond rather than react.

Key focus areas

- why difficult conversations feel difficult
- the cost of avoidance
- identifying personal triggers and conflict habits
- practical self-regulation tools for staying calm and grounded

Practical:

- Personal trigger reflection
 - The 6-Second Reset practice
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Part 2: The Strategic Script

How to speak with honesty, empathy and clarity

Participants learn a simple structure for opening and guiding a difficult conversation in a way

Key focus areas

- how to open a conversation without blame
- using the Third Story approach to create shared understanding
- empathy without over-accommodation
- practical phrases that lower heat and build trust

Practical:

- Paired practice
 - Reframing reactive language into constructive language
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Part 3: The Integration (The Third Voice)

Real-world practice and application. Holding the line while protecting the relationship

Participants apply the tools in realistic workplace scenarios and practise how to stay steady when the other person becomes emotional, resistant or defensive.

Key focus areas

- using the O.A.R. Method: Observe, Acknowledge, Redirect
- responding to difficult reactions with composure
- holding boundaries with respect
- closing the conversation with clarity and accountability

Practical:

- Guided role play,
- Peer feedback, and
- A personal action commitment for one real conversation in the next 48 hours

When difficult conversations are handled well, trust grows, clarity improves, and leadership credibility deepens. This workshop helps middle leaders do exactly that (with courage, emotional intelligence and practical skill).