

SIX SAFE SENTENCE-STARTERS FOR SENSITIVE CONVERSATIONS

Suggestions

Safe sentence-starters insure productive discussions.

Use all six to guide a full discussion of a topic.

The order suggested below works especially well.

Safe-starters can be used repeatedly in a conversation, as many times as you need.

Dialogue generally proceeds best in short chunks, that is, one point at a time, so use one starter and wait for the listener to digest and respond to that point before proceeding on to the next.

Sentence-Starters for Talking

1. **I feel/felt** ____ (one word)_____.

Variations: **I feel/felt** _____ **when you** _____.

Or

When you _____, **I feel/felt** _____.

2. **My concern is/was** _____.

3. **I would like to** _____.

Symmetry is vital in sensitive conversations. The fourth starter, a question, invites the listener to share his/her perspective.

4. **How/What** do you feel/think about that idea?

Sentence-Starters for Listening

The following response sequence enables conversations to flow smoothly. The sequence begins with listening to learn, not to dismiss or negate.

5. **Yes. I agree that** _____ (*explain what makes sense about what you heard by elaborating on what you took in*) _____.

Starting with YES establishes that you are collaborative--on the same side, against the problem. Tell the speaker what you agree with, giving specifics about what you are doing with the new data. Digesting aloud conveys what you took in so the speaker feels heard.

6. **And at the same time** _____.

Rather than linking with the negating (subtracting, dismissing, deleting) word BUT, launch your differing perspective with AND or AND AT THE SAME TIME. Both viewpoints then will remain on the data table keeping the dialogue collaborative, and co-creating new understandings.

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