



# Top 10 tips for challenging conversations in a virtual setting



1.

**Choose the right platform** for holding the discussion and consider what would make them most comfortable



2.

**Pick the right time** – if you suspect that the conversation will be upsetting, it might be best to hold it at the end of the day so they don't need to work afterwards. Look at their calendar in advance – if they have a day full of intensive meetings, they may not have the energy for a difficult conversation



3.

**Minimise disruption** – conduct the conversation in a quiet place and at a time when you are unlikely to be interrupted. It can also be helpful to use the mute button when you are not speaking, particularly if there are other people on the call (eg. another manager or HR representative)



4.

**Get the right set-up** - ensure that your camera is angled correctly with sufficient lighting so that they can clearly see your facial expressions and make eye contact



5.

**Consider 'colour triggers'** in your background and clothing – select calm, neutral colours such as blue and green



6.

**Be mindful of meeting length** – energy levels and concentration can be difficult to maintain in a long meeting. Be prepared and consider in advance what you want to say



7.

**Turn off self-view** – an estimated 30% of your subconscious is being used to look at yourself when video conferencing. Turning off self-view will give you back some headspace so that you can connect better and with more energy



8.

**Allow them room to speak** – 'dead air' can be useful in a virtual setting as it can slow things down and provide punctuation and impact. Giving them space can also help them to get to the underlying issues and facilitate a more meaningful conversation



9.

**Use gestures** to signal agreement and maintain connection, eg. nod along to demonstrate encouragement and keep them talking. Using gestures rather than words whilst someone is talking is best practice in the virtual space to avoid interrupting the audio and disrupting the flow of the conversation



10.

**Take breaks** - if they are upset, allow them to step away, get a glass of water and reset. Similarly, if the meeting is taking place early in the day, allow some time for them to take a break afterwards before continuing with work