CONCEPT

Difficult Conversations at Work: Handling High-Stakes Dialogue

27 June – 1 July 2027
Dammam - Eastern Province five-star



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Ref: 710_19060 **Date:** 27 June – 1 July 2027 **Location:** Dammam - Eastern Province five-star **Fees:** 19500 SAR

Introduction:

Difficult conversations at work are often postponed until a performance gap, a quarrel between colleagues or unwelcome news has grown into lost trust, resignations or formal complaints. When they do happen, managers either soften the message until it is missed or deliver it so bluntly that the other person shuts down. This Core Concept course gives managers, team leaders and HR business partners a rehearsed method for high-stakes conversations: preparing the facts, opening safely, stating the hard message, handling emotional reactions and agreeing next steps. Each participant builds a Personal Conversation Playbook from recorded role-plays.

Course Objectives:

- Diagnose what makes a workplace conversation high-stakes and recognise personal avoidance and escalation habits
- Prepare each difficult conversation by separating observable facts from interpretations and defining the desired outcome for both parties
- Open conversations neutrally and rebuild safety when the other person becomes guarded, silent or hostile
- State unwelcome messages clearly and respectfully while inquiring genuinely into the other person's view
- Handle anger, defensiveness and withdrawal in performance, behaviour, bad-news and peer-conflict conversations, in person and remotely
- Close each conversation with agreed actions and a follow-up record, captured in a Personal Conversation Playbook

Target Audience:

- Managers who address underperformance, conduct concerns and missed agreements with direct reports
- Team leaders who must resolve friction between team members and restore working relationships
- HR business partners who advise line managers on sensitive employee conversations and sit in on them
- Project and functional leads who deliver unwelcome decisions to stakeholders without formal authority
- Section heads who announce restructuring, rejected requests or changes affecting their people

Course Outline:

Day 1: Anatomy of High-Stakes Conversations and Personal Baseline

- High-Stakes Conversation Markers: Opposing Views, Strong Emotions and Consequential Outcomes
- Avoidance, Silence and Escalation Patterns Inventory
- Cost-of-Avoidance Estimate for Unaddressed Workplace Issues
- Personal Conflict Response Self-Audit and Emotional Trigger Log
- Conversation Stakes Map: Relationship, Outcome and Reputation at Risk

Day 2: Dialogue Frameworks and Preparation Methods

- Three Conversations Framework: What Happened, Feelings and Identity
- Observable Facts Versus Interpretive Stories Worksheet
- Intent Versus Impact Analysis and Contribution Mapping
- Desired Outcome Statement for Self, Other Person and Relationship
- Conversation Preparation Canvas and Opening Line Drafting

Day 3: Opening Safely, Stating the Hard Message and Exploring the Other View

- Neutral Third-Story Opening and Shared Purpose Statement
- Safety Restoration Moves: Apology, Contrasting Statement and Mutual Purpose Check
- Hard-Message Delivery Sequence: Headline First, Evidence, Then Pause
- Inquiry Toolkit: Mirroring, Paraphrasing, Priming and Tentative Language
- Self-Regulation Under Pressure: Pause, Reappraisal and Breathing Reset

Day 4: Resistant Reactions and Specific Conversation Types

- Response Playbook for Defensiveness, Anger, Tears and Withdrawal
- Underperformance and Behaviour Conversation Structure with Evidence Log
- Bad-News Delivery: Role Changes, Rejected Proposals and Restructuring Announcements
- Facilitated Three-Way Conversation Between Colleagues in Dispute
- Remote Difficult Conversations: Video, Phone and Written Follow-Up Risks

Day 5: Recorded Role-Plays and Personal Conversation Playbook

- Recorded Role-Play: Performance Shortfall Conversation with Observer Scoring
- Recorded Role-Play: Delivering Unwelcome News to a Team Member
- Recorded Role-Play: Mediating a Disagreement Between Two Peers
- Action Agreement Wording, Check-In Schedule and Follow-Up Record
- Video Replay Review and Personal Conversation Playbook Assembly

Skills You Will Gain:

- Conversation Stakes Analysis
- Fact and Story Separation
- Psychological Safety Restoration
- Hard-Message Framing
- Exploratory Questioning Under Pressure
- Emotional Self-Regulation
- Hostile Reaction De-Escalation
- Action Agreement and Follow-Through

Why Attend This Course:

- Leave with a Personal Conversation Playbook of prepared openings, responses to hostile reactions and follow-up routines
- Watch video replays of your own role-plays to see how tone, pace and body language land with the other person
- Rehearse the specific conversation you have been postponing, with peers playing the other party realistically
- Compare approaches with managers and HR practitioners from other sectors facing similar people situations

Conclusion:

A difficult conversation goes well when the facts are prepared, the other person feels safe enough to speak and both sides leave with the same agreed actions. The week moves from recognising what raises the stakes, through the Three Conversations framework and preparation methods, to opening, stating and inquiring, then to hostile reactions, performance talks, bad news, peer disputes and remote settings. Recorded role-plays on the final day turn each method into practised behaviour and a Personal Conversation Playbook ready for the next real conversation.