

CAREER KIT

Say What You Mean

Scripts, strategies, and boundaries for when the conversation matters most





Stop Staying Silent When It Matters Most

Have you ever replayed a conversation in your head, wishing you'd spoken up? Bit your tongue to "keep the peace" — only to walk away frustrated, unheard, or carrying resentment? Do you avoid hard conversations because you're afraid of being too much, too harsh, or ruining the relationship?

You're not alone. Most people were taught to be agreeable, not honest. But unspoken tension doesn't disappear — it festers. And over time, it costs trust, clarity, and respect.

The truth?

You can be clear and kind.

Direct without being cruel.

Firm without being the villain.

This guide gives you the words. Inside, you'll find scripts for the conversations you've been avoiding, boundary language that's calm and clear, a simple 7-part framework for when emotions run high, and follow-up phrases to make sure nothing is left assumed or unsaid. It's how you start speaking with clarity and confidence.

7 PART CONFLICT FRAMEWORK

1

INTENT

Set psychological safety and establish a collaborative tone before tackling the issue.

2

FACTS + IMPACT

Ground the conversation in objective reality to avoid blame and defensiveness.

3

CURIOUS PROBE

Surface root causes and unseen barriers by inviting the other person's perspective.

4

REFLECT + VALIDATE

Show you're listening and build trust before moving toward solutions.

5

OPTIONING

Shift from problem mode to solution mode through shared problem-solving.

6

DECISION + NEXT STEPS

Turn the conversation into action by agreeing on clear commitments and ownership.

7

CLOSE

Strengthen the relationship and reinforce forward momentum.

CONVERSATION CHEAT SHEET

Conflict is inevitable—being unprepared isn't. These scripts help you address it with clarity, confidence, and respect.

MANAGING UP — PUSHING BACK ON AN UNREALISTIC DEADLINE

Goal: Protect relationship and results while offering solutions

You can say:

"Thanks for meeting. I want to make sure we deliver quality work and protect trust with the team, so I wanted to talk through the deadline you mentioned."

"Right now, with the current scope and team capacity, we're likely to miss it — and that could create rework or errors."

"From your perspective, what's most important — the timeline, the quality, or the full scope?"

"Here are two ways we could go:

- We deliver the critical pieces by the date you gave and roll out the rest after, OR
- We keep the full scope but extend the timeline or get extra support."

"What feels like the best path forward to you?"

PEER-TO-PEER — COLLEAGUE NOT PULLING THEIR WEIGHT

Goal: Preserve partnership, invite honesty, solve together

You can say:

"Hey, can I run something by you? I really value working with you, and I want us to stay on the same page."

"I've noticed a few project tasks have slipped or landed last minute, and it's put extra pressure on the team. I know there's probably more to the story, so I wanted to check in rather than make assumptions."

"What's making this hard right now?"

"Would it help if we rebalanced ownership, adjusted timelines, or flagged capacity issues earlier?"

"I'm not trying to push work your way — I just want us to win together. What do you need from me?"

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DIRECT REPORT — DISENGAGED OR SILENT IN MEETINGS

Care + Clarity (support without lowering standards)

You can say:

"I wanted to check in because your voice matters on this team, and lately I've noticed you've been quieter and a little less present."

"That's totally human — but when it happens, we miss out on your insights and it slows decisions down."

"How have things felt for you lately?"

"Thank you for being honest — it sounds like you're stretched and unsure where to start."

"Here's what we could do:

- We drop or delay some lower-priority tasks, OR
- We keep everything, but I help clear roadblocks and we set shorter check-ins."

"Which one would make things feel more manageable?"

RESETTING EXPECTATIONS AFTER CONFLICT OR TENSION

Goal: Rebuild clarity and trust to keep relationship intact

You can say:

"Thanks for sticking with the conversation earlier. I know it was uncomfortable, but I'd rather we name it than let it simmer."

"Just to make sure we're aligned: here's what we agreed — You'll handle X by Thursday, I'll take Y and update the stakeholders."

"Does that sound right? Anything I missed?"

"I appreciate your honesty in all of this. Let's stay in touch as we go — I'm committed to making this work well for both of us."

BOUNDARY LANGUAGE THAT'S CLEAR — NOT COMBATIVE

When conversations get tense, the goal isn't to win or withdraw — it's to stay grounded, clear, and respectful. Use this page to find language that protects your boundaries without escalating the situation, shutting down the other person, or abandoning what matters to you.



WHEN SOMEONE KEEPS ADDING WORK OR CHANGING SCOPE

- “I want to support this, but with our current capacity, taking this on means something else needs to pause. Which priority should shift?”
- “I’m willing to help — and I want to be realistic about timelines so we don’t compromise quality.”
- “That’s outside the scope of what we agreed to. Are you open to revisiting the expectations together?”



WHEN A CONVERSATION BECOMES UNPRODUCTIVE OR HEATED

- “I want this to be a constructive conversation — can we pause and pick this back up when we’re both able to engage in that way?”
- “I hear your frustration. I’d like to focus on solutions rather than blame — can we shift toward that?”
- “This matters to me, and I want to give it the attention it deserves. Can we take a short break and come back to it?”



WHEN SOMEONE PUSHES PAST YOUR LIMITS (TIME, EMOTIONAL, WORKLOAD)

- “I want to give this the focus it deserves, and I don’t have the space to do that right now. Can we schedule a time?”
- “I’m at capacity at the moment. I can get to this by ____, or if it’s more urgent, we can reassign or reprioritize.”
- “Happy to talk more, but I’ll need to end in 10 minutes — should we dive into next steps?”



WHEN YOU DISAGREE AND WANT TO STAY COLLABORATIVE

- “I see it differently. Can I share my perspective?”
- “I don’t agree, but I want to understand what’s most important to you in this.”
- “We may not fully align, but I’m sure we can land on something that works for both of us.”