# Program Description

**Coaching in Difficult Conversations** is a five phase development program for increasing confidence in holding ‘difficult’ workplace conversations. The program covers conversations such as with:

- staff members (i.e. performance issues),
- suppliers (i.e. quality & implementation management),
- clients (i.e. expectations).

The multi-faceted program includes:

1. **Phase 1: PLANNING**
   
   Participants use a template to identify and clarify their designated conversation prior to the workshop. This pre-program information is confidential and shared only with the facilitator. The objective is to get participants thinking about the specific types of difficult conversations they are required to undertake and identifies areas of concern or uncertainty. Any concerns can then be brought up for discussion during the learning program. Time to complete: 60-90 minutes

2. **Phase 2: LEARNING**
   
   One day workshop covers; the difficult conversation cycle, emotional intelligence, overcoming reluctance, applying personal values, strategies, tools and techniques for holding a difficult conversation.
   
   Although it is recognised that participants are likely short for time, the reason for one day duration is to incorporate emotional intelligence factors. These can only be effectively addressed once the group has had time to develop a level of trust in each other and the facilitator. If a program is too short duration then it tends to become content heavy and addressing difficult situations requires a degree of emotional robustness and understanding. The longer timeframe allows for this.

3. **Phase 3: COACHING**
   
   A one hour confidential one-to-one coaching sessions with each participant. This provides the opportunity to discuss the proposed conversation, identify any barriers and explore options.

4. **Phase 4: APPLYING**
   
   A two week break during which participants hold their difficult conversation(s).

5. **Phase 5: REFLECTING (Two Parts)**
   
   1. Learning Journal – Participants use a template to review and reflect upon their experience. This information is confidential and not shared with anyone. Estimated time to complete: 60 minutes
   2. Group Debrief
      
      The 2 hour debrief provides participants with the opportunity to informally review their personal reflection plus benefit from hearing each other’s experiences. Too often participants
assume that they are the only ones struggling and gain from hearing others too had difficulties or reservations, or felt they could have done better. This enables participants to arrive at a more balanced view of their performance.

Factors taken into consideration for program design:
- Effectively managing the targeted discussions requires both emotional intelligence as well as communication skills.
- Conflict-adversity is common with people being reluctant to address situations where they are likely to be exposed to conflict.
- Understanding and being able to manage emotions both our own and other parties is essential since as levels of emotions go up, the capacity to think goes down.
- Given the emotional nature of conflict, it can be difficult for individuals to effectively reflect and debrief events on their own.
- Reflection capability is a sophisticated skill and most individuals benefit from receiving support during the process.

Outcomes
Program outcomes include:
1. Increased confidence in holding difficult conversations
2. Expansion of skill set and personal resilience in matters when addressing conflict
3. Reduction in resistance to addressing conflict.

Timeframes
Program typically concludes within 5 weeks from commencement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Est time Required</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60-90 minutes - Complete planning template</td>
<td>Independent work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>One day workshop</td>
<td>All participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Coaching</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45 minute coaching session</td>
<td>One per participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Applying</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Variable - independently scheduled difficult conversations</td>
<td>Independent work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reflecting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>120 minute – Group debrief</td>
<td>All participants</td>
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</tbody>
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Presenter
The presenter, Tracey McGrath is a registered psychologist and author of the program.

Resources
Participants all receive a wallet-sized laminated prompt card detailing key strategies, a comprehensive manual including templates and a reminder magnet.

Group Size
Up to 15 participants

Fee
$6,900 + GST

Contact
Tracey McGrath International Pty Ltd
Office: +61 (0) 8 9457 2266
Fax: +61 (0) 8 9457 4466
Email: Admin@traceymcgrath.com.au or tracey@traceymcgrath.com.au
Website: www.traceymcgrath.com.au
Testimonial

Thank you for delivering the “How to Handle Difficult Conversations” program. You not only provided us with practical knowledge and techniques on tackling those conversations head on in the future but you also provided a safe, trusting environment where staff were able to explore their feelings and behaviours without judgement.

Some of the feedback comments from staff who attended were:

- Tracey showed us how to communicate with people who have different personalities, communication skills, background, etc. Tracey also taught us that when it doesn’t feel right, it doesn’t mean it’s wrong. I’m quite a sensitive person and often limit myself to do something just because it doesn’t feel right. To handle a difficult conversation, we should also say what we think is right and it’s ok to sometimes say no;
- I think it was great. It helped me to plan what or which way I should approach the conversation to resolve it asap;
- The course taught me the reasons behind having difficult conversations – some of them might be fear of bad outcome or unhappy emotions due to past experience. The goal is to think positive or at least be neutral when facing another party in a “difficult” or important conversation; and
- Tracey has taught me so much in the 3 sessions we had with her. I now know not to let something build within and if I have something to say it’s better to first write it down and then speak with the person rather than say nothing.

Kirsten Morgan
Government Office Accommodation Co-ordinator
Department of Finance – Building Management and Works
PLANNING

1 x 1.5 hr Scenario development
Identify a conversation you plan to have
Who with?
Why?
What will success look like?
Why are you reluctant?
What are the consequences of doing nothing?

INDIVIDUAL

LEARNING

1 x 7.5 hr workshop
Awareness
Content
Strategies
Tools
Techniques

INDIVIDUAL & GROUP

COACHING

1 x 1 hr coaching session
Discuss:
Barriers to success
Concerns and apprehensions?
How you intend to go about it?
Where?
When?

INDIVIDUAL

APPLYING

1 x 1 hr learning journal entry
1 x 2 hr group debrief

INDIVIDUAL

REFLECTING

How well did it go?
What did I learn?
What could I do differently in the future?

INDIVIDUAL