

BETTER CONVERSATIONS
SUPPORT SERIES

ME-06

Managing Conflict Conversations

A practical workbook to help people
prepare, engage and follow through.

PREPARING PEOPLE FOR
IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS



Peake Performance | Practical Leadership. Real Development. Lasting Impact.

OVERVIEW

Conflict is a natural part of working with people.

Different priorities, expectations and perspectives can create misunderstandings, tension and disagreement.

When addressed early, conflict can improve understanding, strengthen working relationships and support better performance. When ignored, it can damage trust, wellbeing, engagement and productivity.

Effective managers do not focus solely on avoiding conflict. They focus on addressing issues early, creating clarity and supporting constructive resolution before positions become entrenched.

This workbook provides practical tools, frameworks and reflection activities to help managers and employees prepare for conflict conversations, choose the most appropriate route and support positive outcomes through effective follow-through.

Important conversations rarely succeed because of one discussion alone. Real progress is usually built through a series of conversations, actions, check-ins and follow-through over time. This workbook is designed to support that ongoing process, helping managers and employees build clarity, momentum and accountability over the weeks and months that follow.

The objective is simple:

Create better conversations that lead to better outcomes.

WATCH THE INTRODUCTION VIDEO

Managing Conflict Conversations - *Better Conversations Support Series*

[YouTube link..](#)

START HERE

Conflict needs a route, not a reaction

This workbook helps managers and employees create clarity before issues escalate.

THE PRINCIPLE

The objective is not to avoid conflict. The objective is to address it early, support constructive dialogue and prevent unnecessary escalation.

Why early conversations matter

Most workplace conflict begins with small, unresolved moments: misunderstandings, unmet expectations, competing priorities, perceived unfairness or frustrations that were never properly explored.

CLARITY Name the issue before assumptions take over.	SAFETY Choose a route that protects people and the organisation.
OWNERSHIP Focus on what each person can do next.	FOLLOW-THROUGH Check progress after the conversation.

Before you begin

Use the safety check before starting an informal conversation.

- ☐ Can everyone participate voluntarily and without fear of retaliation?
- ☐ Am I sufficiently neutral, or should somebody else support the conversation?
- ☐ Could this involve bullying, harassment, discrimination, misconduct or a psychological or physical safety risk?
- ☐ Do I need confidential advice from HR before taking the next step?

IF YOU ARE UNSURE

Pause. Seek advice. Choose the most appropriate route.

6 COMMON CAUSES OF WORKPLACE CONFLICT

Conflict is a normal part of working with people. Understanding the common causes helps us address issues early and constructively.

01



COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWNS

Misunderstandings, assumptions and lack of open communication can lead to frustration, mistrust and conflict.

02



UNCLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

When expectations, accountabilities or decision-making authority are unclear, it can cause confusion, duplication or tension.

03



DIFFERENT WORKING STYLES

People have different preferences, approaches and ways of working. These differences can create friction when not understood or respected.

04



PERCEIVED UNFAIRNESS

Feelings that decisions, treatment or opportunities are unfair or inconsistent can lead to resentment and conflict.

05



RESOURCE OR WORKLOAD PRESSURES

High demands, tight deadlines or limited resources can create stress, increase competition and contribute to conflict.

06



PERSONALITY CLASHES

Differences in personality, values or attitudes can lead to ongoing tension, especially under pressure or uncertainty.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Most conflict doesn't start with big issues. It starts small. Recognising the root causes early helps us have better conversations and build stronger working relationships.

Better conversations. Stronger relationships. Better outcomes.

CHOOSE THE ROUTE

Not every difficulty should begin with an informal conversation.

1 EARLY CONVERSATION

Use when the issue is recent or limited; people can participate safely; the aim is clarity, repair or changed behaviour; there is no formal complaint or serious conduct concern.

2 FACILITATED / MEDIATED

Consider when direct conversation has stalled; trust or communication has broken down; both people are willing to participate; a neutral third party could help.

3 HR / FORMAL PROCESS

Pause and seek advice when bullying, harassment, discrimination, misconduct, retaliation or a safety risk may be present; or when a formal complaint has been made.

Conflict Readiness & Resolution Assessment

Better conversations begin before the conversation. The assessment helps people prepare constructively before positions become entrenched.



[Link HERE](#)

UNDERSTAND

What is really happening?

EXPLORE IMPACT

Who and what is affected?

CLARIFY

What outcome would help?

ASSESS READINESS

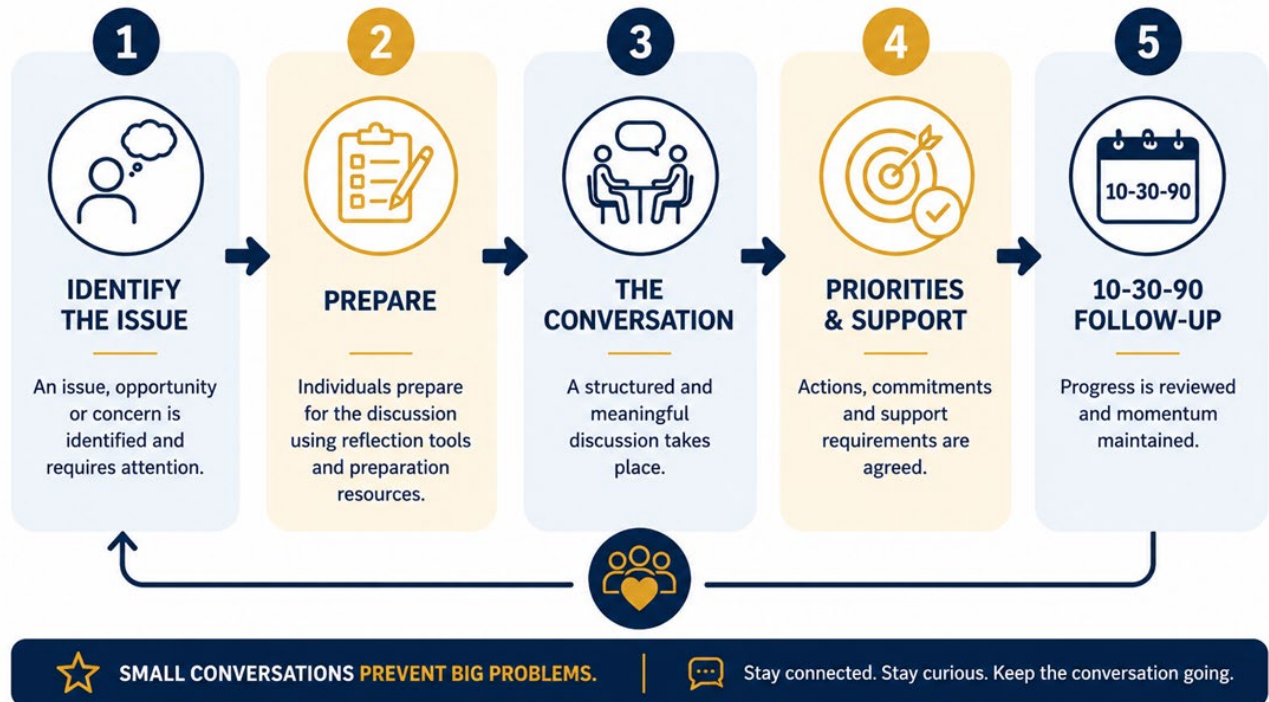
Is this the right route and moment?

USE THE ASSESSMENT

Complete the Conflict Readiness & Resolution Assessment before an important conversation. It is designed to support reflection, not prepare arguments.

THE CONVERSATION JOURNEY

A simple journey. Better preparation. Better conversations. Better outcomes.



PAUSE and REFLECT

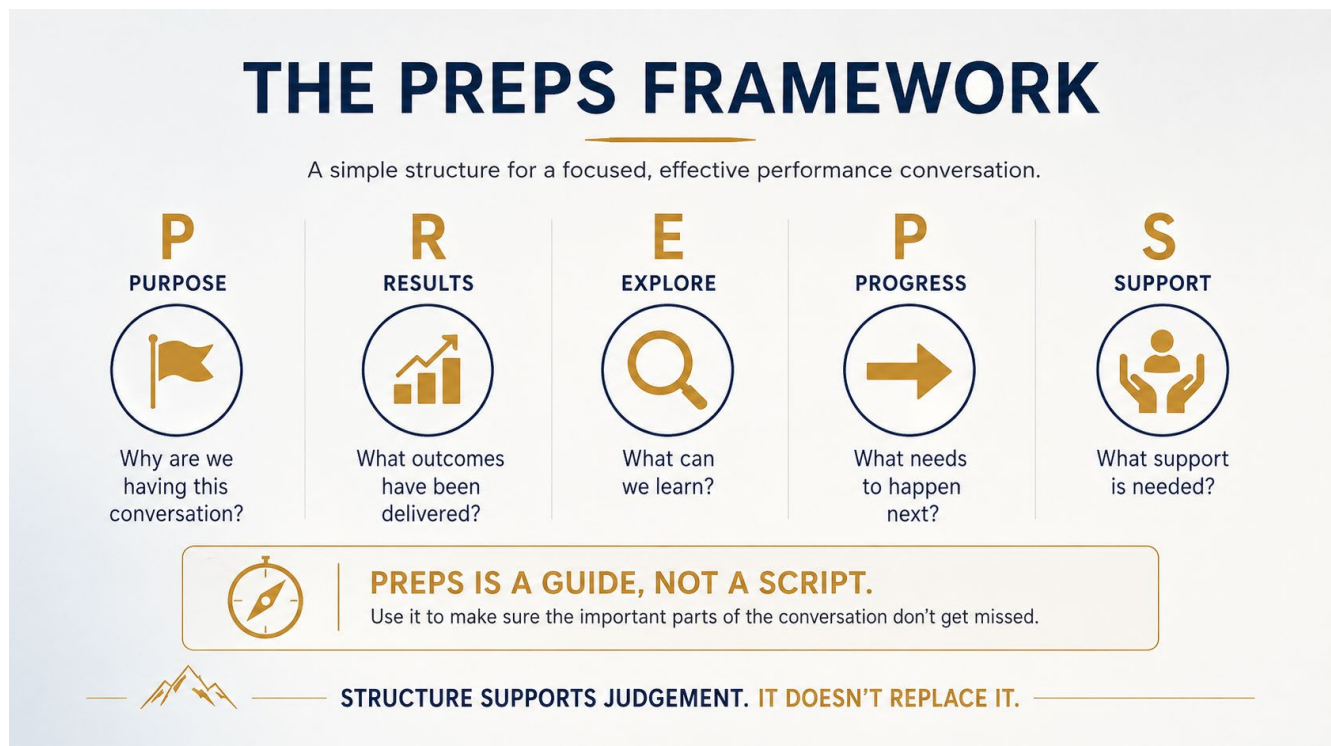
What is the most important issue that needs attention?

What preparation would help me most?

THE PREPS FRAMEWORK

A structure for focused, respectful and effective conversations.

Use PREPS to create clarity, focus and constructive momentum. You do not need perfect words. You do need a clear purpose, curiosity and a willingness to follow through.



A MANAGER REMINDER

Seek understanding before judgement. Listen more than you talk. Focus on future behaviours rather than past blame.

Purpose

Why are we having this conversation?

SUGGESTED OPENING

“The purpose of today’s discussion is to better understand the issues that have emerged, explore their impact and identify a constructive way forward.”

- What issue needs attention?
- Why is this conversation important now?
- What would a successful outcome look like?
- What are we hoping to achieve?

Reality

What has happened?

MANAGER PROMPT

Seek understanding before judgement.

- What facts are known?
- What assumptions might exist?
- What impact has the situation had?
- What attempts have already been made to resolve the issue?

FACTS What can be observed or evidenced?	ASSUMPTIONS What are we inferring or filling in?
FEELINGS What emotional impact is present?	INTERPRETATIONS What meaning have we attached?

Explore

What can we learn?

- What is at the core of this disagreement?
- When did the issue first emerge?
- What needs or expectations have not been met?
- What perspective might the other person be bringing?
- What is preventing resolution right now?



Progress

How do we move forward?

- What needs to change?
- What would improvement look like?
- What commitments can each person make?
- What actions are specific and realistic?

Support

What support is needed?

- What support would help?
- What role should the manager play?
- Are further interventions or supports required?
- What follow-up arrangements should be agreed?

PAUSE and REFLECT

Which part of PREPS am I likely to find most challenging?

Why?

What could I do differently?

CONFLICT ESCALATION CURVE

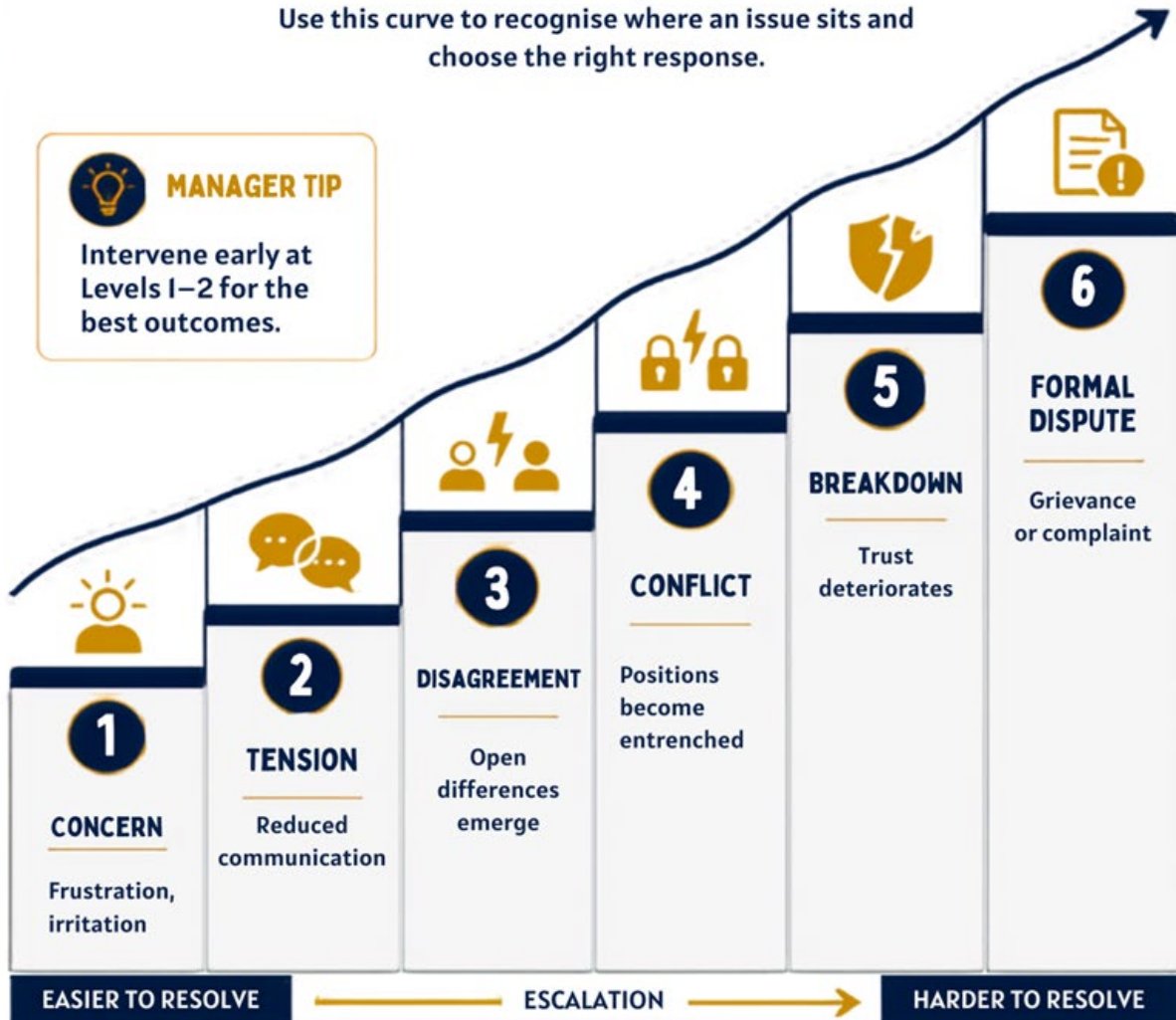
ADDRESS EARLY. RESOLVE QUICKLY. PRESERVE RELATIONSHIPS.

Conflict doesn't appear overnight. It escalates.
The earlier an issue is addressed, the easier it is to resolve.
Use this curve to recognise where an issue sits and
choose the right response.



MANAGER TIP

Intervene early at
Levels 1–2 for the
best outcomes.



KEY MANAGER MESSAGE

The earlier an issue is addressed, the easier it is to resolve.
Most workplace conflicts become difficult
because they are ignored for too long.

CONVERSATION PLANNER

Pause. Reflect. Prepare.

BEFORE YOU MEET

The aim is not to prepare arguments. The aim is to arrive prepared for a constructive conversation.

1. What issue requires attention, and why is this conversation necessary now?

2. What facts are known? What assumptions need to be tested?

3. What impact has the situation had on people, work or the relationship?

4. What would a constructive outcome look like?

5. What support or follow-up may be needed?

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Preparing for a better conversation

A NOTE FOR EMPLOYEES

You do not need perfect answers. The aim is simply to arrive prepared for a better conversation.

Reflect: What has happened from my perspective? What would I like the other person to understand?

Impact: How has the situation affected me and my work?

Understanding: What assumptions might I be making? What role, if any, have I played?

Looking forward: What outcome would I like? What am I willing to do differently?

Support: What support would help improve the situation?

Need some time to think? You can also use the **Individual Reflection App**. [Click HERE](#)

PAUSE and REFLECT

What do I most need the other person to understand?

What am I willing to do differently?

A simple structure for the conversation itself.

OPENING

State the purpose: understand the issue and agree a constructive way forward.

GROUND RULES

Respect. Listen to understand. One person speaks at a time. Focus on behaviours, solutions and the future.

DISCUSSION

What is important to understand? How has this affected the relationship? What needs to change?

AGREEMENT

Record actions, commitments and a review date.

Key issues discussed

Agreed actions and individual commitments

Review date

PAUSE and REFLECT

What commitments have been agreed?

What could prevent progress?

What support will be needed?

COMMON CONVERSATION TRAPS

SHIFT FROM REACTION TO RESOLUTION.

The quality of a conversation often depends on what happens in the first few minutes.
Notice the trap. Choose a better response.

CONVERSATION TRAP		BETTER APPROACH
1 ASSUMING INTENTION <i>"I know why they did that."</i>	SHIFT YOUR RESPONSE	 EXPLORE IMPACT & UNDERSTANDING <i>"Help me understand what happened."</i>
2 INTERRUPTING <i>"I need to make my point."</i>		 LISTEN FULLY BEFORE RESPONDING <i>"Tell me more..."</i>
3 LOOKING FOR BLAME <i>"Who's responsible?"</i>		 FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS <i>"What would improve things?"</i>
4 DELAYING TOO LONG <i>"Maybe it will sort itself out."</i>		 ADDRESS ISSUES EARLY <i>"Let's discuss it before it grows."</i>
5 MAKING IT PERSONAL <i>"That's just what they're like."</i>		 FOCUS ON BEHAVIOUR & IMPACT <i>"What happened and what was the effect?"</i>



KEY MANAGER MESSAGE

Most workplace conflict escalates when people make assumptions, react before listening, focus on blame or avoid issues for too long.

Great conversations replace judgement with curiosity and reaction with reflection.

Better conversations. | Stronger relationships. | Better outcomes.

PEAKE PERFORMANCE

WHEN EMOTIONS SHOW UP

Managers often struggle when a conversation becomes difficult.

IF SOMEONE BECOMES DEFENSIVE

Stay curious. Avoid arguing. Return to facts and impact.

IF EMOTIONS ESCALATE

Pause. Acknowledge emotions. Slow the conversation.

IF BLAME EMERGES

Redirect towards behaviours and future solutions.

IF AGREEMENT IS NOT REACHED

Summarise differences. Clarify next steps. Consider mediation or HR support.

REMEMBER

Your role is not to force agreement. Your role is to support a fair, safe and constructive process.

Closing the conversation

- ☐ Key issues discussed
- ☐ Areas of agreement
- ☐ Actions agreed
- ☐ Individual commitments
- ☐ Review date

FOLLOW-THROUGH

The 10 • 30 • 90 Habit

A conversation creates awareness.

Follow-through helps turn awareness into sustained change.



MAKE IT ORDINARY

A short call, coffee chat, walk-around conversation or Teams check-in is often enough.

When that's done you can send the **Reflections and Next Steps** automated note as an immediate follow up to your conversation: [Link HERE](#)

What matters is that the commitments are not forgotten.

My 10-day follow-up date

My 30-day follow-up date

My 90-day follow-up date

MANAGER CHECKLIST

A quick final check before, during and after.

PAUSE and REFLECT

Am I clear on the purpose? Have I separated all the facts from assumptions? Am I ready to follow through?

Before

- ☐ Be clear on purpose and desired outcome.
- ☐ Review facts and assumptions.
- ☐ Check your neutrality and emotional readiness.
- ☐ Confirm this is the right route.

During

- ☐ Set a respectful tone.
- ☐ Listen without interrupting.
- ☐ Focus on behaviours and impact.
- ☐ Agree specific actions.

Close

- ☐ Summarise issues, agreements, actions and commitments.
- ☐ Set a review date.

After

- ☐ Complete 10, 30 and 90-day follow-ups.
- ☐ Escalate appropriately if the issue worsens or a safety, policy or conduct concern appears.

ESCALATION CHECK

Pause and seek advice where there is a formal complaint, repeated or worsening conflict, bullying, harassment, discrimination, misconduct, retaliation or a psychological safety risk.

BETTER CONVERSATIONS

Tools for the moments that matter.

This workbook forms part of the Peake Performance Better Conversations Support Series, designed to build consistent leadership capability across key people moments.

ME-01

Mid-Year Review Conversations

ME-02

Setting Expectations Conversations

ME-03

Giving Feedback Conversations

ME-04

Managing Underperformance Conversations

ME-05

Coaching for Growth Conversations

ME-06

Managing Conflict Conversations

ME-07

Career Development Conversations

ME-08

Managing Change Conversations

ME-09

Wellbeing Conversations

ABOUT PEAKE PERFORMANCE

Peake Performance supports organisations, leaders and managers through coaching, leadership development and practical people development solutions. Our focus is helping people build the confidence, capability and habits required to have better conversations and achieve better outcomes.

PeakePerformance.ie