

Preparing and having a 'Cuppa Conversation'

00:00 – Preparing and having 'Cuppa Conversations' is an important part of our approach to healthier working relationships.

00:08 – It's really normal for us to have tensions with other people. We all have different perspectives and experiences which can lead us to see the world and issues differently. None of us are the same and in that uniqueness comes great possibilities, but also tensions.

00:24 – Disagreeing is really normal, but doing this badly harms patients. We also have to recognise none of us are always at our best. We make mistakes. We must deal with disagreements and not let them fester. If we let them fester, patients suffer and importantly as well, we suffer.

00:43 – Disagreeing is normal, but we can always choose how we disagree.

00:49 - A cuppa conversation is our prompt and invitation and urge for each of us to take ownership of other relationships we have with each other. Cuppa conversations are so powerful. Why cuppas? Well, I defy you to drink a hot drink quickly, so by just spending time with each other with a hot drink, it forces you to pay attention to each other. It's been a part of history for many, many years.

01:15 – So might how we prepare ourselves for what may be a difficult conversation? Well firstly, we need to think of the other person's behaviour on ourselves. Knowing this helps us to be really clear about what we want to change and what we expect from another person.

Secondly, it is so important to get to know the other person, what do we know about them, what might be going on for them, what might be the situation that has caused this? If we can build some empathy, we have so much better chance of finding some sort of middle ground and resolution with each other.

And thirdly, remind ourselves again what's the impact of the behaviour on us. This cannot be overstated as to how important it is.

02:00 – So setting up the cuppa conversation and approaching the other conversation is a really important part and probably the hardest part. It is obviously very difficult just to ask someone to say "I'd like to have a chat with you". So it's really important just to just remind yourself what it is you want to discuss and why. This normally helps you to be really clear and feel less anxious about the very initial conversation. Approaching the person with the right mindset is vital, so finding a time where you both feel strong and they are least likely to be defensive towards you is really important, so come in with a mindset of enquiry and 'how might we do things better', and be really careful of our language so perhaps they are not loaded and it doesn't cause problems for the other person for them to go into defensive mode. There is no perfect way, but it's often helpful to start with "It would be really helpful if we could talk through a couple of things" or "I'd be really grateful if we could just reflect together on something please".

Then actually setting up and agreeing the place and time as to where you are going to have the conversation becomes really important. So generally, we know that being away from your normal place of work and away from other people is vital if you are going to have a really good chance to listen to each other, so you might find it helpful to setup a conversation or chat away from the workplace in a different place, maybe going out for a walk together. A walk is a great way of doing this because not only do you both feel much better, getting a bit of fresh air, but also the issue is out in front of you, rather than between you so you can walk side by side as you look at the issue together.

The other really important part is the hot drink and hence the cuppa conversation, because it forces you to spend time with each other. If anyone disagrees, just think, how quickly can you drink a really, properly hot drink? So that time gives you a chance to just pause and reflect together. And then you can perhaps agree together what time or what situation is most likely to get the situation going at it's best. It is often a helpful thing to think of a time when you and the other person are going to be as positive and well as you possibly can be. At the very least it's generally not worth starting to raise something with someone when either or both of you are not feeling up to it, it's just not going to work, so trying to find that mutually convenient time is obviously really important.

04:22 - Then we take the plunge. We get stuck in.

04:25 – During the conversation, to start with, digest, just connect. We are just people. Find something about each other. Talk about the things you do know about each other and just connect as human beings. Notice the reactions from the other person, that is so important and keep checking how the other person is. This is where the success and failure of a difficult conversation can happen.

Then, when we are ready, we start by sharing what is the issue for us and the absolute invitation is “when you did that, it made me feel this way”. It is not a criticism of the person, it is not a criticism of their behaviour, but it allows you to be in charge of how you feel about something.

Then you need to give people space. Let the other person reflect, consider. This hopefully doesn't take too long but sometimes may take some minutes, some hours or even some days. Giving that person some space to work out what they want to say back and want to do as a result. And if really stuck, the suggested question is “what would make things better between us?”.

After the challenge, there's hopefully a chance to agree, ‘well now what?’ and if others have been involved in some shape or form, perhaps either party have told other people, then let them know what has happened as well so they can support you and challenge as needed.

05:54 – And after the conversation, I would suggest this is a really important part, reflect ‘how did it go?’. What was good? What would you have done differently? And maybe, what might you do next time? And, however the conversation has gone, we urge you to give yourselves a ten out of ten for trying. A huge high five, a slap on the back and a well done for trying. Taking the plunge is hard so well done for trying.

06:21 - By having healthier relationships with each other we will have a healthier Wales.