

O2L

OPTIMIZE2LEAD LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

The Difficult Conversations Preparation Workbook

A structured guide for addressing performance, behaviour, expectations or conflict with courage and respect.

YOUR OUTCOME

A clear, fair conversation that protects both accountability and dignity.

Designed for leaders, managers, educators, entrepreneurs and emerging leaders.

Coach Kehinde G. Ogunlana | Optimize2Lead Connect

1. Clarify the real issue

Separate facts from assumptions. A strong conversation begins with evidence, not labels.

The specific behaviour, decision or outcome I need to address

Observable facts: what happened, when and where?

The impact on people, performance, trust or values

2. Check your story

Your interpretation may contain truth, but it is not the whole picture. Identify what you know and what you still need to ask.

The assumptions I may be making

Other reasonable explanations

The questions I need to ask before reaching a conclusion

3. Define the outcome

Decide what a constructive result would look like for the person, the relationship and the work.

What must be understood by the end of the conversation?

What change or commitment is required?

What support am I willing and able to provide?

What boundary or consequence must be clear?

4. Plan your opening

Use a calm, direct opening: purpose, facts, impact, invitation.

Step	Draft your words
Purpose	
Facts	
Impact	
Invitation	

5. Listen and respond

Prepare to stay curious, especially when the response is unexpected.

- ☐ Listen without interrupting.
- ☐ Acknowledge emotion without surrendering the issue.
- ☐ Ask for examples and specifics.
- ☐ Summarise what you heard before responding.
- ☐ Return to the required outcome and next steps.

If they disagree, I will say...

If emotions rise, I will...

The question that will help us move forward is...

6. Close with accountability

End with shared understanding, a specific commitment and a review date.

Agreed action

Owner, deadline and evidence of completion

Follow-up date and purpose

After the conversation: what I learned about my leadership
