

# TOOL: A SHORT GUIDE TO HARD CONVERSATIONS BY KRIS HOLMES

*A short guide to hard conversations based on principles from collaborative problem-solving, conscious discipline, and the Imago Dialogue framework*

## Prepare Mentally

- Start by acknowledging your emotions and intentions. (What's going on in your body)
- Take a moment to reflect on your goals for the conversation and the outcome you hope to achieve. (This will help you approach the discussion with a clear mind and a positive attitude.)

## Set the Stage

- Choose a time and place that is conducive to open communication.
- Ensure privacy and minimize distractions to create a safe and comfortable environment for both parties. (No phones or additional noises)

## Active Listening

- Practice active listening by giving your full attention to the other person.
- Listen without interrupting, and show empathy and understanding by acknowledging their feelings and perspectives. (Have a sender & receiver)
- Use "I" Statements: Frame your thoughts and concerns using "I" statements to avoid sounding accusatory.
- For example, say "I feel concerned/notice when..." instead of "You always..."

## Conscious Discipline Techniques

- Use techniques from conscious discipline, such as breathing exercises or self-regulation strategies, to manage your emotions during the conversation.
- Stay calm and composed to facilitate productive dialogue. (If/when you feel triggered ask for a short break)

## Collaborative Problem Solving

- Approach the conversation as a collaborative problem-solving exercise.
- Focus on finding solutions together rather than placing blame or pointing fingers.

## Focus on Solutions

- Keep the conversation focused on finding solutions and common ground.
- Encourage brainstorming ideas and alternative perspectives to work towards a positive resolution. (Try a mind mapping exercise)

## Follow-Up:

- After the conversation, follow up with the other person to ensure that each person feels heard, seen, and understood. (This follow-up could be a day or a week apart as use a verbatim tool.)
- Document key points, emotions, and agreements post-conversation.
- Use direct quotes to accurately capture perspectives and ensure clarity.
- Follow up with clear action steps, built-in accountability for agreed-upon resolutions.

## Imago Dialogue Framework

### Apply the Imago Dialogue framework by following its key steps:

- **Mirroring:** Repeat what the other person says to ensure understanding and validation.
- **Validating:** Acknowledge the validity of their feelings and perspectives, even if you don't agree.
- **Empathizing:** Show empathy by putting yourself in their shoes and understanding their emotions.
- **Dialogue:** Engage in a respectful and open dialogue to explore solutions and reach a mutual understanding.