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## YETI - Difficult Conversations

A guide for both youth and adult allies on handling difficult conversations professionally and productively, especially in advocacy settings where youth may face resistance or challenging feedback.

Learn strategies for staying professional and respectful in difficult conversations, and further your knowledge through the included question prompts and practice scenarios.

### Top Tips from YETI

#### Preparing before a tough conversation or meeting

- Listen to a favorite song to energize or calm yourself
- Write down thoughts or questions you want to ask that can help you feel prepared and get ready.
- Be honest about how you are feeling. If you are dealing with tough life situations and feel it is ok to share, letting someone know is an explanation, not an excuse.
- Identify where there may be barriers or differences you can anticipate so you can be ready.
- Upfront, find a connector. Did this person DO something I like or am interested in. Find something good. Or maybe a personal connection.

**Can you describe a time when you had a difficult interaction? what did you do during that interaction and what was the outcome?**

**How do you build credibility and trust when advocating for a change that may be unpopular or met with resistance?**

## During a meeting or conversation

- Use a fidget toy or write something down or doodle if appropriate.
- Focusing attention on the environment – such as lights. The grounding senses – 5 things you can see, hear, feel.
- Align your priorities and know your audience.
- Know your body language.
- Leave the room and take a quick break. Go use the restroom or get something to drink.
- Other people are not their reactions. Everyone is human – not everyone is 100% all the time
- Ask the other person for more information on what they are saying
- Have the mindset that the worst thing they can say is no. You are not gonna die from one tough moment, and the answer is often no if you don't ask or talk it out in the first place.
- Remember the big picture - what is the main goal of your efforts and what change are you trying to achieve?
- Don't be afraid to be your true, authentic self! That's where your passion comes from!

**Are you able to recognize when you are making assumptions or jumping to conclusions?**

**How do you handle situations where your advocacy may conflict with other people's priorities or beliefs?**

## Closing & debriefing after a meeting or conversation

- Recap the main points of the meeting, thank them for meeting, and offer to continue the conversation.
- Send a thank you note or email
- Debrief with allies, friends or other trusted people on how to keep momentum going after the meeting.

**How can you ensure that difficult conversations and feedback are constructive and lead to positive outcomes?**



## Scenario prompts:

A youth comes into their IEP meeting and the teachers come in and say that the extra time is no longer needed.

- What would you say that would foster a positive conversation?

A classroom for a college is inaccessible on a different floor and will not move it. Going into the meeting, you expect them to not be flexible.

- How can you end the meeting and offer suggestions?
- How can you obtain this accommodation?
- What would this look like in a system change setting?

A youth meets with a state organization that provides youth programming; however they do not seek out the opinions of the youth they are working with about the best ways to engage and offer valuable programs.

- How do you strategize with the organization to have your voice heard?
- How will you maintain a positive relationship so that programming continues?

## Suggested Ally Follow Up Support

- What did the youth do well?
- What could they have worked on?
- How can you follow up with youth to further promote their self-advocacy and serve as an effective mentor?