



I started my career as a classroom teacher and I was raised by two classroom teachers. They've been married for 50 plus years, so they're doing something right, but they are almost polar opposite in almost every way including their teaching styles. When they would give me advice that was the same, I knew I had to pay attention to it.

One of the things they both told me was that success in the classroom was mostly determined by the planning outside of the classroom.

It turned out to be true and it's true for most things in life- the planning you put into it is really going to affect the execution.

This is true for confrontation.

Before you sit down and actually have the conversation, you need to plan effectively so that that conversation goes well.

Today we're going to talk about how to set yourself up for success.

When you decide to have a confrontation and when you sit down make sure you're focusing on the positive, get yourself in a good mental space where you're just dreading it, and can't wait to get it over with.

You have to shift your mindset so that you're in a good place when you're ready to have that confrontation focus on the benefit and the positive that can come out of the conversation.

Think through the logistics. When does it make sense to have the meeting? The old management trick was to give people bad news on Friday at 4 o'clock. You don't always have to do everything on Friday at 4 o'clock.

Be thoughtful about when you're going to have a difficult conversation. If you're just about to start a team retreat or you're having a team member's birthday party, you might not want to schedule the meeting right before that, right?

Be conscious of what's going on around you. Something as simple about where to have it can have big implications.

If you're the supervisor and you have the meeting in your office, it can feel like a little bit of a power play or that you have home field advantage as they say. So think about having it in a neutral place, maybe even getting out of the office and having it somewhere else. Maybe that will help diffuse the tension a little bit.

Who needs to be involved? This can be tricky. Do you need another person there? Sometimes you bring in another person too early and it sets the tone. It makes it a really heavy meeting when really it wasn't that big of a deal or on the flip side.

Sometimes it is a big deal and somebody else should be in the meeting and they're not



and that causes some consequences.

Really think through who else if anybody should be in the room and how the meeting is going to go.

Most of these meetings are going to be face to face, but if you're confronting about something that's sort of small, maybe you can do it in an email or a phone call, but most cases you're going to want face to face.

It's really important that you're not blindsiding anybody. You're there having this confrontation for both of you to get to a good place and you don't want anyone walking into a conversation without knowing what it's about and all of a sudden they're thrown off. They weren't prepared. Now, they're feeling defensive.

Be as open as you can when you're setting up the meeting to let the person know why you want to have it.

If you've ever gotten one of those dreaded Friday emails, and I certainly have- of *make sure you come to my office first thing Monday morning*, it's just terrible.

When it happened to me, it turns out it was nothing but I didn't know that and it really made for an uncomfortable couple of days.

Be open and honest with people so they can best prepare themselves for what is going to be something that's uncomfortable for most of us.

Make it as comfortable as possible and address the elephant. The fact that you're having the confrontation means you're addressing that elephant, so good job. But whatever other elephants might be out there, address them too. Don't ignore them. Don't pretend they're not there. It just makes them grow and grow and grow.

A lot of times just by acknowledging that it is an uncomfortable conversation, saying something like, *I know this isn't the place we want to be* or *I know things have been challenging*- that can really help set the tone.

Give each other space to address whatever elephant is there so that they're acknowledged and that they're not just hovering and lingering there without acknowledging that they're there.

Articulate what you want to accomplish. You can do this as you're setting up the meeting so they know what the purpose is and then make sure they understand. That you're articulating it in a way that is clear to them and give them the opportunity to say what they are trying to accomplish as well so you can both prepare effectively for that meeting.

Then you're going to need to decide which confrontation style you want to use.



Sometimes you can make an argument for using different ones and there's not necessarily a perfect one or a right one or you have to go with this one. In some cases, it will be really clear which style you should use, and in other cases it might not be, so do the best you can but be thoughtful about it.

What are you trying to get out of this conversation?

Remember when you're deciding which style, you're weighing the importance of the result against the importance of the relationship. Sometimes the result is going to come up on top. Sometimes it's the relationship and sometimes you're going to want them to be in equal measure.

Think it through before you decide the approach you're going to take. It's really important to start with the end in mind. As a coach, whenever I have a coaching session before we dive into the conversation we start with the same questions, *what do you want to get out of this conversation*. It helps to set up the expectation and guide the conversation.

Sometimes almost the entire conversation is deciding what the end is going to look like particularly if it's a situation that's kind of confusing or it's uncertain and you're just not sure. It can really help the process to decide what the end should be- same thing when it comes to confrontation.

Find an endpoint that both of you agree on. The specifics of the end is probably why the confrontation is happening in the first place.

Don't dive into fixing it immediately. What you're trying to do is set up a mutual end that you both feel good about. For example, if it's a negotiation on salary your end might be that you want more money, but your boss' might be that they need to stick with their budget. That's what you're there to hash out. That's the purpose of the confrontation.

The end that you decide upon might be something like you both want to walk away feeling good about the solution or you want to make sure you're on the same page or you want to make sure that the money feels good for both of you. Start with a mutual end in mind so you can both work toward that and decide how you will know when you get there.

It might be helpful to decide a time frame. There might be a natural deadline like, raises have to be in to payroll by Friday at 3:00 or whatever but sometimes there's not a natural deadline. Does it make sense to set one?

Are you determined to come to an outcome in this meeting or do you plan on having a follow-up in case you don't get there? What if you don't get there? Do you call it a day and decide you're just not going to come to an agreement or do you come back at it another day?

Set up expectations, so you're both on the same page about ground rules, norms or



expectations.

You want to make sure you're both in agreement about how the meeting is going to proceed. If it's helpful to put it in writing, you can put it in writing as well.

Then when you're having the meeting you're using your active listening and strong communication. It's so much about how you say something and what you're actually saying and this is meant to be a conversation. It's not you dictating to somebody else or vice versa.

How do you set this up to be an effective conversation?

You always lead with empathy and respect and show appreciation to the other person for engaging in the conversation.

Continuously check for understanding on both sides and recognize when you're making progress.

Decide what the follow-up is going to look like.

If you've come to a decision then what does the follow-up need to be? If you haven't come to a decision, what happens next?

Make sure that you're setting yourself up for success before the actual confrontation.

So the most important question for you is, how will you set yourself up for success when it comes to confrontation?