

## Communicating in times of crisis

As the covid-19 pandemic evolves, we are all trying to adapt in a constantly changing situation that affects every aspect of our lives and community. With so much to process and respond to, we can find ourselves facing more challenging conversations with clients and staff than usual. This brief resource was developed to support those conversations.

### Getting started

First, how are you? Are you sleeping, eating well, taking time to unplug and unwind? It is more critical now than ever to look after our health and stress levels, both to continue to be there for others and strengthen our immune systems.

### Refrain

The higher the risk or anxiety involved, the more likely we will revert to a "fix it" mindset where we:

- Inform, warn, or confront
- Rely on facts and logic to persuade
- Try to problem solve for the person.

The risk is that when we push for a course of action, the other person is more likely to defend the case against it.

### Connect

While we know how important it is to stay calm and present, it can be one of the first things to lose when there is so much going on. We can ground both of us when we start by connecting:

- Slow down
- Ask for their perspective
- Listen
- Reflect and check your understanding
- Affirm strengths, values and shared goals.

### Ask-offer-ask

We are more likely to find practical solutions when we take a collaborative approach that actively involves the other person in problem solving together. A useful guide is to:

- **Ask** for their understanding (e.g. of the risks of covid-19 or the purpose of a specific policy)
- Ask permission to **offer** information (e.g. the rationale for a specific approach or suggestions on how it could work in practice)
- **Ask** for their ideas to help find solutions that address their concerns within the limitations (e.g. requirement of law, safety or policy).

### Be safe, be kind

These are very stressful times. Look after yourselves and each other.



## Guiding the conversation: what might this look like in practice?

### Connect

- *How are you feeling? How are you going?*
- *What are your thoughts about...?*
- *What are your concerns about...?*

### Reflect

- *You're feeling... or This feels...*
- *You're not sure about...*
- *You're wondering...*
- *You're hoping... or You would prefer...*
- *It's important that...*
- *You feel able to...*
- *You're willing to...*

### Affirm

- *I appreciate your... (e.g. honesty, courage, concern for others, other strength).*
- *Your (e.g. family, health, relationships, commitment to others, other value) is important to you.*
- *I can see we both want... (what's best for others, safety, solutions that are realistic).*

### Ask

- *What have you heard about...?*
- *What do you know about... (e.g. the policy/requirement/law/virus transmission)*
- *What's your understanding of why you're being asked to...?*

### Offer

- *Would it be OK if I explained a bit more about the reason for...?*
- *If it's OK, I'd like to clarify a couple of things...*
- *I can provide some more information on... Would this be a good place to start?*
- *These some ideas that have worked for others in a similar situation. Would it be helpful to hear about them and see what you think?*

### Ask

- *How does that fit with your understanding?*
- *Of the different things we have covered, what's your priority?*
- *What would be helpful to focus on first?*
- *What do you need from me in order to work on this?*
- *What would help us to work together on finding a good solution here?*

### Affirm

- *This is a really difficult situation to be in, I appreciate your openness to discuss this with me.*

