

### ***Bitesized Belonging: How do we provide difficult feedback?***

One of the hardest things we may have to do in the workplace is provide feedback about something fraught with high emotions or hostility. If you're someone who has ever had to provide feedback, you know how difficult it can be. Whether because of high emotions, a perception of hostility or difference, or a lack of trust, trying to have a professionally difficult conversation with a fellow employee, leader, or report can feel perilous.

Vinh Giang, expert in communication and vocal modulation, has some great ideas on how we can help mitigate many issues around giving difficult feedback and his reasoning is that it's all about the approach! Before providing feedback it's important to do these five things:

1. Always talk to the person in private, never in public.
2. Engage with a soft melody to foster openness.
3. Frame the conversation to their benefit – making it constructive.
4. Ask for permission to give the feedback.
5. Provide the feedback.

While this is no assurance that your conversations are going to be perfect, approaching difficult conversations with openness and professionalism, even when our emotions are high, is a vital skill. However, I think Giang leaves out one important aspect of having difficult conversations; ending the discussion with compassion and understanding.

**Take a look at this mock scenario and think back to a time when you had to have a difficult conversation in the workplace. Are these the steps you took? How could it have gone better?**

*Max and Ace are working together with an important client. Ace and the client have similar views on the world and have been scheduling private meetings to discuss these similarities. However, Max feels as if business decisions are being made that they aren't privy to.*

*Max: Hey, Ace. Do you have a couple of minutes to quick chat?*

*Ace: Sure. What's up?*

*Max: I was hoping you might be open to some feedback on a difficult topic. I wanted to take a few minutes and give you some insight into something that's been going on with our client. Is now a good time for us to chat about that?*

*Ace: Yeah, I don't have any other meetings for about an hour. What's going on with the client? I just spoke with them yesterday and they didn't mention any issues.*

*Max: Actually, that's what I was hoping to chat with you about. It seems like business decisions are being made in meetings that I'm not being invited to. It's impacting my ability to get work done and, if I'm being honest with you, it makes me feel as if I'm being cut out of conversations. I know you and our client are close but I was hoping that from now on if it involves the business we can reserve those conversations for when all of us get together?*

*Ace: Oh, wow. I'm sorry about that Max. You're absolutely right and I can totally see how*

*that would be frustrating. We just get to chatting and things have a tendency to bounce back to the work we're doing. From now on, I'll be sure to include you in all business conversations. My bad.*

*Max: I really appreciate it. This was weighing on my mind because I really enjoy working with you. I really appreciate you being willing to hear this feedback and make some changes. If there's anything I can do to support you, please let me know.*