DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

One of the most challenging aspects of supervision is having a difficult conversation with an employee. This is especially true when the conversation requires providing constructive or disciplinary feedback to an employee. Avoiding the conversation is a frequently used technique which ultimately has detrimental effects on the employee/department.

When facing a difficult conversation, consider the following six-step strategy for success:

**Step 1:** Identify the Appropriate Time to Provide Feedback
Ensure you have the employee’s full attention; ensure privacy

**Step 2:** Use a Gentle Approach
Explain that you need to discuss an issue/concern; acknowledge that the conversation may be difficult for you and/or the employee

**Step 3:** Provide Direct Feedback
State the concern; allow the employee to respond

**Step 4:** Describe the Impact of the Behavior
Explain how this impacts “the big picture”

**Step 5:** Provide Expectations for Future Behavior
Describe acceptable behavior moving forward

**Step 6:** Follow-Up & Provide Ongoing Feedback
Revisit the issue; recognize improvement or discuss further, if needed

**BEST PRACTICES**
- Take Time to Prepare
- Don’t Use a Script
- Ensure Privacy
- Provide Examples
- Don’t Argue
- Be Specific with Your Expectations
- Offer Praise & Recognize Improvement

Interested in learning more about difficult conversations? Register for the upcoming training series *What Every JMU Supervisor Needs to Know* here

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