

Raising a Concern

Deciding Whether to Raise a Concern

Very few of us enjoy confronting someone else. A primary reason is that our experience with confrontation has been very uncomfortable or painful. For that reason, most people tend to avoid approaching or addressing conflict at all costs. When no one is willing to deal with conflict, unresolved issues can fester as time passes.

Here are some relevant questions to consider when deciding to raise a concern:

1. How important is this issue to me?

- Will this still affect me tomorrow? Next week?
- Has an important value of mine been violated?

2. How much do I want to invest in this relationship?

- Is this job/relationship only temporary? Long term?
- Is this relationship personal? Professional? Both?

3. What is the “worst-case” scenario?

- What are the consequences of speaking up? How likely are these to happen? Are the consequences worse than not speaking up?
- Can I minimize these consequences? (through communication)

4. What are my alternatives?

- What is the best alternative if I don't raise the concern? Is that alternative acceptable?

Raising a Concern

Raising a Concern

Purpose: To approach and address a problem with someone in a way that encourages joint problem solving and de-escalates the situation.

Method: Talk specifically about the impact that the person's behaviour or the situation has had on you, rather than criticizing, judging or threatening the person.

1. The Approach

- Organize your thoughts
- Harness your frustration
- Set aside the desire to win
- Separate the person from the problem

2. Raising the Issue

- **Describe the specific problem behaviour**
"It's difficult for me if you interrupt while I'm speaking."
- **Describe the impact on you**
"I feel distracted and find it difficult to stay on track."
- **Find common ground (if possible)**
"I sense how strongly you and I both feel about this project. Your contribution has made a difference..."
- **Express an interest in more information or further discussion**
"Would you be willing to talk more about this?"

OR

- **State your suggestions or preference for the future**
"When I can state my thoughts and ideas without interruption, I can more easily focus on the input of others..."
- **Talk about and identify your feelings (optional)**
"...which is less frustrating and much more enjoyable for me?"

Summary Examples

I sense how strongly you and I both feel about this project.... Your contribution has made a difference... It's difficult for me if you interrupt while I'm speaking.... I feel distracted and find it difficult to stay on track...

When I can state my thoughts and ideas without interruption, I can more easily focus on the input of others, which is less frustrating and much more enjoyable for me.... Would you be willing to talk more with me about this?"

There are many ways to convey these main elements. Below is another possible format.

I feel _____ (state feelings/emotion)... When _____ (specify problems behaviour)... Because _____ (describe impact on me)
Could we discuss this? I was wondering... could talk about this together? Or: I'd like to work out a solution with you. Or: What are your thoughts about it? (Or invite further information in another way)