

Supervisor / PI conversation planner

Sometimes we all have to deliver unwelcome news, difficult feedback, or unexpected messages, and there is no easy or right way to achieve this.

Delivering your message or feedback in a way that allows you to be honest about your situation but does not damage your relationship with your researcher(s), requires you to think through how to achieve positive outcomes. Reflecting on what has happened, what the contributing factors were, and what would be preferable and how, will help you articulate your point.

Whether you have this conversation by email or face to face, think about the timing, give it appropriate thought, and allow the other person time to digest the message and compose themselves for a response.

Notice that there's no space for blame, for hearsay, or for extrapolating around the issue. And always remember you are collaborating towards a solution that works for you both – look for the alignment, work towards what you both want.

What do you want to achieve by having this conversation, any specific outcomes? What will be different for you if this conversation goes well? *Remind your researcher(s) that you are talking to them honestly because you want to resolve the issue and find a better way forward.*

What outcomes might your researcher(s) be expecting?

Write a sentence that opens the conversation. Name the issue. What's been happening, for how long? How bad are things?

What are the main points you want to your researcher(s) to understand? And what firm examples or evidence could you use to support your points? *Remember to keep it to known facts, observations and examples, not hearsay or what you imagine is the case.*

What has been the impact of this on you, how have you been feeling? What's at stake here?

What has been the impact on your researchers, how might they be feeling?

What could their thoughts, feelings, or reactions be when you make your points?

How have you personally contributed to the issue/problem/situation you find yourself in? ***This is an important part of building a shared solution, don't skip it.***

What is your decision/plan going forward, what specific actions do you want to take?

Invite your researchers(s) to respond, give them some time to think and really listen to their reply without interjecting, or justifying behaviours.

Together try to reach agreement on a better way to do things.

Please remember though that both you and your researchers never have to put up with bullying or harassment at work. It's not OK for anyone to use anger, threats, or other manipulative means to coerce anyone else into a course of action, or prevent them from speaking up.