Bringing up a Concern

Too often, team members don’t express concerns about behavior or attitudes of others, due to a fear that things will get worse. In truth, the opposite is often the case when the issue is approached in a respectful, caring manner, and in the spirit of collaboration and growth. Very often, a quick conversation about the many concerns that come up at work will prevent the build-up of resentment that can occur when issues are slid “under the rug” or are vented to a third party.

The objective of the worksheet below is to integrate and practice the seven steps of bringing up a difficult issue. The steps are:

1. **Share your observation.**
   Use sentences that begin like: I noticed….. or When you did __________.

2. **Check for mutual understanding or ask clarifying questions.**
   Was that your experience? or Do you know what I mean?

3. **Pause and LISTEN**
   You don’t have to agree with the person’s rationale, but it is important to demonstrate an understanding their point of view. Too often we go into a conversation with our own objective or agenda and, though we hear what the person is saying, we are not listening.

4. **Share the expectation or the standard that describes what should have been done.**
   We agreed that........

5. **Check for understanding.**
   Is that your understanding of what we decided? or How do you see it?

6. **Pause and LISTEN to their response.**

7. **Agree upon a plan for next time, or what needs to be done next.**
   Ok, let’s make a plan for what to do next time.

**Remember**

**The goal is to build trust.** Make sure to have the conversation in private and that any sensitive issues discussed are not to be discussed with team members not originally involved in the conversation.

**Listening is key.** Two of the seven steps are pausing and listening.

**Keep an open mind.** Come to the conversation with the intent to understand rather than prove a point.

**Avoid using judging or blaming language.** Use behavioral statements. Describe what you saw, heard, or observed objectively rather than through your point of view or with your “story.”

For example:
You came into the exam room before I was finished with the foot exam and asked me to leave.

Rather than…..
You were in a rush, as usual, and kicked me out before I could do my job.