

## Raising Sensitive Issues

### 1. Obtain psychological agreement to have the conversation

“Can I talk to you about something I’ve been concerned about.”

(Do it in private, sitting down.)

### 2. State the Problem Using ‘I’, Not ‘You’ Language:

(“YOU” language—too “yang”, too accusatory)

YES: “I’m feeling underutilized.”

NO: “You never give me any good assignments.”

YES: I’m embarrassed.”

NO: “You always put me down.”

Or: “I’m feeling that you are putting me down.

### 3. Pinpoint detail: Tell people exactly what they said and when they said it or what they did and when they did it.

“Yesterday when you phoned the clients about the delay in getting edits to the marketing plan, you raised your voice and told the office manager she was incompetent.”

Bad: You’re a spendthrift

Better: You spent too much money last month

Best: Last month you overdrew the checking account by \$300.

### 4. Acknowledge your part: What is the person you are speaking to probably thinking about how you also make the same mistake or contribute to the problem.

“I know I own part of this problem, too, because at the meeting I stayed focused on my plan even when I could see the group was advocating a different course of action.”

### 5. Agree on a solution: Avoid a vague or one-sided solution where one person does all the work.

Here’s what I can do to make this work . . . Is there anything else you would like me to do?”

Then: “What I ask of you . . .”

### 6. Make Nice. Monkey grooming. Bad news does not define the relationship, etc.

(from S. & P Glaser, *Be Quiet, Be Heard*)