



Go from manager to coach with this 4-step guide to having **SAFE™** and productive coaching conversations.

Set the stage

Set the time: Schedule your conversation for a time that works for both schedules. Avoid catching them by surprise by scheduling ahead of time to allow them their own time to prepare.

Pick the setting: Choose a neutral setting, like a coffee shop or public setting, to level the playing field and provide a safe space for discussion.

Do your homework: Spend some time catching up on what your team member has accomplished or been challenged with since your last conversation. Be sure to include more than their performance in your research! What are their personal goals and aspirations? How might you be able to help?

Add Authentic Connection

Take a personal interest: Focusing on performance is key, but remember to check-in on how your team member is doing personally, too.

Start & stay positive: Keep the conversation productive by avoiding emotionally charged moments. For difficult topics, keep an open mind and avoid playing the blame game.

Be vulnerable: Spend some time catching up on what they have accomplished or been challenged with since your last conversation. Is there anything in your own life that you can share to help them better understand the path forward?

Foster 2-Way Dialogue

Listen more than talk: Be actively engaged in your role as their coach. Listen, gain perspective, then respond. After all, these conversations are all about how you can effectively support their efforts.

Watch for emotional reactions: Touching on a difficult topic? Watch for elevated emotions and know how to redirect the conversation back to a safe space.

Reset & find common ground: If emotions run high, back up, find a way to reconnect with them (even if it means changing the topic), and revisit the conversation once they've had time to process.

End with Action

Ask how you can help them succeed: The job of a coach is to do what it takes to help your team members succeed. Ask and act on what they need from you.

Be open to changing your perspective: There are two sides to every coin. Take time to understand how your team member views the world. Unresolved conflict often stems from choosing to see things from only your lens.

Thank them and finalize the conversation: Recap what you both discussed and end the conversation on a positive, actionable note. They should leave feeling energized, not defeated.