

PAUSE

Five Steps for Navigating a Difficult Conversation

Difficult conversations can arrive without warning—with a student, colleague, supervisor, faculty member, or another department. Before reacting, try PAUSE.

	ACTION	IN THE MOMENT	ASK YOURSELF
P	Pause	Slow the interaction enough to think rather than react.	Do I need to respond right now?
A	Assess	Notice what kind of situation you're actually dealing with.	What's really happening here?
U	Understand	Listen for concerns and perspectives while noticing your own assumptions.	What might I not understand yet?
S	Select	Choose the role or response the situation needs.	What does this need from me right now?
E	Engage	Respond intentionally, using the least escalatory appropriate next step.	What's the wisest next step?

PAUSE isn't a script. It creates enough space between what happens and what you do next to choose your response rather than simply react.

WHEN A PAUSE ISN'T ENOUGH...

Some workplace situations benefit from having a neutral person help you think through what is happening, explore your options, prepare for a difficult conversation, or facilitate a conversation with others.

THE COMMON GROUND PROJECT (CGP)

CGP is a confidential, informal, voluntary and impartial resource for Chaffey employees navigating workplace concerns and conflict. Services include individual consultation and conflict coaching, mediation, facilitated conversations, group support, and workshops.

You don't need to have a formal complaint—or even know exactly what you want to do—to contact CGP. Sometimes a confidential conversation is simply a good place to begin.

CGP MAY BE HELPFUL WHEN...

Thinking it through

Preparing for a difficult
conversationCommunication has broken
down

Conflict is escalating

A neutral facilitator could
help