



Coaching Tip:

When you want to win the respect of others, catch them by surprise -- Listen.

Step 1: Set the stage for a different outcome

Use a surprise lead-in to create the possibility of a different outcome. Let go of your preconceived notions about the other person and the situation; invite the other person to do the same. Shift the paradigm from the small game to the Big Game. Create space for true dialogue.

Possible Lead-ins:

I know you came to talk about the project, James, but I'd like to discuss something of even greater importance -- our working relationship. With all the pressure we've been under recently, I wonder if I've really taken the time to listen to you. I've set aside an entire hour this morning. I'd really like to hear what you have to say.

Step 2: Ask questions out of genuine curiosity

Listen without interruption and without judgment. Use questions, not reactions or opinions to respond. Use your natural curiosity to guide the conversation. Avoid "interrogating the witness." Your objective is to open up new lines of inquiry and uncover hidden clues. Record what you learn.

Possible Curiosity Questions:

- *How do you see your role on the team? How do you see my role?*
- *What are three things you need to help you become more productive?*
- *What was the impact on you when the equipment you requested was not approved?*
- *Tell me about a time when you felt I was not supportive of you. Tell me about a time when you did feel supported by me.*
- *What is working well in our communication with each other? What is not working so well?*

Step 3: Clarify mutual expectations and next steps

Ask for a clear statement of what the other person needs or expects from you. Tailor your response to that stated need. Ask for what you need as well. Tell the person what you have learned from the conversation and how it will impact you moving forward.

Possible Points of Clarification:

- *What is the one thing I could do differently to improve our working relationship? What would you be willing to do to help make our relationship work better?*
- *It is not always clear to me when you want me to step in and make a decision or recommendation and when you are simply sharing information with me. How will I know the difference?*
- *I feel I now have a much clearer understanding about what is working and not working in our interaction with each other. I have made some notes about what I will be attempting to change. How about if we meet again next month and review our progress?*