FREE GUIDE · AYOUB CHOBAH

Say the hard things without breaking the relationship

5 situations you keep putting off, the question to understand first, and the words to bring it up.

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You know what you should say. You rehearse it in your head at night, in the car.

And the next day, you say nothing. Not for lack of courage: you're afraid of damaging the relationship, of being seen as the difficult one, or of being wrong.

I appreciate that caution. It shows the relationship matters to you. Now, I invite you to see it another way: what really damages a relationship is what we keep to ourselves for too long.

Ayoub

Before every sentence: understand first

We never solve a problem we don't understand. What you see is only part of the story.

So each situation starts with an open question. You really listen to the answer. Only then do you say what you have to say.

1. Pick ONE situation you're living right now.
2. Ask the question, and listen without preparing your answer.
3. Say your sentence, in your own words. It doesn't need to be perfect.

1 Someone on your team is always late

Three meetings in a row. You feel the irritation rising, and the team notices.

WHAT HOLDS YOU BACK	You don't want to police a few minutes. And you don't know what's going on for them.
UNDERSTAND FIRST	**"I've noticed the start of our meetings has been hard for you lately. What's going on?"**
THEN SAY	**"Thanks for telling me. When the meeting starts without you, we cover everything twice. I need us to find a solution together. What would help you?"**
WHY IT HELPS	You start from facts, not a judgment. And the solution comes from the other person too, so they commit to it more.

2 Saying no to your manager

A new file lands on your desk when you're already at capacity.

WHAT HOLDS YOU BACK	The fear of disappointing, or of looking like someone who won't pitch in.
UNDERSTAND FIRST	**"What is this file a priority over? What happens if it's delivered next week?"**
THEN SAY	**"I want this file done well. With file X under way, I can't deliver it properly before [date]. Would you rather I push X back, or should we give this to someone else?"**
WHY IT HELPS	You show the real constraint and offer two options. The decision stays with them, based on honest information rather than a yes that ends in failure.

3 A colleague who doesn't do their share

Their part comes in late, and you're the one catching up, again.

WHAT HOLDS YOU BACK	You don't want to spoil the mood. And you wonder if you're making a big deal out of nothing.
UNDERSTAND FIRST	**"How are you finding this project right now? What's getting in the way on your side?"**
THEN SAY	**"When your part arrives after the deadline, I'm the one absorbing the delay to keep us on track. I can't keep going like this. How do we organize things from here?"**
WHY IT HELPS	You describe the impact on you instead of judging the person. An impact can be observed. A judgment can be argued.

4 Someone who writes to you at night and on weekends

A demanding client who expects an immediate answer.

WHAT HOLDS YOU BACK	The fear of losing this client, or of seeming less available than others.
UNDERSTAND FIRST	**"When you write to me in the evening, what makes the request urgent for you?"**
THEN SAY	**"To serve you well, I handle requests on weekdays, within 24 hours. For a real emergency, here's how to reach me. Shall we agree together on what counts as urgent?"**
WHY IT HELPS	You link your limit to their interest, not your comfort. And you don't leave a gap: a real emergency still has a way in.

5 A tension nobody names

For weeks, things have been cold between you. Everyone acts as if nothing's wrong.

WHAT HOLDS YOU BACK	You're afraid of opening a box you won't be able to close again.
UNDERSTAND FIRST	**"I feel like something has changed between us. How do you see things?"**
THEN SAY	**"Our working relationship matters to me, and I don't like letting this settle in. Would you be open to talking about it honestly, ten minutes, this week?"**
WHY IT HELPS	You name what you're both feeling, and that's already a relief. By asking for their agreement, you leave them in control instead of cornering them.

Your conversation, this week

Have you ever asked yourself what this conversation you keep putting off is costing you? The sleepless nights, the energy, the relationship wearing thin. I invite you to prepare it here, in five minutes.

1. **The situation:** with whom, and what's happening, in facts?

2. **What holds me back:** what am I afraid of, honestly?

3. **My question to understand:**

4. **My sentence, in my own words:**

5. **When I'll talk to them:** the day, the time, the place.

What if the other person reacts badly?

It happens, and it's not a failure. Go back to understanding: "I can see this affects you. Help me understand what bothers you in what I just said."

If the tension rises too high, suggest a break with a date to pick it up again. A conversation started is better than a conversation avoided.

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Book my express coaching

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