Debugging Difficult Conversations worksheet

When you can anticipate that you're going to head into a Difficult Conversation it's useful to take the time to step back and think through productive mindsets and preparation.

This will give you the best chance of having a successful Difficult Conversation.

The Difficult Conversation To help you think about your Difficult Conversation holistically, fill in the blanks:

What	Who	When	Where
What is the conversation going to be about? Describe it as neutrally as you can.	Who will be taking part in this conversation? Invite the right people who need to be there.	When is the best time to have this conversation? Probably not 4:30pm on a Friday.	Where is the best place to have this conversation? Somewhere private is preferable.
I saw Jonathan playing with his phone during a meeting with our client It meant he missed some important information It also meant the client felt he was disengaged and didn't care about the project	Myself Jonathan No one else!	I don't want to wait too long. The longer I want, the more chance there is he'll forget his actions I'll talk to him after the standup tomorrow	It should be very private 1-2-1 call? Private meeting room?

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Mindset The first step in dealing with a Difficult Conversations is making sure you have the right mindset to approach it.

Why is it in my own best interests for me to have this Difficult Conversation?	Why is it in the best interests of the other person/people to have this Difficult Conversation?	Why is it in the best interests of my team to have this Difficult Conversation?	What will happen if I don't have this Difficult Conversation?
I feel uncomfortable watching Jonathan play with his phone The person the client is going to call when they're annoyed by it is me! I don't want to have that conversation… It could lose us the deal I can't hit my numbers if I lose this deal	He's still young and doesn't understand the appropriate etiquette. I'm helping him He wants to be successful, this is how he gets there Clients will get a bad impression of him and it'll make his life difficult when he's discussing topics with them If my boss noticed, she wouldn't be as nice to him as I would. It's better for him that I have this conversation rather than her	Whatever I let Jonathan do, gives permission to the rest of my team to do the same thing Getting the client annoyed is going to have knock on consequences to my team. It'll make their lives harder dealing with the client	Jonathan won't learn the right way to behave in meetings The client will get annoyed and I'll have to deal with it My team will get upset that I'm not picking up on behaviour that I've told them about previously

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Preparation   Once you have the right mindset, you can move onto preparing for the Difficult Conversation.

What data/evidence can I gather to backup my claims?	Are there any outside opinions to ensure I have the right viewpoint?	Any possible objections that could be raised and how can I overcome them?	What are possible ways this Conversation could go awry? What are my backup plans?
I don't need much evidence. Just to remember the meeting and the client If I discuss this soon enough, he'll remember	I know I am right in this, but I double checked with my coach and my peer anyway	"It's not a problem". It is a problem. I need to explain the impact of his behaviour. I can use SBI "It was just once". It wasn't. And even if it was - once is enough to annoy a client. Again, I can use SBI	He could get angry. If that happens, I can use my usual conflict resolution skills He could deny it happened. I saw it. I will firmly but compassionately say that to him He could say it's not a problem. I can use a story narrative to explain the possible outcomes to try to help him get in the head of the client

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