

## **Phrases to Help with Difficult Conversations**

We all inevitably need to have conversations with people that are difficult and can cause the person we are speaking with to get defensive. One way we can avoid them getting defensive is to provide them with a way out of the conversation with dignity. Try these phrases the next time you find yourself in an awkward conversation. **“You might not realize this but...”** **You probably didn’t realize this but... You might not know this but”** or when you don’t want to come off as a ‘know it all’. **“You might already be aware of this but”**, or **“You probably already know this but...”**

**Directions:** Think of a real-life conversation that you have had where one of these phrases might have made the conversation go more successfully and fill in the blanks.

**1. You might not realize this but**

**2. You probably already know this but**

### **Steps to starting a gratitude journal**

1. Choose a blank notebook or journal to write in. Consider a spiral-bound journal that opens flat for ease in writing. Select lined or unlined paper. Keep this notebook next to the bed with a pen readily available.
2. Look for things during the day for which you are grateful. Make mental notes throughout the day. Notice how the gratitude journal shifts the focus to a more positive outlook.
3. Write five things you're grateful for before bedtime. Review the day and include anything, however small or great, that was a source of gratitude that day, e.g., a baby's smile, a flower in bloom, or the smell of a newly cut grass. Make the list personal. Write a few words about the five benefits or blessings. Be brief and increase the length as time progresses
4. Personalize the gratitude journal. Expand it with clippings, photos and quotes from magazines or other sources –
5. Remember the best practices for writing in a gratitude journal; be specific, choose something that has scarcity attached to it, pick something that surprised you or you weren't expecting. Focus on near misses.

Best practices modified from *Gratitude Works! A 21 Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity* by Dr. Robert Emmons.

### **Directions for Writing a Gratitude Letter**

Writing a Gratitude Letter to someone is a great way to show your appreciation for that person. You can write the letter to someone you talk to everyday or to someone you haven't talked to in years. The important thing is that you have not taken the time to properly thank that person for the great things the person has done for you in your life. One caution when writing the gratitude letter; make sure it is someone who you feel positively about not someone in which you feel indebted. Use the space below to write the first draft of your letter. You will want to edit it several times to get the wording just right.

### **Instructions for making a Gratitude visit.**

Select one important person from your past who has made a major positive difference in your life and to whom you have never fully expressed your thanks. (Do not confound this selection with new-found romantic love, or with the possibility of a future gain.) Write a testimonial just long enough to cover one laminated page. Take your time composing this; my students and I found ourselves taking several weeks, composing on buses and as we feel asleep at night. Invite that person to your home, or travel to that person's home. It is important you do this face to face, not just in writing or on the phone. Do not tell the person the purpose of the visit in advance; a simple "I just want to see you" will suffice. Bring a laminated version of your testimonial with you as a gift. When all settles down, read your testimonial aloud slowly, with expression, and with eye contact. Then let the other person react unhurriedly. Reminisce together about the concrete events that make this person so important to you. (If you are so moved, please do send me a copy at [Seligman@psych.upenn.edu](mailto:Seligman@psych.upenn.edu))