BMA

Reading list: Build assertive skills at work: courageous conversations

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Contents

1   Description

- This tailored reading list includes signposted web links, links to e-Books held by the BMA library, and journal articles on the topic of **Building assertive skills at work: courageous conversations** as a supplement to the Learning and Development webinar you attended on 22 June 2023.

- The selected content is representative of the current literature on this topic, inclusion on this list does not imply endorsement from the BMA.

- If you would like to request a literature search on any aspect of this topic please fill out a request form (this service is available to BMA Members only).

- This reading list prioritises online content to ensure all attendees can benefit from this supporting resource. However most full text links will be accessible to BMA Members only. Find out more about the benefits of BMA Membership and join here.

- The BMA Library prioritises an e-first approach, however if you are near BMA House in London, we have a modern, purpose-built library space where members are welcome to come and study. Find out more and see how we can help you here.

2   Obtaining full text articles

2.1.1.1   Full text links

If available, the full text link has been included.

2.1.1.2   Search for Journals

The BMA Library provides access to thousands of e-journals for all BMA members. Use our journal search or search by citation options on the library website.

2.1.1.3   Article Requests

Members can use our article request service to request digital copies of articles that are not available in our library collections. We will try to obtain these copies from other libraries in the UK on your behalf for a fee: £5.10 (+VAT) for the first ten article requests; £13 (+VAT) for all subsequent requests. To request digital copies of articles, use the order an article form on the library website (you must be signed in).

2.1.1.4   E-Books

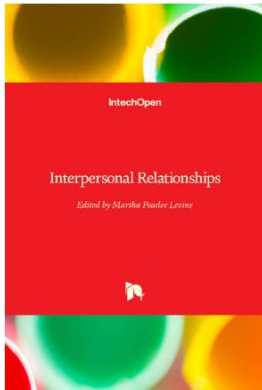We provide free, direct access to thousands of e-books for BMA members.

2.1.1.5   Further help

For any further help with getting full text articles, please contact the BMA Library Team (bma-library@bma.org.uk)

3   Results

3.1   e-Books

Peaslee Levine, Martha. *Interpersonal Relationships*. Intech Open, 2022.

Available online here

Relationships are a necessary part of life. What do we know about interpersonal relationships? How do we develop the skills to connect with each other? Relationships can bring value and meaning to our lives, but, sometimes, they can have negative effects and impair our view of ourselves and others. This book examines interpersonal relationships from many different angles.
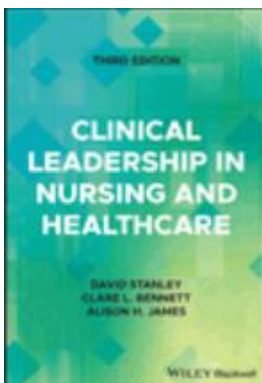
Stanley, D. et al. *Clinical leadership in nursing and healthcare.* Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2022
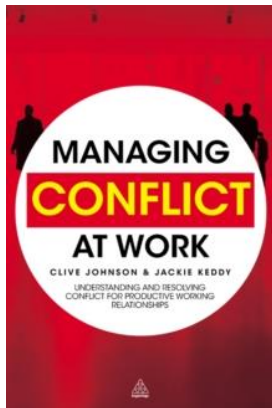
Available online here

Clinical Leadership in Nursing and Healthcare offers a range of tools and topics that support and foster clinically focused nurses and other healthcare professionals to develop their leadership skills and strategies. Chapter 12 focuses on Dealing with conflict and communications styles.
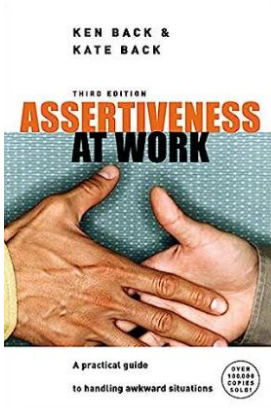
Back, K. & Back, K. *Assertiveness at work: a practical guide to handling awkward situations.* McGraw-Hill, 2005

**Available from the BMA Library**

Whether you are a line manager, project leader, specialist, or key member of a team, this book gives practical guidance for developing your own natural assertiveness to benefit both yourself and your organisation.

Johnson, Clive. & Keddy, Jackie. *Managing conflict at work: Understanding and resolving conflict for productive working relationships.* London: Kogan Page, 2010

Available online here

Aimed not just at mediators and conflict practitioners, but at staff managers and anyone who needs to deal with people disputes; the book provides a wide range of practical techniques, tools and templates for dealing with conflict situations - both when potential disputes are first emerging, and once a conflict has escalated into a formal complaint.
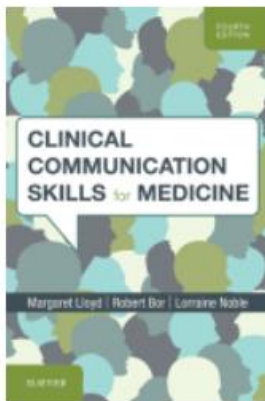
Lloyd, Margaret et al. *Clinical Communication Skills for Medicine*. Philadelphia: Elsevier, 2018.

Available online here

The purpose of this book is to produce a practical guide to the learning and development of communication skills that is of value to students throughout their careers. The order of the chapters reflects this development, from basic communication skills to those required in dealing with challenging situations.

Polack, Lisa. *Communicating effectively in the workforce*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2020.

Available online here

If you understand how communication works, then you have a good chance of diagnosing and fixing communication problems. Chapter 6 distinguishes among the following difficult communication patterns: hostile-aggressive, passive-aggressive, procrastinating, negative-complaining, and arrogant. It applies coping techniques to use with difficult communication patterns.

3.2 Web links

NHS Leadership Academy – Southeast
The Confident Conversations Toolkit
Difficult conversations can be traumatic and stressful. The purpose of this toolkit is to enhance communication skills and to provide effective approaches to help you manage confident conversations in all aspects of your professional life
Available online here

Health Education England
HEE Assertiveness Workbook
This workbook will help you to be assertive without damaging your working relationships. Whether you find that you are not assertive enough, or come across as too assertive, the following exercises will guide you through what high quality assertiveness looks like and how you can apply these skills in your personal and professional relationships
Available online here

Learnlight
Leadership 101: How to Have Courageous Conversations at Work
One of the most important skills that any leader must have is the ability to have courageous conversations. You won't even get positive feedback when you use it. However, it is a skill that is essential to the motivation, performance and the success of your team.
Available online here

Diverse Educators
Courageous Conversations Toolkit
We are collating a growing bank of resources to support you in how you lean into courageous conversations with colleagues, line managers, friends and family about DEI matters.
Available online here

Ted
We're all hiding something. Let's find the courage to open up
Ash Beckham offers a fresh approach to empathy and openness. It starts with understanding that everyone, at some point in their life, has experienced hardship. The only way out, says Beckham, is to open the door and step out of your closet.
Available online here

Consensio

Courageous Workplace Conversations: A practical guide.
The aim of this guide is to promote the kind of "courageous conversation" described above, as an alternative to doing nothing, or waiting until the relationship falls apart and then seeking more formal measures. Drawing on the combined experience and expertise of the Consensio team, this guide sheds light on why courageous conversations are so difficult to have and provides a 3-part guide to having these conversations effectively.
Available online here

You Are Not a Frog Podcast

How to Have Crucial Conversations with Dr Ed Pooley
In this episode, Dr Edward Pooley discusses the three strands present in any conversation and helps us understand how we can be more aware of each. We also share some frameworks that can help you navigate difficult conversations. Understanding the importance of emotion is crucial in being an effective communicator and connecting with your team.
Available online here

Nadine Powrie Consultancy Limited

Transforming difficult conversations into courageous conversations
This paper explore how you can turn difficult conversations into productive engagements. To do that, we need to understand the nature of conflict and the nature of difficult conversations: What are difficult conversations? Why do people avoid them? What is the cost to an organization of avoiding them? Why is managing conflict effectively so important?
Available online here

3.3   Google Scholar

intitle:"courageous conversations"

Click link to see Google Scholar results

BMA members can follow the instructions set out in this library blog post to directly access the full text of any of the Google Scholar articles that the BMA library has a subscription to (you only need to follow these instructions once).

Please note that as Google Scholar results are ordered by relevance, the first few pages of results will be the most useful.

3.4   Journal articles

1. Weinstein N. (2022)
"The motivational value of listening during intimate and difficult conversations"
Social and Personality Psychology Compass 16 (2), ArtID e12651

Click to view reference

Outcomes of conversations, including those dealing with controversial, deeply personal, or threatening disclosures, result not only from what is said but also from how listeners receive these messages. This article integrates the motivational framework of self-determination theory (SDT) and the expanding literature on interpersonal listening to explore the reasons why high-quality listening is so impactful during these conversations. We describe why high-quality listening is a specific and distinguishable autonomy-supportive motivational strategy and argue that there is much to gain by considering that listening can satisfy basic psychological needs, in particular for autonomy and relatedness. We argue that SDT can help explain why high-quality listening is effective, especially in reducing defensiveness, bridging divides, and motivating change. The discussion focuses on ways motivation science can build more effective interventions for behavioral change by harnessing listening as an interpersonal strategy.

2. Levine E.E. (2020)
"Difficult conversations: navigating the tension between honesty and benevolence"
Current Opinion in Psychology Vol 31, p. 38-40

Click to view reference

Difficult conversations are a necessary part of everyday life. To help children, employees, and partners learn and improve, parents, managers, and significant others are frequently tasked with the unpleasant job of delivering negative news and critical feedback. Despite the long-term benefits of these conversations, communicators often approach them with trepidation, in part, because they perceive them as involving intractable moral conflict between being honest and being kind. In this article, we review recent research on egocentrism, ethics, and communication

to explain why communicators overestimate the degree to which honesty and benevolence conflict during difficult conversations, document the conversational missteps people make as a result of this erred perception, and propose more effective conversational strategies that honor the long-term compatibility of honesty and benevolence. This review sheds light on the psychology of moral trade-offs in conversation and provides practical advice on how to deliver unpleasant information in ways that improve recipients' welfare.

3. Davys A. (2019)
"Courageous conversations in supervision"
Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work 31(3):78

Click to view reference

INTRODUCTION: Courageous conversations, commonly identified as conversations which are associated with some form of emotion, are features of many social workers' daily routine. In supervision, such conversations are typically required to address issues of supervisee professional competence, ethical issues or the supervision relationship and/or process. These conversations, which are challenging, are at times avoided and, at other times, may be poorly handled.
APPROACH: Following identification of the obstacles which may impede addressing challenging issues in professional practice, this article focuses the supervisor's role in courageous conversations. The importance of building a supervision environment which can support robust conversations is highlighted. Here the contracting process, where the expectations of supervision are negotiated and the power inherent in the supervision relationship can be identified, is considered foundational. The skills and attributes needed by the supervisor to manage these difficult encounters are explored and three kinds of interventions are identified as helpful: relational, reflective, and confrontational. A framework for a courageous conversation is provided which highlights the need for clarity about the motivation, purpose and desired goals. Finally, a structure for the proposed conversations is presented.
IMPLICATIONS: With an understanding of the dynamics and of the skills required, supervisors can better prepare themselves for courageous conversations. When supervision relationships are based on negotiation and shared understanding about power, difference and expectations, hard issues can be raised and honestly confronted and at the same time the integrity of all involved can be maintained.

4. Sandford K. (2014)
"7 Keys to Having a Courageous Conversation With Anyone"
Lifehack.org

Click to view reference

There may have been many times in your life when you should have had a courageous conversation but didn't. One of the main reasons why people don't have these types of conversations is because they don't know how to. These 7 keys to having a courageous conversation give you a framework that helps you to have a "Courageous Conversation", in which you can express and articulate your thoughts and opinions in a way that avoids awkward situations, quickly clears up misunderstandings and creates positive relationships in your life.