

Difficult Conversations: Common Mistakes

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: COMMON MISTAKES



Ten tips to help you pluck up the courage to have those difficult conversations

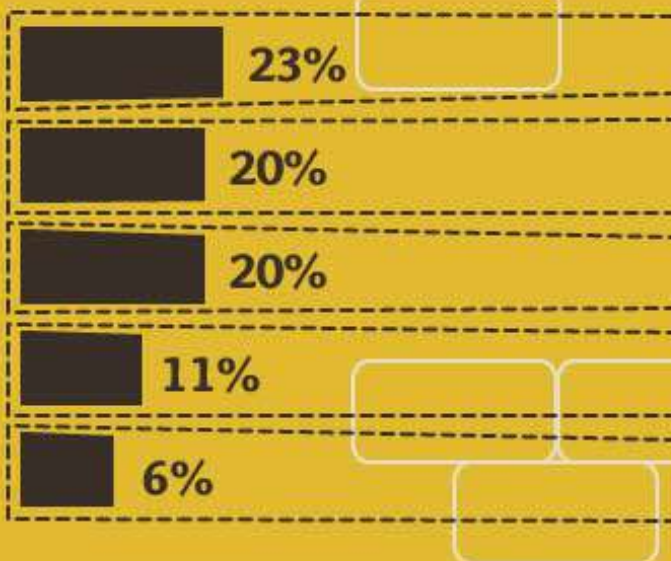


50% of managers cite difficult conversations as the biggest challenge they face in their role.¹



Cost of not having that uncomfortable conversation: 35% of employees leave their jobs voluntarily because of internal politics and conflict.²

The most difficult conversation subjects for managers³



behavioural issues

poor performance

personal hygiene

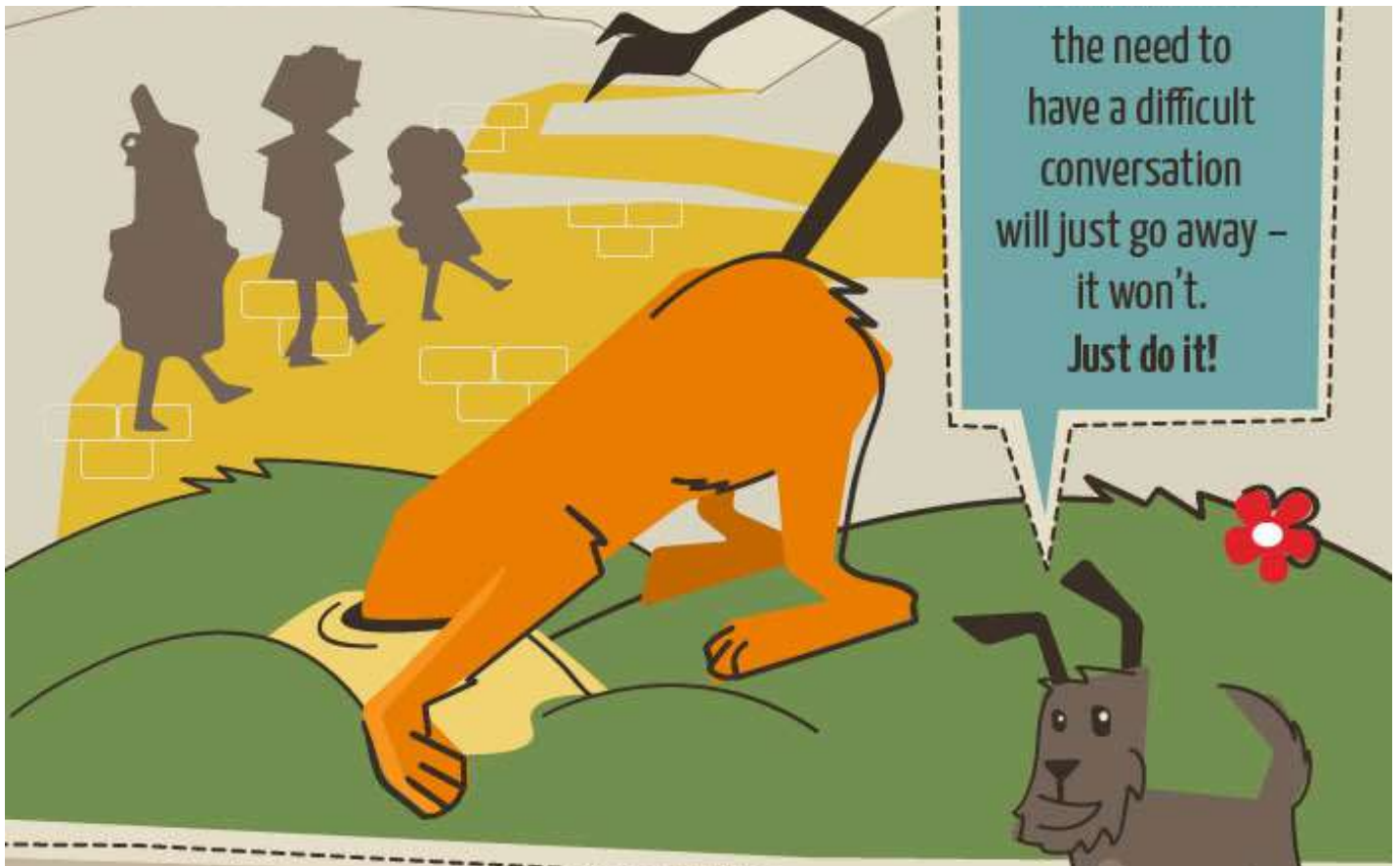
firing or redundancy

absence and lateness

MISTAKE 1

PROCRASTINATION

Don't assume



34%


25%

34% have put off holding a difficult conversation for at least a month. 25% have put it off for more than a year.⁴

MISTAKE 2

BEING UNPREPARED





Jumping straight in without thinking can cause serious problems, which can be just as bad as delaying the meeting.

To prepare well:



Gather as much factual information and evidence as you can.



Reflect on what you know about the other person – e.g. is their behaviour out of character?



Identify the key points you want to make.



Be clear on your desired outcome – what do you want to happen?

MISTAKE 3

WRONG TIME, WRONG PLACE





Choose a suitable time and place by booking a quiet, private room where you won't be disturbed.



Give the other person plenty of notice.



Be sure to allow enough time to explore both sides of the story.

MISTAKE 4

NOT BEING CLEAR ABOUT THE ISSUE





Focus on two things:



1. Describe:
What exactly is the behaviour that is causing the problem?



2. Explain:
What impact is the behaviour having on you, the team or the organisation?

MISTAKE 5

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS



Don't fall into the trap of making assumptions. There may be

Don't fall into the trap of making assumptions. There may be mitigating circumstances (e.g. illness or stress) which explain the negative behaviour both inside and outside the workplace.

MISTAKE 6

GETTING EMOTIONAL



Try not to raise your voice or lose your temper, even if the other person becomes angry or confrontational.



Stay focused on the issue, not the person.



Remain calm and objective.



Concentrate on facts and observable behaviours, not hearsay or personal opinion.

MISTAKE 1

NOT ASKING ENOUGH QUESTIONS



Use open-ended, probing questions to get to the bottom of things.

For example:



Can you tell me more about...?



What happened when...?



How did you feel...?

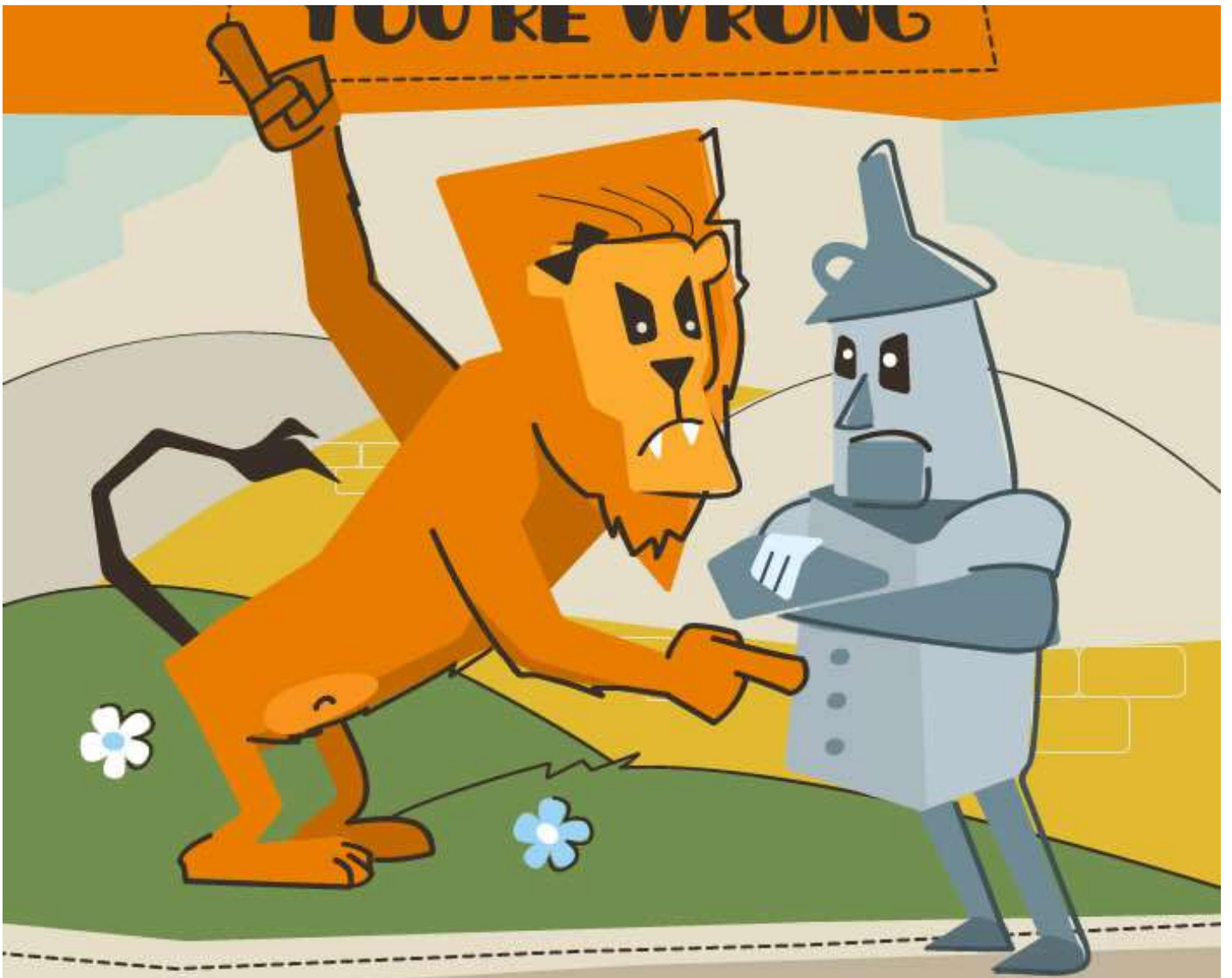


What was that like?

MISTAKE 8

I'M RIGHT AND YOU'RE WRONG

YOU'RE WRONG



Avoid using accusatory language or laying blame



e.g. 'You always...', 'You never...' etc.



Keep it neutral and use the passive voice

e.g. 'It was disappointing when...' rather than 'I was disappointed...'

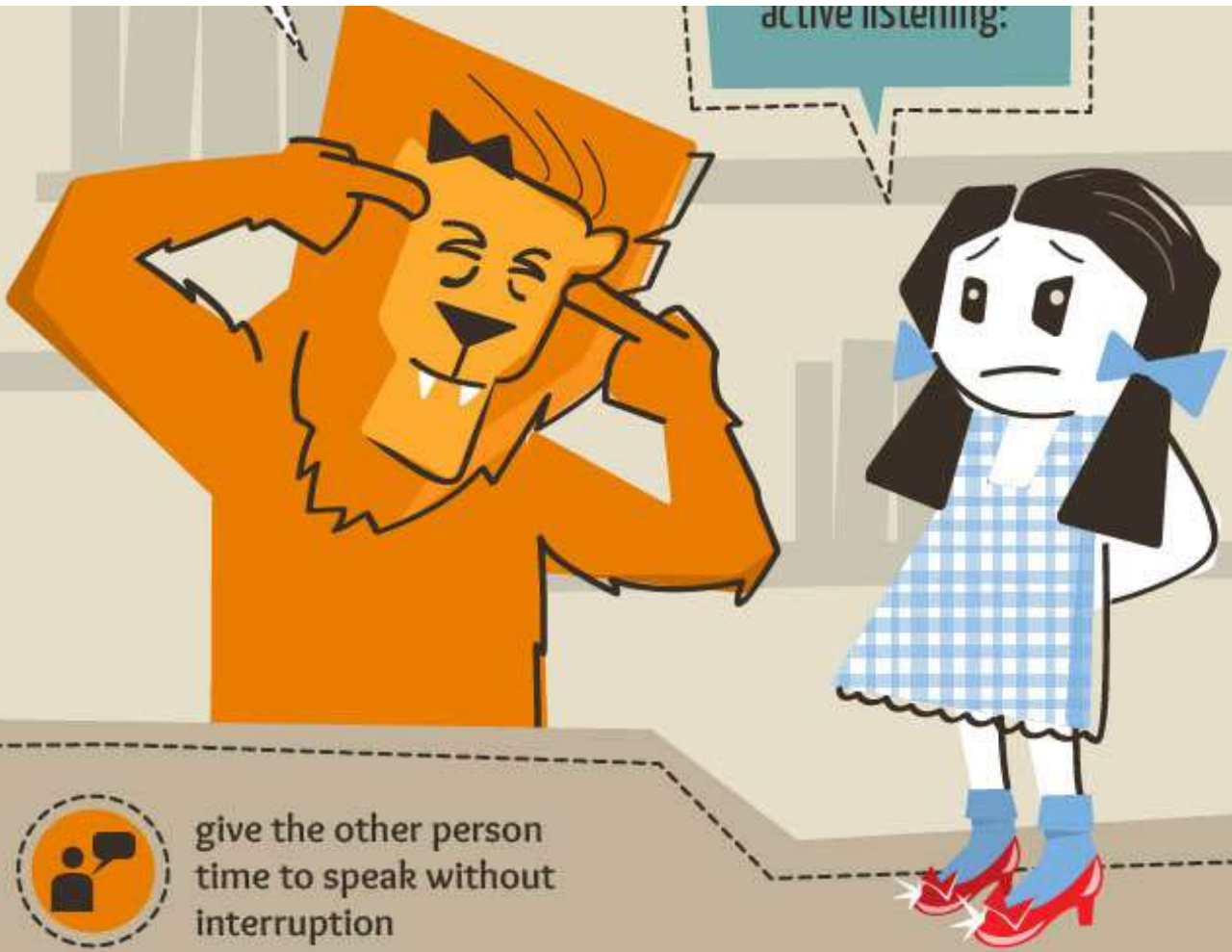
MISTAKE 9

NOT LISTENING

LA LA LA...

Don't do all the talking. Practise active listening.

active listening:



give the other person time to speak without interruption



acknowledge what you've heard



pay attention to body language and non-verbal signals

MISTAKE 10

NOT WORKING TOGETHER ON A JOINT SOLUTION



YOU MUST!





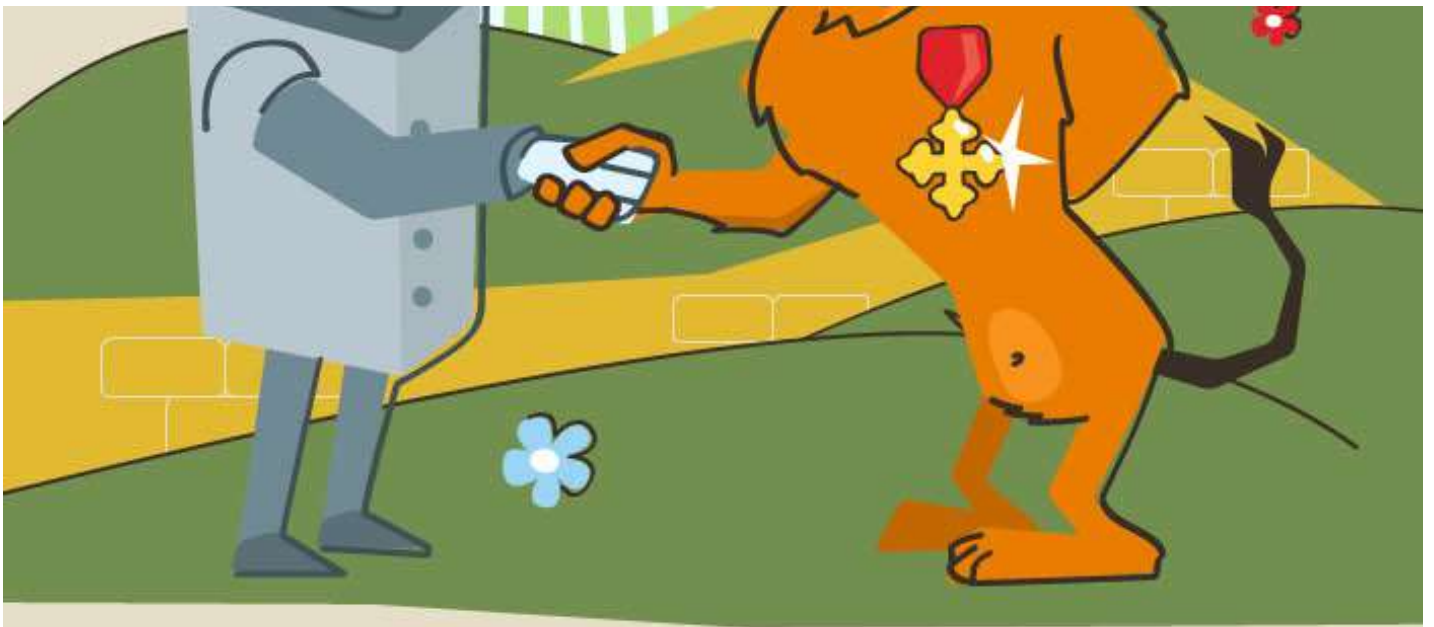
Ask the other person for suggestions on addressing the situation.



Agree next steps, who will be responsible for doing what and how to monitor progress.

**FINALLY,
DON'T FORGET
TO THANK THEM
FOR THEIR TIME!**





1. GoodPractice Insights, 'The Learning Habits of Leaders and Managers' (June 2012). Available at:
<http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/goodpractice-marketing/Learning+Habits.pdf>
(accessed 06 October 2014).

2. Accenture, 'Defining Success' (2013). Available at:
<http://www.accenture.com/sitecollectiondocuments/pdf/accenture-iwd-2013-research-deck-022013.pdf> (accessed 30 September 2014).

3. Learning Consultancy Partnership, 'Handling Difficult Conversations at Work' (23 February 2012). Available at:
http://lcp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Difficult_conversations_at_work_survey_results_and_guide.pdf (accessed 30 September 2014).

4. VitalSmarts, 'Employees Fear Crucial Conversations' (2009). Available at:
<http://cms.vital-smarts.com/d/d/workspace/spacesstore/29512982-0d6e-4ccb-9bb4-2389f3bf358a/employees>
(accessed 30 September 2014).

 **GoodPractice**
for leaders and managers



To download this infographic as a GIF, please right click on the image and select 'Save Image As'.