Quick How-To Guides: Core Skills for Leading Tough Conversations

Defusing Resistance
a. What it is: Acknowledging emotion or disagreement without escalating conflict.
b. Why it matters: Builds psychological safety and allows people to stay engaged instead of shutting down.
c. When to use it: When someone is angry, defensive, or blaming the union.
d. How to do it:
   i. Name the emotion or concern: "It sounds like you're frustrated."
   ii. Normalize the feeling: "You're not alone—others have felt that way too."
   iii. Redirect to shared ground: "Let's talk through what we can do next."
e. Try this: "I hear that you're upset. Let's figure out what part of this we can tackle together."

Framing with Purpose
a. What it is: Introducing a topic in a way that connects to values, goals, or shared interests.
b. Why it matters: Helps others see the bigger picture and lowers resistance to hard truths.
c. When to use it: Before delivering hard news, making a request, or challenging a decision.
d. How to do it:
   i. Start with a purpose: "I want to talk about this because we both care about…"
   ii. Acknowledge reality: "I know this might be a tough conversation."
   iii. Make the frame clear: "This isn't about blame—it's about finding a solution."
e. Try this: "My goal in bringing this up is to make sure we're protecting our team and our agreement."

Quick How-To Guides: Core Skills for Leading Tough Conversations

Holding Space for Solutions

a. What it is: Staying present, listening actively, and allowing ideas or concerns to emerge.

b. Why it matters: Builds trust, uncovers root causes, and prevents quick-fix assumptions.

c. When to use it: When emotions are high, or when others need time to process or contribute ideas.

d. How to do it:
   i. Listen without interrupting
   ii. Use open-ended questions: "What's your take on this?"
   iii. Pause before responding to give room for reflection.

e. Try this: "What do you think would move this forward?" / "What's most important to you in how we handle this?"