SODAK

# Tips for better conversations.

**In most workplaces, we quietly step around the topics that feel uncomfortable — difference, risk, feedback. We do it to stay polite… but the silence builds gaps: missed warning signs, uneven experiences, avoidable friction.**

Braver conversations don't have to be big confrontations. With a little structure, they can be short, curious check-ins that build trust, safety and better work.

Our card packs are built to open up honest, useful conversations at work. They work best when a few simple things are in place before you start. This guide will help you prepare, facilitate and follow up well, whichever pack you're using.

**WORKS WITH OUR CARD PACKS**

**Risk.**

**Performance.**

**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.**

# Setting up.

## Setting up for a good conversation

A few minutes of preparation makes a real difference to how useful (and how safe) these conversations feel.

### 1 Know your purpose

Are you using the cards for a regular team check-in, a one-off workshop, a 1:1 or a leadership session? The same card can land very differently depending on the setting — pick cards that suit the room, not just the topic.

### 2 Set the tone up front

Before you turn the first card over, say out loud what kind of conversation this is. A short opening does a lot of work:
***"This is a space to think out loud, not to have the right answer."***

### 3 Agree some ground rules

Even a quick, informal version helps:

- What's said in the room stays in the room (unless there's a safeguarding concern)
- It's okay to pass on a card
- One person speaks at a time
- Disagreement is welcome; disrespect isn't

### 4 Know your group

If there's known tension in the team, a recent difficult event, or people with very different levels of seniority or comfort speaking up, factor that into which cards you choose and how you facilitate.

02 — DURING THE CONVERSATION

# Facilitating well.

1 **You don’t have to use every card**

Pick the ones that are relevant. Skipping a card is a legitimate facilitation choice, not a failure.

2 **Participation is always optional**

Make it genuinely, visibly okay to pass on any card, or to answer briefly rather than deeply. Nobody should feel cornered into disclosing more than they intended to.

3 **Let silence happen**

These are reflective questions — people often need a moment before they answer. Resist the urge to fill the pause.

4 **Watch the room, not just the cards**

Notice who’s gone quiet, who’s dominating, and whether the energy has shifted. Your job as facilitator is to read the room as much as it is to work through the pack.

5 **Park, don’t push**

If a topic opens up something bigger than the session can hold, it’s fine to name that and agree to pick it up separately, rather than trying to resolve everything in the moment.

6 **Close every session properly**

End with a short reflection round or a simple “What’s one thing you’re taking away from this?” — it signals the conversation has a clear end point. Consider asking if there’s anything anyone wants to follow up on privately, and give people a chance to flag anything that’s still sitting with them.

# Keeping it safe.

### 1 Never make it about a specific person in the room

Keep the conversation on ideas, patterns and experiences in general — not "so what did you mean when you said X last week?" If a card seems likely to point at an individual situation, choose a different one or explicitly reframe it before asking.

### 2 No one should be asked to speak for their whole identity group

Nobody should feel expected to represent or explain "the [X] perspective." If a question risks putting someone in that position, it's worth naming that explicitly:
***"I'm not asking you to speak for everyone with this experience — just for yourself, if you're comfortable."***

### 3 Watch for signs the conversation has gone somewhere it shouldn't

Raised voices, someone visibly withdrawing, a comment that crosses from opinion into personal attack, or a disclosure that clearly needs a private conversation rather than a group one — these are all cues to pause the group activity. You can always say:
***"Let's pause here — I want to make sure we handle this well."***
...and follow up individually afterwards.

### 4 Have a plan if someone gets upset or discloses something sensitive

Know in advance who they can talk to afterwards — HR, an Employee Assistance Programme, a trusted manager — and be ready to offer that, calmly and without making it a bigger moment than it needs to be.




To help people understand people.