PRBB Intervals Course Proposal

Course Title: Difficult conversations in research: how to make them easier

Proposed dates: 29th January & 5th February 2026

Course Language: English

Course Leader: **Louise Schubert MSC, CIPD, EIA Senior Coach Practitioner and ESIA Coach Supervisor.**
Louise works with individuals and organizations as an executive coach, coach supervisor and consultant. She is experienced as trainer, to help professionals from all disciplines, improve their overall performance management and leadership skills.

Rationale for course:
This course is designed to help those people who need, as part of their role in managing or collaborating with others, to deliver difficult feedback. They will learn how to enable others to make changes in mindset or in how they carry out their work. These are referred to as difficult conversations. People tend to feel stress before starting them; very often they are postponed until the situation deteriorates and then it is even more difficult to manage.

Course aim – general
To consider different "tricky" situations; analyse the psychological dynamics at play and the existing levels of trust between the different stakeholders. Participants will develop an approach to enable positive outcomes for all parties. They will feel confident when faced with giving and receiving constructive feedback and will have the opportunity to practice the different skills during the programme.

Specific learning outcomes:

1. To develop techniques on how to:
   - Assess the complexity of the situation and consider the options.
   - Prepare how to deal with difficult feedback in a positive way
   - Set expectations for performance in the future.

2. To reflect on personal communication styles and develop alternative approaches which lead to conversations where new understanding and mutual trust are achieved.

3. To practice techniques to improve listening skills, question technique, dealing with emotions and acting with confidence in challenging conversations.

Course contents:

Part One:

- Welcome and introductions.
- Identification of situations when feedback is necessary; analysis of barriers that prevent the conversations from taking place and the outcomes.
- Psychological models which help us to understand and approach someone who needs to change behaviour.

- Guidelines for giving constructive feedback and preparation beforehand.
- Practice and feedback

Part Two

- Review since last time.
- Listening skills
- Question technique
- Handling emotions.
- Agreeing expectations and follow up
- Practice and feedback.
- Conclusion

Training methods

The programme will be highly participative, with a mixture of small group work, individual reflection, and explanation of relevant theory, exchange of ideas and practice of techniques through observed role play.

Target group in PRBB: Senior scientists, team leaders within scientific research and management/admin staff.

Number of participants: 12

Total course hours: 8 hours

Distribution of course: 2 modules of 4 hours with some reading and short preparation between the two modules.

Material participants need to bring: A willingness to share experiences, have a go and a desire to build on how they give feedback. There will be a contract of confidentiality agreed between those present.

Relevant background reading:

"Coaching for Performance" John Whitmore. Nicholas Brealey Publishing
"Conversational Intelligence" Judith E. Glaser. Bibliomotion Books and Media