

Defusing Tense Situations: the HEAT process

Review Conversations can be challenging, for example in situations where there is disagreement about the achievement of objectives or if the staff member responds with hostility to the discussion. It is important that the supervisor knows how to respond to a situation where emotions run high.

If emotions run high, the HEAT framework could help you to defuse the situation.

Hear them out

- Listen & don't interrupt

Empathise with their situation / feelings / viewpoints

- Acknowledge their emotion - "I can see that you are upset..."

Apologise / express your feelings (if appropriate)

- "I'm sorry that you feel ..."
- "This is difficult for me too..."

Take responsibility for continuously re-focusing on the objective, sticking to objective facts and moving forward, using the GROW approach.

- "Let's remind ourselves that the objective is to ..." (sometimes referred to as the 'broken record approach)
- "As mentioned, the reason that there is a need for improvement is based on the fact that ..."
- "Even though this is challenging, it is important for us to find a way to..."
- "How can we move forward / resolve this?"
- "Could I suggest that we discuss this at a later stage when we both feel calmer?" (if the situation becomes too tense)