



What do elephants, gorillas, and rugs have in common?

They are all used in phrases that refer to avoiding difficult, prickly, and sensitive topics.

- There's an elephant in the room.
- Did you notice the 600-pound gorilla on the table?
- Boy, he just swept that under the rug!

There's a reason we have so many ways to refer to these types of conversations - no one looks forward to them! Communication means telling the truth, even when it's hard. The truth about holding a difficult conversation is that it is a learned skill.

A few tips to hold successful, difficult conversations are:

1. State Your Intent or Desired Outcome - Let the other person know you'd like to clear the air or find a way to work together more effectively.
2. Name the Issue, Telling Your Truth - These are the facts as you see and experienced them.
3. Invite the Other Person to Respond - Listen, not just for what is said, but for what is not said.
4. Acknowledge and Ask Questions - Let them know you heard them and clarify what you heard.
5. Conclude with Solutions, Resolutions, Actions, and Commitments - For both parties.

Difficult conversations have their rewards - improved trust, teamwork, and morale, just to name a few. Plus, the room is more comfortable when it's clean and free of the large animals.