

7 Tips for Being Honest Without Negativity

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Being honest and being kind can be tough to do simultaneously. **There are times that it's easy to be honest, while other times can require far more tact.** There are even times when it's best to keep your opinions to yourself. It's not always easy to know when you should speak up and when you should keep your mouth shut.

Even when you're trying to be helpful, your honesty can backfire. Proceed with caution.

If you've decided to speak the truth, there are several things to keep in mind:

1. **Be gentle.** There are many ways to say something. For example, you could say to your spouse, "Of course it doesn't fit. You've been eating a lot for the last three months. What did you expect would happen?"

- You could also say, "Well, we haven't been very healthy lately. Maybe we need to skip dessert and start taking a walk after dinner. It might be fun."
- Avoid the temptation to harm the other person. **Focus on relaying the necessary information in a way that is kind to the other person.** There are many ways to get your point across to someone. Consider your options before you speak.

2. **Ask yourself, "Does this help the other person?"** Sometimes, the truth will be ignored even if you choose to share it. Sometimes, the truth only causes problems. **If you're quite certain that being honest isn't going to be beneficial, it's best to keep your comments, opinions, and advice to yourself.**

3. Start with the positive. Before you say something that might hurt the other person's feelings, start with a few positive statements. Spend a moment talking about the positive before diving into the negative.

- This can be a great way for dealing with an employee. "We love how you do xyz, and we're grateful to have you as an employee. But it would be better for the company if you did abc this way instead."
- Leading with praise or compliments can greatly lessen the sting of constructive criticism. Make it a point to say something pleasant before delivering a harsh truth.

4. Have your conversation in private. Some honest conversations are best done in private. Having the wrong conversation in front of others can create a lot of negativity. That same conversation might not be a big deal if done one on one.

5. Focus on the behavior or situation instead of the person. If you're addressing someone's behavior, keep the honesty focused on the behavior instead of making it personal.

6. Question your motivation. Before unleashing your honesty on the other person, ask yourself what your true motivation is. **Are you trying to be helpful?** Or, are you trying to even the score? Are you doing it because it will benefit the other person, or are you trying to make them feel bad?

7. Think about the likely outcome. Be realistic and ask yourself what the likely outcome will be from your conversation. Do you expect things to go well or poorly?

Examine your true motivations for being honest in each situation. We're often just doing it for ourselves or causing more harm than good to the other person. **You might consider yourself an "honest" person, but there are times when you should consider keeping your comments to yourself.**

Each situation is unique, so it's impossible to have a single rule that always applies. Use your common sense before offering your two cents.