SPEAK WITH DARSHANA

50

Say It Like a Leader

Calm Responses for Difficult Moments at Work

10 Workplace Situations	**50** Leader-Level Responses
10 Phrase Upgrades	**1** Simple Method

For confident English speakers ready to sound composed, clear and credible under pressure.

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CONTENTS

What's Inside

1 **The Calm Response Method**
What to do in the first five seconds

50 **Responses for 10 Difficult Situations**
Five leader-level lines for each · 1 to 50

10 **Phrases That Quietly Weaken You**
And what to say instead

How to use this guide

Read aloud. Say each line out loud, at a calm, steady pace.

Choose your words. Adapt each line so it sounds like you, not a script.

Use it for real. Pick one line and use it in your next meeting.

BEFORE YOU SPEAK

The Calm Response Method

Your English is already strong. What changes how you are perceived is what you say in the first five seconds of a difficult moment.

1

Pause

Take two seconds before you respond. A short pause reads as control, not hesitation.

2

Acknowledge

Name what is happening without blame. "I see your point." "That's a fair question."

3

Steer

Move the conversation forward with a clear next step.

A NOTE ON TONE

The words are only half the message. Slow your pace slightly, keep your volume steady, and finish your sentences without rising at the end. Calm delivery makes firm words sound respectful.

01

PART 1

10 Difficult Situations, 5 Responses Each

Ten moments every professional faces sooner or later. Five calm, composed responses for each, so you can stay firm without sounding harsh.

RESPONSES 1 TO 50

SITUATION 1 OF 10

When Someone Interrupts You

Being interrupted once is normal. Allowing it every time quietly reduces your presence in the room.

INSTEAD OF ~~"Excuse me, I was speaking!" or simply going silent.~~

1. Let me just finish this point, and then I'd really like to hear your view.
2. Hold that thought for a moment. I'm nearly there.
3. I'd like to complete this, because the next part answers what you're raising.
4. Can I finish this first? Then the floor is yours.
5. I'll come back to you on that in a moment. Let me close this point first.

WHY IT WORKS

You keep the floor without turning it into a contest. Offering them a turn signals confidence, not defensiveness.

SITUATION 2 OF 10

When Someone Takes Credit for Your Work

This one stings. The goal is to reclaim ownership calmly, without an accusation in front of others.

INSTEAD OF ~~"That was my idea!"~~

6 I'm glad that idea is getting attention. Let me build on what I proposed last week.

7 Thanks for picking that up. When I put that analysis together, the key finding was...

8 Happy to walk everyone through the detail, since I developed the original model.

9 That connects to the proposal I shared on Tuesday. I can take it forward from here.

10 IN PRIVATE:
I noticed my work was presented without my name on it. Going forward, I'd like us to be clear about who owns what.

WHY IT WORKS

You reclaim credit by adding detail only the author would know. The room draws its own conclusion.

SITUATION 3 OF 10

When You Don't Know the Answer Yet

Guessing damages credibility. A clear holding response builds it.

INSTEAD OF ~~Guessing, or a flat "I don't know."~~

11 That's a fair question. I'd rather give you an accurate answer than a quick one. I'll come back to you by 4 pm.

12 I don't have that figure to hand. Let me confirm it and send it across today.

13 Here's what I can tell you now, and here's what I still need to verify.

14 I'd like to check that with the team before I commit to a number.

15 Good question. Let me take that away and come back with something solid.

WHY IT WORKS

Leaders are not expected to know everything. They are expected to be precise about what they know. A time commitment turns uncertainty into reliability.

SITUATION 4 OF 10

When You Disagree with Someone Senior

Silence in the meeting and complaints after it help no one. Respectful disagreement is a leadership skill.

INSTEAD OF ~~"No, that won't work." or nodding along and raising it later.~~

16 I see the reasoning. Could I offer a different angle before we decide?

17 I'd like to flag a risk I'm seeing with this approach.

18 Here's where I see it differently, and why.

19 I'm fully committed to making this work. Before we finalise it, can we look at the timeline once more?

20 If we go ahead as planned, here's what I'd want us to watch closely.

WHY IT WORKS

You disagree with the plan, not the person. Framing it as a risk shows you are protecting the shared goal.

SITUATION 5 OF 10

When You Receive Harsh or Unfair Feedback

Your first reaction is rarely your best one. Slow the moment down.

INSTEAD OF ~~"That's not true!" or apologising for everything.~~

21 Thank you for being direct. Could you give me a specific example so I can act on it?

22 I hear you. Let me think about that properly before I respond.

23 That's useful to know. What would good look like to you here?

24 I see it slightly differently, and I'd like to share some context. I'm also open to what you're saying.

25 Let's agree on what I'll do differently, and check in again in two weeks.

WHY IT WORKS

Asking for specifics moves the conversation from judgement to evidence. You stay open without accepting what isn't fair.

SITUATION 6 OF 10

When You Need to Push Back on Work or a Deadline

Saying yes to everything is not commitment. It is a delayed problem.

INSTEAD OF ~~"I can't do this." or saying yes and struggling quietly.~~

26 I can take this on. What would you like me to deprioritise to make room for it?

27 To do this properly, I'd need until Thursday. If Tuesday is fixed, here's what I can deliver by then.

28 Here's what's currently on my plate. Help me understand where this fits.

29 I'd rather commit to a realistic date than miss an ambitious one.

30 I can't take on the full piece this week, but I can own the first section.

WHY IT WORKS

You offer trade-offs, not refusals. That positions you as someone who manages priorities, not someone who avoids work.

SITUATION 7 OF 10

When a Conversation Gets Heated

When voices rise, the calmest person usually ends up leading the room.

INSTEAD OF ~~Matching their volume, or shutting down.~~

31 I can see this matters a great deal to you. Let's work through it together.

32 Let's take a step back and look at what we both want here.

33 I want to understand your concern properly. Walk me through it.

34 I think we'd both benefit from a short break. Can we pick this up at 3?

35 We're on the same side here. Let's focus on the problem, not on each other.

WHY IT WORKS

Calm is contagious. Lower your pace and volume, and the other person often follows.

SITUATION 8 OF 10

When You've Made a Mistake

How you own a mistake is remembered longer than the mistake itself.

INSTEAD OF ~~"It wasn't entirely my fault…" or "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry."~~

36 That's on me. Here's what happened and here's how I'm fixing it.

37 I got this wrong. The corrected version will be with you by end of day.

38 I've found the gap, and I've put a check in place so it doesn't happen again.

39 I should have flagged this earlier. I'm flagging it now, with a solution.

40 I take full responsibility. Let me walk you through the impact and the next steps.

WHY IT WORKS

One clear acknowledgement, then the fix. Over-apologising reduces trust. Ownership builds it.

SITUATION 9 OF 10

When a Meeting Goes Off Track

You don't need a senior title to steer a meeting. You need the right sentence.

INSTEAD OF ~~Sighing, or silently checking the time.~~

41 This is an important point. Can we park it and come back to it at the end?

42 In the interest of time, let's bring it back to the decision we need today.

43 Let me summarise where we are, so we can move forward.

44 We have 15 minutes left. What do we need to agree on before we leave?

45 Shall we take this offline with the people directly involved?

WHY IT WORKS

Steering a meeting is a visible act of leadership. People notice who brings the room back to the point.

SITUATION 10 OF 10

When You Have to Deliver Bad News

Bad news does not improve with delay. Clarity is a form of respect.

INSTEAD OF ~~Hiding it in the last slide, or over-explaining before getting to the point.~~

46 I'll start with the headline: we won't meet the March deadline.

47 This isn't the update you were hoping for, so I'll be direct.

48 Here's where we are, here's why, and here's what I recommend.

49 The good news is we caught it early. Here are our options.

50 I wanted you to hear this from me first.

WHY IT WORKS

Lead with the headline, then the plan. People trust the person who tells them early and comes with options.

02

PART 2

10 Phrases That Quietly Weaken You

Small habits in your language can make you sound less certain than you are. These upgrades help your words match your capability.

PHRASE UPGRADES

UPGRADE YOUR EVERYDAY LINES

Say This Instead

Each line on the left is common, polite and perfectly understood. The line on the right says the same thing with more clarity and quiet confidence.

INSTEAD OF	SAY
~~Sorry to bother you, but...~~	Do you have two minutes? I'd like your input on...
~~I just wanted to check...~~	I'm checking on...
~~I think maybe we could...~~	I recommend we...
~~Does that make sense?~~	What questions do you have?
~~I'm not sure if this is right, but...~~	Here's my view.
~~Sorry for the delay.~~	Thank you for your patience.
~~I'll try to finish it by Friday.~~	You'll have it by Friday.
~~Kindly do the needful.~~	Could you please complete this by Wednesday?
~~Please revert back.~~	Please let me know by Thursday.
~~Basically, what I'm saying is...~~	Start with the point itself.

> Start with one swap this week. Once it feels natural, add the next.

YOU NOW HAVE 50

Calm is a choice you make in the first five seconds.

Pick one situation. Practise the five lines aloud. Use one this week.

For more everyday and workplace English, follow along on Instagram.

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