Session Report

Dialoque · AI voice practice for difficult conversations

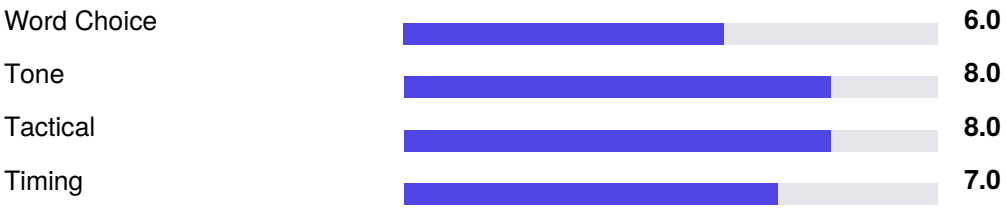
Participant	
Date	October 18, 2026
Duration	10m 43s
Domain	Workplace
Category	Frontline Teams
Scenario	The Once-Reliable Lead
Persona	Chris
Your role	You initiated the conversation
Session ID	Sample

Situation

Chris is in their third season as a team lead and used to be my most dependable. Since being passed over for a year-round role in the spring, Chris has been skipping pre-shift checks, leaving early, and letting newer crew cut corners. I need to address the slide directly and find out what's going on without lecturing about the promotion.

Scorecard

Overall 7.3 / 10



Strengths

You held your ground with real warmth here — even as Chris got sarcastic and challenged your authority directly, you stayed steady and kept steering the conversation back toward a constructive path instead of getting pulled into a fight about who's right. Your choice to ask Chris to reconstruct what actually happened in his review, rather than just telling him what he did wrong, was a smart coaching move that let him arrive at his own insight. You also tied the behavior change to something bigger than compliance — his long-term growth — which is exactly what turned his posture from defensive to open by the end.

What landed well

> *"You've been such a good, dependable worker in the past, but I've been noticing... you've been skipping some pre-shift checks, leaving early, and letting newer crew members cut corners."*
>
> Naming specific, observable behaviors instead of vague complaints gave Chris something concrete to respond to rather than something to argue with.

"I know it must have been very disappointing to have been passed over."

Naming the feeling behind the behavior, rather than just the behavior itself, is what got Chris to lower his guard enough to explain his side.

"What would have happened if you had said to the person giving you the performance review, 'Can you please be specific about what you mean by leadership presence and consistency?'"

This question let Chris discover the missed opportunity himself instead of you pointing it out, which made the insight land without triggering more defensiveness.

"If you get discouraged and you ever decide to leave... you're gonna need these skills."

Framing the ask as a transferable career skill rather than a favor to the organization reframed the conversation from compliance to Chris's own self-interest.

Growth opportunities

The one pattern worth tightening up is how often you softened your own authority with filler — 'Well,' 'I think,' 'I'm not sure about that' — right at the moments you needed to sound most certain, like when stating what success actually looks like. You've got the instincts (curiosity, patience, reframing) already; the next level is trusting those instincts enough to state them cleanly, without the verbal padding, especially once Chris had calmed down and was ready to hear something direct. A second small shift: in your opening, you connected the passed-over promotion to his behavior before asking him for his version — worth leading with the question first so he doesn't feel like the story's already been decided about him.

Statements to try next time

"I've noticed some changes since the spring — leaving early, skipping checks — and I want to understand what's been going on for you before I jump to conclusions."

Leading with curiosity instead of your own interpretation invites Chris to share his story rather than feeling like he's confirming a verdict you'd already reached.

"Here's exactly what moving up requires: pre-shift checks done every time, no early departures, and speaking up when something's unclear — that's the bar."

Stating the expectation in one clean sentence, without 'well' or 'I think' in front of it, signals confidence and makes the ask impossible to misread.

"I hear that the feedback felt vague and that it stung to be passed over — and I still need you to hold the crew to standard starting this week. Let's figure out together what gets in the way of that."

Pairing acknowledgment with a firm, unambiguous timeline keeps the empathy from accidentally diluting the accountability.

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Transcript

"You" is the participant. "Agent" is the AI role-play partner playing the Chris.

Agent: Hey, what's up? Everything okay?

You: Hi, Chris. Hey, we need to talk for a minute. Um, there's some stuff that's been brought to my attention, and I want to come up with a solution. You've been such a good, dependable worker in the past, but I've been noticing and, and been alerted to the fact that you've been skipping some pre-shift checks, leaving early, and letting newer crews, uh, crew members cut corners. And I'm wondering if you're aware of that and how you've experienced it.

Agent: shifts weight, looks away briefly Yeah, I mean... everything's fine. The crew handles it. We get the work done,

don't we? I've been doing this for three seasons — I know what actually matters and what's just box-checking.

You: Well, Chris, what I'm aware of is that you were passed over for a year-round role in the spring, and since that happened, you've been skipping and leaving early and letting the crew cut corners. I think... I, I know it must have been very disappointing to have been passed over.

Agent: pauses, jaw tightens slightly Yeah, it was. Look, I put in the work, I know this operation better than half the supervisors here, and it didn't count for anything. So why should I keep going above and beyond when it clearly doesn't matter? I show up, I do my job — that should be enough.

You: Well, Chris, I, again, I see how disappointed you were and are, clears throat but it's coming out in indirect ways, and I think we need to address it directly and to make sure that your behavior is up to the standards. Um, when you say you're doing your job, it doesn't seem like skipping the shifts and leaving early and so forth is doing the job. And I wanna find out what's getting in the way, uh, so we can all be comfortable and...Get you back to that dependable worker.And respected worker that you have been in the past.

Agent: crosses arms, meets your eyes directly Okay, so let me get this straight — you want me back to being "dependable" so the operation runs smooth, but when it came time to actually recognize that with the year-round position, I wasn't good enough? You're telling me my behavior needs to change, but nobody's telling me what I need to do differently to actually get somewhere here. What's the real path forward, or are we just talking about me working harder for the same result?

You: Well, that's a good point you're making. No, not working harder. I think it's important for you to know what the goals are to, uh, obtain a leadership position. Now, during your informal talks and your formal reviews, has no one told you what could be improved?

Agent: looks down, then back up with a harder edge They said something vague about "leadership presence" and "consistency" — nothing I could actually work with. But here's the thing: I was consistent. I showed up every day, trained half the people on this crew, covered shifts when people bailed. And someone else got the job anyway. So either those reviews didn't mean anything, or there's something you're not saying. Which is it?

You: Well, I- let me understand this. Somebody else got the job. What was the difference between that person and you? Any idea?

Agent: lets out a short, bitter laugh You tell me. They had less experience, less time here. Maybe they interviewed better, maybe they knew the right people, I don't know. All I know is I did everything I was supposed to do and it wasn't enough. So now you're asking me what the difference was — shouldn't you know that? You're management.

You: Well, I want us both to think out this situation and come up with, uh, again, a reasonable solution. Listen, when you got the reviews, you got some vague, as you described it, some vague, uh, words about how you could improve. Could you tell me what those words were again?

Agent: sighs, clearly frustrated "Leadership presence" and "consistency." That's what they said. But I was here every day, doing the work. So what does that even mean? Because from where I'm sitting, it sounds like code for something else, and nobody's being straight with me about what I actually need to do differently.

You: Well, Chris, what, what would have happened if you had said to the person giving you the performance review, "Can you please be specific about what you mean by leadership presence and consistency? Those are general terms, and I'm not sure how they apply to me."

Agent: pauses, looks caught off guard for a second, then defensive I... I mean, yeah, I could've pushed back more. But when your supervisor's telling you that stuff in a review, it doesn't exactly feel like the moment to argue. And honestly? I figured if I just kept doing good work, it would speak for itself. Guess I was wrong about that.

You: Well, who's talk- Chris, who's talking about arguing? What's wrong with saying, "I, I'm not sure I understand when you say leadership stuff and, and consistency. Um, I, I would, I would like some, some elaboration so that I'm clear on what efforts I need to take to get a higher position."

Agent: uncrosses arms slightly, looks less defensive but still guarded Yeah... okay, fair point. I didn't ask. I just took it and assumed they'd see the work. But where does that leave us now? Because I still don't know what

"leadership presence" actually means, and I'm already feeling like I got burned once for trying.

You: Well, I'm not sure about that, that you got burned for trying. I, I think that one of the things that would be a leadership trait is to ask questions when you're not sure, and to get clarification and get prioritization of tasks, and also to, um, to offer, to propose creative solutions. Now, I don't know if that's one of the things that you were asked to do or, or found to be lacking in, uh, but certainly speaking upin a, in a respectful way is, is a, uh, a benefit, not a, not a weakness.

Agent: nods slowly, some of the edge softening Alright. I hear you. I should've spoken up, asked for specifics instead of just... shutting down. But if I start doing that now — actually asking questions, proposing solutions, showing up the way I used to — what's different this time? I need to know this isn't just about getting me back in line so the season runs smooth.

You: No. This is developing skills that you're gonna use here or wherever you go. If you get discouraged and you ever decide to leave, and you may, you may get a promotion or a better job elsewhere, you're gonna need these skills. And that's to ask for clarification and of- to be proactive about these things.Uh, not just wait for somebody to give you orders.

Agent: takes a breath, posture relaxes a bit Okay. I can work with that. So if I start doing the pre-shift checks again, stop cutting out early, hold the crew to standard — and actually speak up when I need clarity or see a better way to do something — are we gonna have real conversations about what it takes to move up? Not just vague reviews, but actual feedback I can use?

You: Yes, we will. And I, I would start with the first thing, and that's speaking up when there's not clarity. And if there's, um, a problem with someone on the shift, or a guest problem, or so on, um, it's important to get details and find out what the staff member did, or what they thought, or how they experienced it, so you can help them problem solve. And then the other things, like you said, um, showing up on time, not cutting corners, and so on, they would be manifestations of, um, uh, uh, more satisfaction and a better attitude. And again, I'm explaining the, the... You're not out of the running for a leadership position, but I wanna help you find a, a, a more effective path to that position.

Agent: meets your eyes, nods with something closer to the old Chris Alright. I can do that. I'll start asking the questions, stop assuming people know what I'm thinking, and yeah — I'll get back to the standard I used to hold. I appreciate you being straight with me about this instead of just writing me up or whatever. Let's see where it goes.