Keeping the relationship and your self-respect

Two short guides for how you say it, as well as what you say.

In any difficult conversation you are balancing three things: getting what you want, keeping the relationship, and keeping your self-respect. These two sets of reminders look after the second and third.

When the relationship matters: GIVE

Gentle	No attacks, threats, eye-rolling or sarcasm. Say hard things kindly.
Interested	Listen. Do not interrupt. Be curious about their side.
Validate	Show that you understand their feelings or point of view, even if you disagree. "I can see why that annoyed you."
Easy manner	A little warmth or lightness. Loosen your face and shoulders.

When your self-respect matters: FAST

Fair	Be fair to them and to yourself. Your needs count as much as theirs.
Apologies kept for when they are due	Do not apologise for having an opinion, asking, or taking up space.
Stick to your values	Do not give up what matters to you to be liked or to keep the peace.
Truthful	No lying, exaggerating or acting helpless.

A conversation coming up. Which matters most this time: the result, the relationship or my self-respect?

Which reminders do I most need to hold on to?

GIVE and FAST are skills from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), developed by Marsha Linehan.

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