Giving sensitive feedback – Part 1

For non-native speakers it is all too easy to come across as direct and unfeeling. We created a scenario where workshop participants acted as HR professionals/Managers supporting their teams in managing a range of confidential issues in a 1 to 1 meeting. Some key expressions we generated are noted below.

Context 1: From the perspective of the employee:

Setting the context of the meeting:
- Thank you for agreeing to see me today.
- I really appreciate your time today.
- Thanks for agreeing to see me at short notice.
- It is a really helpful for me to talk this through.

Stating your problems:
- I have been experiencing a difficult time at work because…
- The last few weeks, months have been challenging because…
- I have had a challenging period because…
- I have struggled with…
- I have found my motivation has suffered in relation to…
- I have found the objectives difficult to deliver because…
- I am still very committed to xxx, however the last few weeks have been…
- I find it difficult to…
- My relationship with xxx has suffered because of…
- My level of performance has dipped (gone down) because of …

Moving forward:

- I would welcome the opportunity to…
- My next step is to….
- I think I need to…
- If it is possible, I would like to…
- I value your support and my next step is to…
- To move forward I need/want/would like to…
- It is important for me that we find a solution to…
- With your support I am confident I/we can…

For example, if you have a serious problem which requires immediate action, your language might need to be direct. However, if you require some support but are mindful of the need to retain your credibility in a very competitive environment, you might want to use more moderate language. The differences can be seen below.

1) Urgent: I really need your help, my performance has suffered because of…

2) Considered: I would welcome your support. While generally my work is going very well I am looking to find a solution to..