CLEMSON UNIVERSITY OMBUDS OFFICE

THE CONCERN FORMULA

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When you have a list of issues to share with someone, it can be easy to get off course, share more than you need to, and immobilize the other person with a deluge of complaints. For example, how is someone supposed to respond to this?

He is toxic. He micromanages me. I can't work with him anymore.

The most effective way to get your concerns addressed is to share them in a way that the other person can respond to them. Be specific with examples. Give the reasons behind why this is a concern. Give the other person an action step they can take.

THE CONCERN FORMULA

Concern

Example of Concern

Reason it's a Concern

Request

What if you said this instead?

Concern

I am concerned about the way he is supervising me.

Example of Concern

Last week, he required me to send him all the emails I would normally send to other people, so he could approve them first.

Reason it's a Concern

It makes me feel incompetent and like he doesn't trust me.

Request

I want to be able to send people emails without him having to approve them first, and I request that we have a broader conversation about my performance if he has concerns.

Now the other person understands why you are struggling with this situation and has a reasonable request to respond to. This formula can keep you on track and move you toward resolution.