CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS®

TOOLS FOR TALKING WHEN STAKES ARE HIGH

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WHY CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS®?

Effective Dialogues

Effective dialogues require free exchange of meaning (beliefs, experiences, feelings, perspectives) between people. They allow people to get a more complete picture, build on others' ideas, and make more informed decisions.

What are Crucial Conversations

Crucial conversations involve opposing views, strong feelings and high stakes. As a result, we tend to avoid them, or handle them badly.

Why they Matter

Their outcomes can affect the quality of our relationships, careers and life. By identifying and managing these conversations, we can achieve what we truly want.

7 PRINCIPLES FOR MASTERING CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

1 Start with Heart

Get the Right Focus

Focus on What you Truly Want

Get clear on what you *really* want for (a) yourself, (b) others and (c) the relationship.

Stay focused. When we're upset, our attention shifts – we try to *avoid* conflict, *win* an argument, or *punish* others for hurting us. Step back, check your motives, and refocus on your original goal.

Refuse the Fool's Choice

Don't choose between 2 bad options. Define what you *want*, what you *don't want*, and focus a solution that addresses both outcomes – ask, "**How can I achieve A *and* B?**"

2 Learn to Look

Know when it's Unsafe

Learn to watch both the ***content*** and ***conditions*** of a dialogue: know when it's breaking down so you can bring it back on track.

Conversation Cues

Look for **physical**, **emotional** or **behavioural cues** that the conversation has shifted from a normal to crucial one.

Loss of Safety

Look for **silence** (e.g. avoidance, vagueness, withdrawal) or **violence** (e.g. controlling, labelling, attacking) – these are signs that people feel unsafe.

Personal Cues

Know your own "**stress style**" and your typical response when threatened, so you can look for the cues.

3 Make it Safe

Facilitate an Open Dialogue

To rebuild safety, ***step out*** of the conversation, ***restore*** safety, then ***resume*** the dialogue

Identify what's at Risk

To start and continue a dialogue, you need **Mutual Purpose** and **Mutual Respect**. Identify what's missing or breaking down.

Restore Safety

Apologize if your mistake has caused pain to others.

Use **contrasting** to correct misunderstandings (address their concerns, then affirm your goals)

Use the CRIB approach (Commit, Recognize, Invent, Brainstorm) to develop **common goals**.

4 Master your Stories

Stay in dialogue despite negative feelings

Know & Master your Stories

Retrace your Path – look at your actions, feelings, and check the facts behind the stories.

Tell the Full Story. Watch out for 3 types of unconstructive stories (the victim/ villain/ helpless) and convert them to helpful stories (the actor/ human/ able).

Understand the "Path to Action"

When we see/ hear something, we conjure a story to explain it – this triggers feelings that affect our actions.

See & Hear → Create Story → Evoke Feelings → Take Action

5 State your Path

Share your views persuasively

Use "**STATE**" to convey your views while maintaining a positive, respectful tone.

- **Share the Facts** (rather than the story)
- **Tell your Story** (using contrasting & looking for safety cues)
- **Ask for Others' Path** (encourage them to share their facts, stories, feelings)
- **Talk Tentatively** (avoid absolutes)
- **Encourage Testing** (invite others to disprove your story)

6 Explore Others' Path

Be a Good Listener

Encourage others to share (AMPP)

Ask or sincerely invite them to share their views.

Mirror what you see and hear, to confirm their feelings.

Paraphrase to ensure correct understanding.

Prime (make a best-guess of their story for validation) as a last resort.

Minimize disagreement

Use the **ABC** (Agree, Build, Compare) approach to sustain dialogue.

7 Move to Action

Convert dialogue to results

Make specific decisions

Make decisions via command, consultation, voting or consensus, and involve the right people.

Ensure follow-up

Clearly specify who to do what by when, and establish clear follow-up and accountability.

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