

Crucial Conversations
Tools for Talking When Stakes are High
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Chapter 1: What's a Crucial Conversation? And Who Cares?

The void created by the failure to communicate is soon filled with poison, drivel, and misrepresentations. –C. Northcote Parkinson

Definition: noun-A discussion between two or more people where (1) stakes are high, (2) opinions vary, and (3) emotions run strong

Chapter 2: Mastering Crucial Conversations-The Power of Dialogue

Give me a lever long enough and I shall move the world. -Archimedes

You will learn how to create conditions in yourself and others that make dialogue the path of least resistance, you will learn the key skills of talking, listening and acting together, you will master the tools for talking when stakes are high.

Chapter 3: Start with Heart-How to Stay Focused on What You Really Want

More than any time in history mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness, the other to total extinction. Let us pray that we have the wisdom to choose correctly. -Woody Allen

Work on me first, focus on what you really want, and refuse the sucker's choice

Chapter 4: Learn to Look-How to Notice When Safety is at Risk

I have known a thousand scamps; but I never met one who considered himself so. Self-knowledge isn't so common. –Ovidal

Learn to look at content and conditions, for when things become crucial, to watch for safety problems, to see if others are moving toward silence or violence, for outbreaks of your Style Under Stress.

Chapter 5: Make It Safe-How to Make It Safe to Talk about Almost Anything

They had lived together so many years that they mistook their arguments for conversation. –Marjorie Kellogg

When others move to silence or violence step out of the conversation and make it safe.

When safety is restored, go back to the issue at hand and continue the dialogue. Decide which condition of safety is at Risk (mutual purpose, mutual respect); Apologize when Appropriate; use contrasting to fix misunderstanding; CRIB to get to mutual purpose (C-commit to seek Mutual Purpose; R-Recognize the purpose behind the strategy; I-invent a Mutual Purpose; B-Brainstorm new strategies.

Chapter 6: Master My Stories-How to Stay in Dialogue When You're Angry, Scared or Hurt

It's not how you play the game; it's how the game plays you.

Retrace your Path: Notice your behavior, Get in touch with your feelings, Analyze your stories, Get back to the facts, watch for clever stories; Tell the rest of the story and ask: Am I pretending not to notice my role in the problem, Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do this, What do I really want, what would I do right now if I really wanted these results?

Chapter 7: STATE My Path- How to Speak Persuasively Not Abrasively

Outspoken by whom? -Dorothy Parker when told that she was very outspoken

Share your facts-start with the least controversial, most persuasive elements from your path to action; Tell your story-explain what you're beginning to conclude; Ask for others' paths-encourage others to share both their facts and their stories; Talk tentatively-state your story as a story-don't disguise it as a fact; Encourage testing-make it safe for others to express differing or even opposing views.

Chapter 8: Explore Others' Paths- How to Listen When Others Blow Up or Calm Down

One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears—by listening to them. – Dean Rusk

To encourage the free flow of meaning and help others leave silence or violence behind, explore their Path to Action. Start with an attitude of curiosity and patience. This helps restore safety. Then, use four powerful listening skills to retrace the other person's Path to Action to its origins. Ask, Mirror, Paraphrase, and Prime.

Chapter 9: Move to Action-How to Turn Crucial Conversation into Action and Results

To do nothing is in every man's power-Samuel Johnson

Turn your successful crucial conversations into great decisions and united action by avoiding the two traps of violated expectations and inaction.

Decide how to decide: Command-decisions are made without involving others, Consult-Input is gathered from the group and then a subset decides, Vote-an agreed-upon percentage swings the decision, Consensus-everyone comes to an agreement and then supports the final decision.

Chapter 10: Putting It All Together-Tools for Preparing and Learning

Communication works for those who work at it. -John Powell

If we first learn to recognize when safety is at risk and a conversation becomes crucial (Learn to Look) and that we need to take steps to Make It Safe for everyone to contribute his or her meaning, we can begin to see where to apply the skills we've learned. A visual model can also help us see where the principles and skills are needed. Using these tools and reminders will get us started in mastering the skills that help us improve our crucial conversations.

Chapter 11: Yeah, But-Advice for Tough Cases

A man surprised is half beaten. – Thomas Fuller

In worst cases consider two dimensions: (1) what bothers you the most? (2) What might be the easiest to work on? Look for those areas that are the most grievous to you and might not be all that hard to talk about. Pick one element and work on it. Establish mutual purpose. Frame the conversation in a way that the other person will care about. State the issue, and then work on that one issue. Don't nag; don't take on everything at once; deal with one element, one day at a time.

Chapter 12: Change Your Life- How to Turn Ideas into Habits

To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often. – Winston Churchill

Practice and Share for a better life.