

TKC!

Crucial Confrontations

Patterson, K., Grenny J. McMillan R., Switzler A. (2012). Crucial Conversation. McGraw-Hill: USA.

“To know and not to do is really not to know.” (foreward xi).

“The root cause of many- if not most human problems lies in how people behave when others disagree with them about high-stakes emotional issues.” (preface xiii).

I. What’s a Crucial Confrontation and Who Cares

- Opinions vary
- Stakes are high
- Emotions are strong
- Results of the conversation have a HUGE impact on the quality of your life

Sometimes we: avoid
 Change the subject
 Email or text instead of talking

When it matters most, we are on our worst behavior. Our emotions do not prepare us to converse effectively. We may feel pressure, which often comes spontaneously and we are caught by surprise.

We have to deal with the issue and the person. Our brain is pumped with adrenaline, so it is not thinking rationally. We get stumped and we don’t know how to deal with the problem.

“Strong relationships and communities stem from the ability to talk openly about high-stakes, emotional, controversial topics.” (p. 9).

Our goal in conversing with others is usually to improve our relationship with them, but when we end up in a heated discussion, one of three things can happen:

- a. Regression into threats and name-calling
- b. Reverting to silent fuming
- c. Speaking openly, honestly and affectionately

When negative feelings are held in, emotional pain increases, and we batter ourselves with continual unhealthy conversations, then we are on a path which leads to minor health problems.

II. Mastering Crucial Conversations: The Power of Dialogue

In difficult situations, we often feel that we have two choices:

1. Tell the Truth- speak up and make an enemy of the most powerful person in the company
2. Keep a Friend- remain silent and suffer the consequences of a bad decision

When grandma asks, "Do you like my cake?"
She might really mean, "Do you like me?"

Key to success = to be 100% honest + 100% respectful

Methods of Reacting

1. Dialogue- is the free flow of meaning between 2 or more people

In order to achieve dialogue:

- People must FEEL comfortable for meaning to flow freely
- This shared pool of information increases the capacity to make an informed decision
- Result of the shared pool of meaning is greater commitment to the final decision

"The pool of shared meaning is the birthplace of synergy." (p. 25).

2. Silence

- Give the cold shoulder
- Rely on hints, sarcasm and caustic humor
- Play the martyr and pretend we are trying to help

3. Violence

- Force your opinion into the pool through subtle manipulation or verbal attacks
- Act like we know everything and discredit others
- Borrow power from the boss
- Make hurtful comments

Dialogue Skills are Learnable

1st- Think about Problem situations

2nd- Prepare for them by: Talking, Listening, Acting

III. Start with Heart: How to Stay Focused on What you Really Want

The best way to work on “us” is to start with “me”.

Eg. Two sisters argued for 25 minutes about who would use the bathroom first.

Begin high-risk conversations with the right motives (p. 36):

1. Know goal
2. Realize that dialogue is ALWAYS an option

Reactions

- Winning- correct the facts and quibble over unimportant details
- Punishing- another for making a verbal attack in public (honesty)
- Keeping the peace- Silence because of discomfort. This leads to the *certainty* of a bad result rather than the *possibility* of an uncomfortable situation.

1. Know Goal

Focus on what you really want. When you are in a tense situation, after being attacked in public, before reacting: Think- what do I really want? What is my goal?

Check motives inside:

- What do I really want for *myself*?
- What do I really want for *others*?
- What do I really want for *the relationship*?

Why to ask these questions:

- Find your bearings. Remember why and what you want.
- Take charge of your body. Blood will be sent to your brain to help solve problems rather than to your emotions which lead you to flee or fight.

All 3 questions are essential. You can also ask yourself what you don't want.

- I want a reliable husband
- I don't want a heated conversation with bad results for the relationship

So, then comes the HOW. How can I have a conversation without the heated discussion?

That requires REFLECTION. Think. Is there a way to accomplish both?

IV. Learn to Look: How to Notice when Safety is at Risk

Watch for:	Content	the topic at hand
	Conditions	how people are responding

This requires Knowledge and Practice.

Conditions to be aware of:

1. The moment when the conversation turns crucial.
2. Signs of unsafety. Silence or violence.
3. Your own style under stress. Do you move to silence or violence and under which form?

Spot signs of Crucial Conversations:

- *Physical*- for some people their stomach gets tight or their eyes get dry. What happens to your body when a conversation gets difficult?
- *Emotional*- some people realize they are scared, angry, hurt, etc.
- *Behavioral*- raising voice, pointing finger, becoming silent

Then, make it safe to speak. When it is safe, you can say anything. You won't fear that you will be attacked or humiliated.

The problem most people face is how to get right: the "content" of the message and
The "conditions" of the conversation.

When someone feels really threatened, they can scarcely see beyond what is directly in front of them. We need to help others feel safe in order to see the way.

When someone feels unsafe, for instance when someone is making fun of you, insulting or arguing, he or she feels under attack and goes into defense mode. Tactics:

Silence- withholds info to avoid problems.

Forms:	Masking
	Avoiding
	Withdrawing

Violence- verbal strategies to convince, compel, or control

Forms:	Controlling
	Labeling
	Attacking

Look for your own style under stress. Monitor your own behavior. Watch to see if you are having a good or bad impact.

Examples of low self-monitors:

- "I'm not angry" while spitting the words out.
- "What's wrong?" "Nothing," as you whimper and look wounded.

V. Make it Safe: How to Make it Safe to Talk about almost Anything

1. Notice which condition is at risk

a. Mutual Purpose- the entrance condition

- Others perceive that I am working toward a common outcome in the conversation, that I care about their goals, interests and values.
- Others may believe that I have a malicious intent and then they get defensive.
 - o Do others believe that I care about their goals in the conversation?
 - o Do they trust my motives?
- Look for mutuality rather than selfish interests
- This is not a technique. We must truly care.

b. Mutual Respect- the continuance condition.

- If people perceive disrespect, they move to defending dignity.

Signs that people are defending their dignity (emotions are key):

- Become highly charged. Emotions turn from fear to anger.
- Pouting, name-calling, yelling and making threats
 - o Do others believe I respect them?
- Look for ways we are similar, rather than focusing on differences
- Try to sympathize or even empathize with them

2. Three hard hitting skills for dialogue

1- *Apologize*- sacrifice ego by add-on'mitting error

2- *Contrast*- use don't/ do statement

- o DON'T- Address concern that you DON'T respect others. This is the most important area to address because of the conflict.
- o DO- Confirms respect, clarifies purpose
- Do not apologize when you don't need to, but clarify genuine goals to make topic safe.
- Provides context and proportion
- Use contrasting before dropping a bomb so that defenses do not go up
- Explain what you DON'T mean until you've restored safety

3- *Create a mutual purpose*

- This is not a competition, submission or compromise.
- CRIB
 - Commit- to seek mutual purpose. Commit to staying in the conversation until finding a solution both share
 - Recognize- the purpose behind the strategy. When you want different things, find out “why”.
 - Invent- a mutual purpose. When goals are not compatible, discover and invent what your real long-term goals are and whether they are compatible
 - Brainstorm- new strategies. Suspend judgment and think of situations outside the box
- The way of making a comment can:
 - Sound to the other that he or she is being blamed for everything
 - Cause the other to believe that one small concern reflects the total sum of feelings towards he or she.

VI. How to Stay in Dialogue when you’re Angry, Scared, or Hurt

Emotions don’t just happen

- 1- Others do not make us mad. We make ourselves mad, scared, annoyed, or insulted. Only you can create your own emotions.
- 2- Act on your emotions. To be acted on by them = to fall hostage.




See and Hear  Tell a Story  Feel  Act

See and Hear	Louis takes over the presentation and meets privately with the boss
Tell a Story	He doesn’t trust me. He thinks I am weak. If I speak up, I’ll look too emotional.
Feel	Hurt, worried
Act	Silence, cheap shots

Typical- he told story. I felt angry. Our storytelling happens blindingly FAST!

***Excel at dialogue-** this means influencing your emotions during crucial conversations

Skills for Mastering our Stories

Stop  Think  Analyze  Take control

- 1- Behavior- am I in silence or violence?
- 2- Feelings- what emotions make me act this way?
- 3- Analyze- what story creates these emotions?
- 4- Facts- do I have evidence to support this?

- 1- Notice your BEHAVIOR.
 - Be Honest! It is not true that violence is a “necessary tactic”
 - Don’t justify your own actions
- 2- Get in touch with your feelings
 - Use accurate vocabulary. Why are you upset?
 - o Humiliated
 - o Cheated
 - o Embarrassed
 - o Surprised
 - o Violated
- 3- Analyze your stories
 - Question your feelings
 - Don’t confuse stories with facts
- 4- Get back to the facts
 - Separate fact from story by focusing on behavior.
 - The behavior is a fact.
 - The conclusion- “he doesn’t trust me” is a conclusion.
 - The conclusion explains what you think, but not what the other person did.
 - Watch for “hot terms”. Words such as “scowl”, “sarcastic”. He scowled at me. He made a sarcastic comment.
 - Hot terms express judgment and attribution.

Types of Stories

Can be: accurate and healthy
 Inaccurate and justify our behavior

- a. Victim Story- the other person is bad, wrong, dumb.
- b. Villain Stories- “it’s all his fault”. You impute bad motive and tell everyone.

Double Standard

- Victim story- our motives are innocent and pure
 - Villain story- invent terrible motives or exaggerate flaws when others actions affect us.
- c. Helpless stories- justify our action because there was nothing we could do.

Helpless stories- look forward to explain why we can't do anything to change our situation: "If I didn't yell at my son, he wouldn't listen."

Victim or villain stories- look back to explain why we're in the situations we're in: "If I told the boss this, he would just be defensive—so of course I say nothing," (p. 119).

- d. Clever Stories- the others are bad and wrong, while I am right and good.
- You believe you should help someone but don't.
 - You believe you should apologize, but don't.
 - When we don't admit to our own fault in something, we obsess about others. I felt I should've let a car pass in front of me, but I didn't so then I feel bad and complain about the other is such a bad driver and I was doing what I was supposed to do...
 - Solution: Accept and don't justify
- Stop CLEVER Stories
- Tell USEFUL Stories- create emotions that lead to healthy actions
- Am I pretending not to notice my role in the problem?
 - Turn VILLAINS into HUMANS
 - Why would a reasonable, rational and decent person do what this person is doing?
 - Emotions soften. Judgment turns to empathy. Personal accountability replaces self-justification.
 - Worry less about other's intent and more about the effect

Tell the Rest of the Story. Dialogue. Resolution.)p. 126, 130).

- 1- Am I pretending not to notice my role in the problem?

"When I found out that Louis was holding project meetings without me, I felt like I should ask him about why I wasn't included. I believed that if I did, I could open a dialogue that would help us work better together. But then I didn't and as my resentment grew, I was even less interested in broaching the subject."

- 2- Why would a reasonable, rational and decent person do what this person is doing?

"He really cares about producing good quality work. Maybe he doesn't realize that I'm as committed to the success of the project as he is."

- 3- What do I really want?

"I want a respectful relationship with Louis. And I want recognition for the work I do."

4- What would I do right now if I really wanted these results?

"I'd make an appointment to sit down with Louis and talk about how we work together."

VII. State My Path: How to Speak Persuasively not Abrasively

5 Skills for Talking in Situations where the other could become defensive

Our HEARTS need to be in the right place. Pay close attention to the moments when others start to feel unsafe. Restore safety.

- Be totally frank and completely respectful.
- When the topic turns from things to people, it's always more difficult. It's one thing to talk about a policy change and another thing to tell someone that they are offensive or unlikeable.

Maintain SAFETY through: Confidence, Humility and Skill

- Confidence- to say what needs to be said to the person who needs to hear it.
- Humility- realize that others have valuable input.
 - Opinion is the starting point, not the final word.
 - Express opinion and encourage others to do the same.
- Skill- be good at speaking delicate info.

Have a dialogue until you confirm your concern without using threats or accusations.

Think about what you really want and how to get there.

What	(1- S- Share your facts.
		2- T- Tell your story.
		3- A- Ask for others' paths.
How	(4- T- Talk tentatively.
		5- E- Encourage testing.

What Skills

- Share your facts
 - Look at what happened. Go from beginning to end.

- Facts are the least controversial and the most persuasive. Think them through before beginning the conversation.
- For example: instead of vaguely accusing someone of not contributing to the community state facts that might lead to that conclusion:
 - o X commitment was missed
 - o You asked everyone to be present for an important meeting and you did not show up
 - o You didn't answer a series of questions about 1 of your responsibilities.
 - o You bought X without asking permission
 - o Did not inform that you were not coming to x, so everyone was waiting for you
 - o Left the house for the weekend without informing anyone
- 2- Tell your story
 - The facts and the conclusion are what call for discussion
 - Don't pile it on
 - o Rather than waiting for things to simmer, address a problem when it comes up
 - When there are safety problems use contrasting
 - o Don't apologize, but clarify
- 3- Ask for others' paths
 - Have the CONFIDENCE to share facts and your story
 - Have the HUMILITY to ask others to share their view
 - GOAL: openness- expand the pool of meaning. The goal is not to be right.
 - BE willing to abandon or reshape your story with the new information you receive.

How Skills

- 4- Talk tentatively
 - Find the balance between confidence and humility

Soften	To	Too wimpy
The fact is...	In my opinion	I know this is probably not true, but
Everyone knows that	Three suppliers believe	Call me crazy, but
It's clear to me	I'm beginning to wonder	

- If we are too forceful, the meaning will not make it into the pool due to resistance
- Eg: Basketball Hoop
 - o Too forceful- bounces out
 - o Balanced shot- makes a hoop
 - o Wimpy shot- falls short of goal
- Tentativeness is not manipulation
 - o We are not certain that our opinions represent absolute truth

- Observations could be faulty
 - Stories could be educated guesses
- 5- Encourage Testing
- Especially when others may move to silence
 - Invite opposing views- if others appear hesitant, make it clear that I want to hear their views
 - Mean it- don't use veiled threats
 - Play devil's advocate... "Maybe I am wrong here. What if the opposite is true?"
 - Do it until your motive becomes obvious.
 - The degree to which you encourage testing proves your motive to engage in real dialogue

VIII. How to Listen when others Blow-up or Clam-up

Have HEART- be ready to listen

- Be sincere
- Be curious- when other gets furious
- Stay curious- ask questions
- Be patient
- Every sentence has a history
- Break the cycle

Get at the source of feelings

Or

Suffer the effects of feelings

- How?- Sincerity
- What?- Listening

AMPP (Ask, Mirror, Paraphrase, Prime)

- 1- Ask- don't worry about my feelings. I'd really like to hear your opinion.
- 2- Mirror- Reflect observations: "You say you are fine, but by the tone of your voice you seem upset."
- 3- Paraphrase- Acknowledge story. Don't push too hard. Back off or prime...
- 4- Prime when you are getting nowhere- offer your best guess. Pour meaning into the pool . Guess at what the other is thinking or feeling.

When you disagree with the other person, use ABC (Agree, Build, Compare)

A- Agree

- Say when you agree with part of what the other is saying
- B- Build
 - Absolutely... "in addition..."
 - Not wrong... "you left out"
- C- Compare
 - "I think I see things differently. Let me describe how."
 - Use STATE:
 - o Share observations (facts)
 - o Tell your story.
 - o Ask for others' paths.
 - o Talk tentatively.
 - o Encourage testing.

IX. Move to Action: How to Turn Crucial Conversations into Actions and Results

- We fail to convert intentions into actions due to:
 - o 1. Unclear expectations
 - o 2. A poor job of acting on decisions that have been taken
- Dialogue is not decision-making. Details must be confirmed.
- 1- Decide how to decide:
 - a. By command
 - b. By consultation
 - c. By vote
 - d. By consensus
 - Increased involvement brings increased commitment
- How to choose:
 - Ask:
 - o Who cares
 - o Who knows
 - o Who must agree
 - o How many people is it worth involving (involve fewest while still assuring quality)
- 2- Make assignments
 - Put decisions into action
 - o Who
 - o Does what
 - o By when
 - o How will you follow-up

X. Yeah But... Advice for Tough Cases

XI. Putting it All Together: Tools for Preparing and Learning

- Start with two levers
 - Learn to Look
 - Make it Safe

Coaching Summary: 7 Dialogue Principles (p. 227).

- 1- Start with Heart
- 2- Learn to Look
- 3- Make it Safe
- 4- Master my Stories
- 5- STATE me Path
- 6- Explore Others' Paths
- 7- Move to Action

What can be done to better crucial conversations is within a person's current skill set. It is possible to listen better. We can be thoughtful and pleasant. We can avoid harsh language and terse accusations. It is not necessary to study every concept.

Crucial Conversations is plural. The crucial conversation is the beginning of an ongoing dialogue. It is not the one conversation that will solve every problem.

It is an attitude to foster in encouraging dialogue in crucial moments before the situation leads to conflict.

Conclusion: It is not about communication. It is about results- improving the results of communication with those you care about.