



CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL AND USEFUL TOOLS I HAVE FOUND.

Mike Miller,
Director of Business Billing, AT&T

TOOLS FOR TALKING WHEN STAKES ARE HIGH

Whenever you're not getting the results you're looking for, it's likely a crucial conversation is keeping you stuck. Whether it's a problem with poor quality, slow time-to-market, declining customer satisfaction, or a strained relationship—whatever the issue—if you can't talk honestly with nearly anybody about almost anything, you can expect poor results.



What Is Crucial Conversations® Training?

Crucial Conversations is a two-day course that teaches skills for creating alignment and agreement by fostering open dialogue around high-stakes, emotional, or risky topics—at all levels of your organization. By learning how to speak and be heard (and encouraging others to do the same), you'll surface the best ideas, make the highest-quality decisions, and then act on your decisions with unity and commitment.

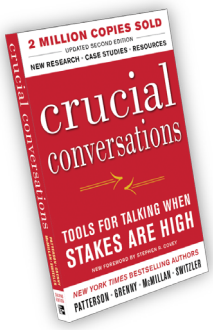
What Is a Crucial Conversation?

A crucial conversation is a discussion between two or more people where the stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong. These conversations—when handled poorly or ignored—lead to strained relationships and dismal results.

What Does Crucial Conversations Training Teach?

Crucial Conversations teaches participants how to:

- Speak persuasively, not abrasively
- Foster teamwork and better decision making
- Build acceptance rather than resistance
- Resolve individual and group disagreements



About the Book

With more than 2 million copies sold, *Crucial Conversations* is the *New York Times* business bestseller that's transformed organizations and changed the way millions of people communicate.

Participant Materials

- Crucial Conversations Participant Toolkit
- Cue cards for each lesson in a desktop display case
- Crucial Conversations model card
- A copy of the *New York Times* bestselling book, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* (2nd Edition)
- Crucial Conversations Audio Companion
- A course completion certificate

Training Options

- **In-house**—One of our experts trains the program at a location you specify.
- **Public Workshop**—Your employees attend a prescheduled, public training workshop. Both virtual and in-person training options are available.
- **Trainer Certification**—Individuals or trainers from your organization certify to teach the course within your company. Certified trainers can also train the Small Group Virtual Classroom course in partnership with the VitalSmarts virtual production team.

Want to Customize this Course?

We offer multiple options to both personalize our training to meet your specific needs, as well as measure its impact. Learn more at



www.vitalsmarts.com/tailormeasure

The Crucial Skills Suite

Those who have already attended the two-day Crucial Accountability course may add on the one-day Crucial Conversations course. Visit

Who Needs Crucial Conversations Training?

Does your organization suffer from taboo topics, deference, disagreement, analysis paralysis, information hoarding, office politics, or alienation? Is your organization battling declining productivity, safety violations, low morale, reduced quality, poor customer satisfaction, or other bottom-line concerns? Then you, your team, or your organization needs Crucial Conversations Training.

Organizational Benefits of Crucial Conversations

Fortune 500 organizations around the world have turned to the award-winning Crucial Conversations Training to improve bottom-line results like quality, efficiency, satisfaction, safety, etc. Results include:

- **Productivity & Quality.** Sprint Nextel saw a 93 percent improvement in productivity and a 10 to 15 percent improvement in quality, time, and cost.
- **Teamwork.** Employees at MaineGeneral Health were 167 percent more likely to speak up and resolve problems with colleagues after being trained in Crucial Conversations.
- **Relationships.** Franklin Pierce College reduced passive-aggressive behavior by 14 percent and increased trust levels by 15 percent.
- **Performance.** STP Nuclear Power Plant went from total shut-down to generating the most electricity in the nation among two-unit plants.
- **Efficiency.** AT&T reduced billing costs by 30 percent and Sprint Nextel reduced customer care expenses by \$20 million annually.



Named "Training Product of the Year"

Human Resource Executive

Don't Take Our Word for It

More than 1.5 people and 300 of the Fortune 500 companies have used our skills to improve their organizational culture and create change for good.

What's the Next Step?

If your organization could benefit from the skills taught in Crucial Conversations Training, contact us today to learn more. Call 1-800-449-5989 or visit us at www.vitalsmarts.com.

About VitalSmarts. An innovator in corporate training and leadership development, VitalSmarts combines three decades of original research with 50 years of the best social science to help leaders and organizations change human behavior and achieve new levels of performance. We've identified four high-leverage skill sets that, when used in combination, create healthy corporate cultures. These skills are taught in our award-winning training programs and *New York Times* bestselling books of the same titles: *Crucial Conversations*, *Crucial Accountability*, *Influencer*, and *Change Anything*. VitalSmarts has worked with 300 of the Fortune 500 companies and trained more than 1.5 million people worldwide. www.vitalsmarts.com

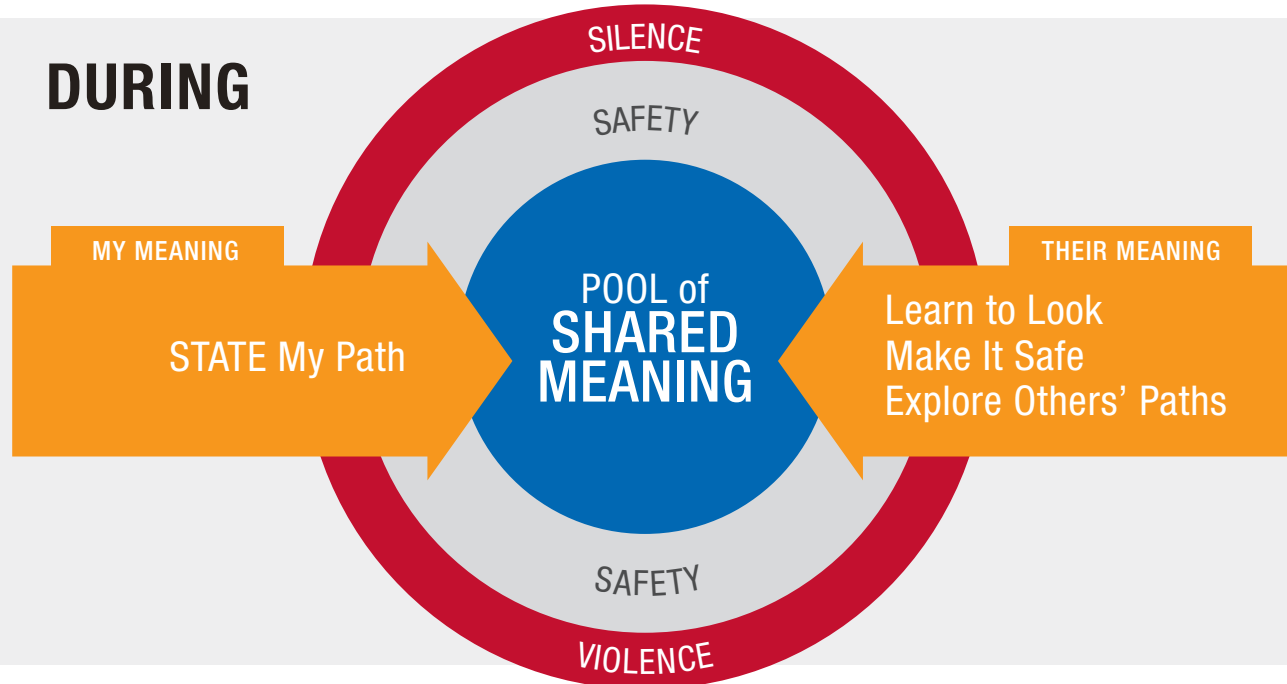
CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS MODEL

BEFORE

WORK ON ME FIRST

Get Unstuck
Start with Heart
Master My Stories

DURING



AFTER

MOVE TO ACTION

Who does What by When
Follow up



WHAT IS YOUR STYLE UNDER STRESS™?

From the *New York Times* bestseller
*Crucial Conversations:
Tools for Talking
When Stakes are High*



*“When we use
crucial conversations skills,
we can influence decisions,
improve relationships,
and speak our minds
in a way that gets heard.”*

- Joseph Grenny

How do you react when conversations suddenly move from smooth and easygoing to tense or awkward? Do you retreat into silence? Do you go on the attack? Or do you do your best to keep the conversation calm and focused on the issues at hand?

Crucial conversations take place when the stakes are high, opinions differ, and emotions run strong. Handling crucial conversations well can dramatically improve your personal relationships, your career progress, and your work team’s performance.

Take this 33-question test to explore how you typically respond when you’re in the middle of a stressful situation. Have your friends, colleagues, or family members take the test as well. The answers may surprise you.

A self-scoring version of this test is available online at www.vitalsmarts.com/styleunderstress. Information on what your score means can be found on pages 68-69 of the *New York Times* bestseller *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*.

Instructions

Before you start, read through the following points:

- **RELATIONSHIP**

Think about the relationship you want to improve— with your boss, coworker, direct report, friend, or family member— and keep this relationship in mind.

- **CIRCUMSTANCE**

Next, think of a tough situation—one you might have handled poorly or avoided altogether.

- **APPLY**

Now, with that situation in mind, respond to the statements on the following pages as either true or false.

Style Under Stress™ Test

- T F 1. At times I avoid situations that might bring me into contact with people I'm having problems with.
- T F 2. I have put off returning phone calls or e-mails because I simply didn't want to deal with the person who sent them.
- T F 3. Sometimes when people bring up a touchy or awkward issue I try to change the subject.
- T F 4. When it comes to dealing with awkward or stressful subjects, sometimes I hold back rather than give my full and candid opinion.
- T F 5. Rather than tell people exactly what I think, sometimes I rely on jokes, sarcasm, or snide remarks to let them know I'm frustrated.
- T F 6. When I've got something tough to bring up, sometimes I offer weak or insincere compliments to soften the blow.
- T F 7. In order to get my point across, I sometimes exaggerate my side of the argument.
- T F 8. If I seem to be losing control of a conversation, I might cut people off or change the subject in order to bring it back to where I think it should be.
- T F 9. When others make points that seem stupid to me, I sometimes let them know it without holding back at all.
- T F 10. When I'm stunned by a comment, sometimes I say things that others might take as forceful or attacking—terms such as "Give me a break!" or "That's ridiculous!"
- T F 11. Sometimes when things get a bit heated I move from arguing against others' points to saying things that might hurt them personally.
- T F 12. If I really get into a heated discussion, I've been known to be tough on the other person. In fact, they might even feel a bit insulted or hurt.
- T F 13. When I'm discussing an important topic with others, sometimes I move from trying to make my point to trying to win the battle.
- T F 14. In the middle of a tough conversation, I often get so caught up in arguments that I don't see how I'm coming across to others.
- T F 15. When talking gets tough and I do something hurtful, I'm quick to apologize for my mistakes.
- T F 16. When I think about a conversation that took a bad turn, I tend to focus first on what I did that was wrong rather than focus on others' mistakes.
- T F 17. When I've got something to say that others might not want to hear, I avoid starting out with tough conclusions, and instead start with facts that help them understand where I'm coming from.
- T F 18. I can tell very quickly when others are holding back or feeling defensive in a conversation.
- T F 19. Sometimes I decide it's better not to give harsh feedback because I know it's bound to cause problems.
- T F 20. When conversations aren't working, I step back from the fray, think about what's happening, and take steps to make it better.
- T F 21. When others get defensive because they misunderstand me, I immediately get us back on track by clarifying what I do and don't mean.
- T F 22. There are some people I'm rough on because, to be honest, they need or deserve what I give them.
- T F 23. I sometimes make absolute statements like "The fact is..." or "It's obvious that..." to be sure my point gets across.
- T F 24. If others hesitate to share their views, I sincerely invite them to say what's on their mind, no matter what it is.

- T F 25. At times I argue hard for my view hoping to keep others from bringing up opinions that would be a waste of energy to discuss anyway.
- T F 26. Even when things get tense, I adapt quickly to how others are responding to me and try a new strategy.
- T F 27. When I find that I'm at cross purposes with someone, I often keep trying to win my way rather than looking for common ground.
- T F 28. When things don't go well, I'm more inclined to see the mistakes others made than notice my own role.
- T F 29. After I share strong opinions, I go out of my way to invite others to share their views, particularly opposing ones.
- T F 30. When others hesitate to share their views, I do whatever I can to make it safe for them to speak honestly.
- T F 31. Sometimes I have to discuss things I thought had been settled because I don't keep track of what was discussed before.
- T F 32. I find myself in situations where people get their feelings hurt because they thought they would have more of a say in final decisions than they end up having.
- T F 33. I get frustrated sometimes at how long it takes some groups to make decisions because too many people are involved.

Scoring

Fill out the following score sheets. Each domain contains two to three questions. Next to the question number is either a (T) or (F). For example, under "Masking," question 5, you'll find a (T). If you answered question 5 true, check the box. With question 13, on the other hand, you'll find an (F). Only check that box if you answered the question false—and so on. Finally, add the number of checks in each column to determine your total score.

Your Style Under Stress score will show you which forms of silence or violence you turn to most often. Your Crucial Conversations Skills score is organized by concept and chapter from the book *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* so that you can decide which chapters will benefit you the most. Again, a self-scoring version of this test is available at www.vitalsmarts.com/styleunderstress. This test is also duplicated on pages 63-69 of *Crucial Conversations*.

Style Under Stress

Your silence and violence scores give you a measure of how frequently you fall into these less-than-perfect strategies. It's actually possible to score high in both. A high score (one or two checked boxes per domain) means you use this technique fairly often. It also means you're human. Most people toggle between holding back and becoming too forceful.

Masking

5 (T)

6 (T)

Avoiding

3 (T)

4 (T)

Withdrawing

1 (T)

2 (T)

Controlling

7 (T)

8 (T)

Labeling

9 (T)

10 (T)

Attacking

11 (T)

12 (T)

Silence Total _____

Violence Total _____

Crucial Conversations Skills

The seven domains below reflect your skills in each of the corresponding seven skill chapters found in *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*. If you score high (two or three boxes) in one of these domains, you're already quite skilled in this area. If you score low (zero or one), you may want to pay special attention to these chapters.

Start with Heart

(chapter 3)

13 (F)

19 (F)

25 (F)

Total _____

STATE My Path

(chapter 7)

17 (T)

23 (F)

29 (T)

Total _____

Learn to Look

(chapter 4)

14 (F)

20 (T)

26 (T)

Total _____

Explore Others' Paths

(chapter 8)

18 (T)

24 (T)

30 (T)

Total _____

Make It Safe

(chapter 5)

15 (T)

21 (T)

27 (F)

Total _____

Move to Action

(chapter 9)

31 (F)

32 (F)

33 (F)

Total _____

Master My Stories

(chapter 6)

16 (T)

22 (F)

28 (F)

Total _____

Conclusion

Since these scores represent how you typically behave during stressful or crucial conversations, they can change. Your score doesn't represent an inalterable character trait or a genetic propensity. It's merely a measure of your behavior—and you can change that.

Here are two ways to improve your skills:

• ATTEND TRAINING

Crucial Conversations is an award-winning, two-day course that teaches skills for fostering open dialogue around high-stakes, emotional, or risky topics.

www.vitalsmarts.com/crucialconversationstraining

• FREE NEWSLETTER

One of our best learning resources is our free, weekly e-newsletter. Subscribers of the *Crucial Skills Newsletter* receive expert instruction from our bestselling authors on handling real-life crucial conversations.

www.crucialskills.com



CONVERSATION PLANNER

Use the following worksheet to plan your next crucial conversation.

Get Unstuck

1. Where do you feel stuck (personally or professionally)?

2. Unbundle with CPR. Identify:

Content Issues: _____

Pattern Issues: _____

Relationship Issues: _____

Which issue do you need to address, and with whom, in order to get unstuck? _____

Start with Heart

1. What do you really want:

For yourself? _____

For the other person? _____

For the relationship? _____

For the organization (if applicable)? _____

Master My Stories

1. What stories are you telling yourself about the situation or the person (Victim, Villain, Helpless)?

2. Tell the rest of the story. Ask:

a. What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the problem?

b. Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do this?

c. What should I do right now to move toward what I really want?

STATE My Path

1. Create a script for how you will begin the conversation. Start with facts, then tell your story, and be sure to end with a question that invites the other person into dialogue.

THE FACTS	MY STORY	THE QUESTION I'LL ASK

Make It Safe

1. What's the worst possible response you could get with your crucial conversation?

2. What safety skills would you use to address it (apology, contrast, create mutual purpose)?

3. If the other person misunderstands your intent, what is a contrasting statement you could use?

Don't: _____

Do: _____

Explore Others' Paths

1. How could you use the "AMPP" (Ask, Mirror, Paraphrase, Prime) skills to help the other person come out of silence or violence?

Move to Action

1. How will you establish a way to follow up after the crucial conversation?

Who: _____

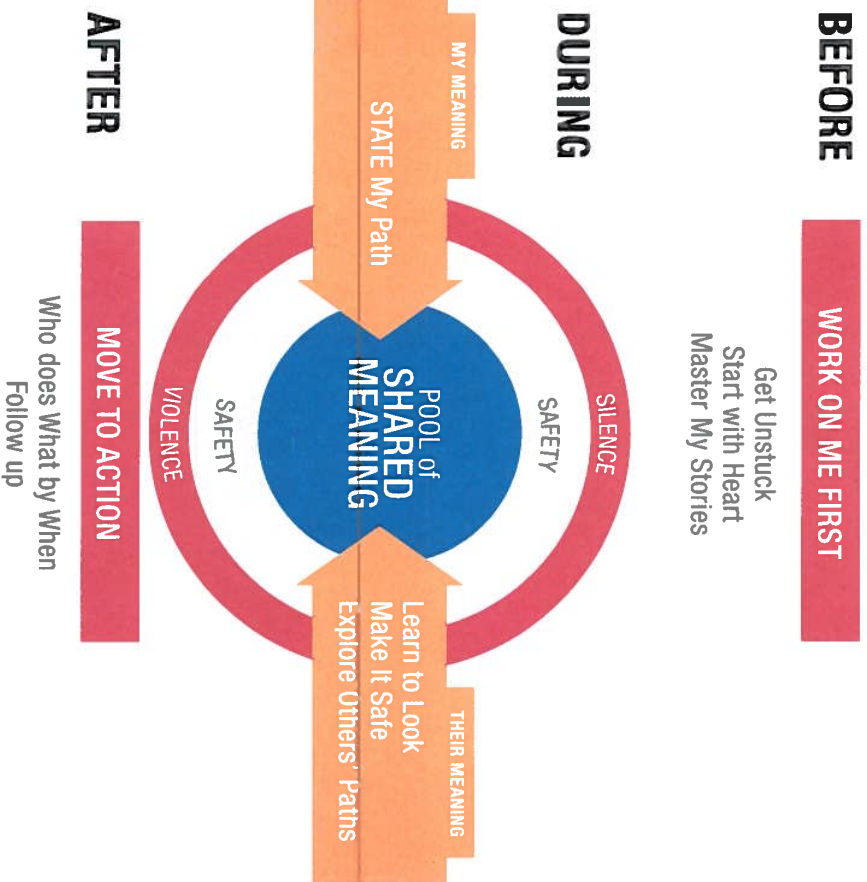
Will do what: _____

By when: _____

How we'll follow up: _____

THE LAW OF CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

Anytime you find yourself stuck, there's a crucial conversation you're either not holding or not holding well.



BEFORE

WORK ON ME FIRST

Get Unstuck
Start with Heart
Master My Stories

DURING

Learn to Look
Make It Safe
Explore Others' Paths

AFTER

MOVE TO ACTION

Who does What by When
Follow up

SITUATION

1 Results and Relationships are suffering.

2 You need to initiate a Crucial Conversation, or one is evolving.

3 If you are getting emotional or telling clever stories.

PRINCIPLES & SKILLS

You need to hold a **Crucial Conversation**.

- Identify where you are stuck.
- Unbundle with CPR.

Start with Heart
Focus on **What You Really Want** (or you, them, the relationship, and the organization (your long-term results)).

Master Your "Clever" Stories—Tell the Rest of the Story
Victim Story:
"What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the problem?"

Victim Story:
"Why would a reasonable, rational, decent person do this?"

Helpless Story:
"What should I do right now to move toward what I really want?"

4 If you have a tough message, be honest and maintain safety.

STATE Your Path

Share your Facts: "I noticed . . ." "Twice you . . ."
Tell your Story: "I'm beginning to wonder if . . ." "It seems to me . . ."

Ask for Others' Paths: "How do you see it?" "Help me understand . . ."

Talk Tentatively: Own your story and avoid absolutes.

Encourage Testing: "Do you see it differently?"

5 Others are already in silence or violence and you missed the early warning signs.

Learn to Look

- For the signs that a conversation is turning crucial.
- For early warning signs of silence and violence.

Contrast

"I don't think/mean/want _____ (their fear/misunderstanding)."
"I do think/mean/want _____ (your actual purpose/meaning)."

Create Mutual Purpose

Commit to seek Mutual Purpose
"Can we look for something we both agree on?"

Recognize the Purpose behind the Strategy.

"Why do you want _____?" "This is why I want _____."
"So, if you get _____ and I get _____, we're both happy?"

Brainstorm new strategies.

"What ideas do you have?" "I was thinking it may help if . . ."

Explore Other's Paths

Ask: "I want to know what you think about . . ."

Mirror: (Silence) "You seem reluctant. Are you sure you're OK with it?" (Violence) "Wow, you seem really upset. What's up?"

Paraphrase: "So you're saying _____?"

Prime: "Do you think that _____?"
Move to Action—Determine **Who**, does **What**, by **When**, and how we will **Follow up**.

DURING

6 If someone misunderstands your intent regarding Purpose or Respect.

"I don't think/mean/want _____ (their fear/misunderstanding)."
"I do think/mean/want _____ (your actual purpose/meaning)."

7 The discussion is going in circles. People are arguing. You're beginning a tough project or discussion.

Commit to seek Mutual Purpose
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Paraphrase: "So you're saying _____?"

Prime: "Do you think that _____?"
Move to Action—Determine **Who**, does **What**, by **When**, and how we will **Follow up**.

AFTER

8 If someone else is going to silence or violence, their full meaning isn't getting into the Pool.

9 When you're ready to Move to Action.

Crucial Conversations Tips

Tip One: Get Unstuck Anytime you find yourself stuck, there are crucial conversations you're either not holding or not holding well.

Tip Two: Start with Heart The first step toward better results is a change in heart—which begins when you admit that you may be part of the problem.

Tip Three: Learn to Look Watch for the signs that a conversation is turning crucial. Remember, the sooner you catch problems, the sooner you can return to dialogue.

Call 1-800-449-5989 for more information.

crucial
conversations®

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OF THE MOST POWERFUL AND
USEFUL TOOLS I HAVE FOUND.

Mike Miller,
Director of Business Billing, AT&T

PRESENTATION
SKILL SUMMARY



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