



Crucial Conversations Worksheet

As the world changes becoming increasingly interdependent, the pressures and the stresses of communicating increase proportionately. This atmosphere makes it more imperative than ever before to nourish relationships and to develop tools, skills, and the enhanced capability to find new and better solutions to organizational problems. These new solutions, according to the authors of Crucial Conversations, do not represent “my way” or “your way,” they will have to, instead, represent “our way.” Solutions must be synergistic, which will result in better relationships, a better decision-making process, and an increased commitment to implementing the decisions that have been made. It is these “crucial conversations,” the authors believe, that transform people and relationships and that create a new level of bonding. By first creating the right mind-set and the right “heart-set,” leaders and managers are then poised to develop and utilize the right skillset.

So what are Crucial Conversations?

Crucial conversations take place every day among virtually everyone; they are the conversations that affect the direction and quality of everyone’s lives.

Three characteristics make a conversation crucial: 1) opinions vary; 2) stakes are high; and 3) emotions run strong. These characteristics make a conversation not just frustrating or annoying, but the results of the exchange have the potential to significantly impact the quality of one’s life.

This resource is intended to guide you through your thinking, feeling and acting productively while having crucial conversations.

Step 1: Get UNSTUCK

Begin with ME...What is the RIGHT conversation?

1. What is the conversation that I am not holding or not holding well (as in, I am in my very own version of Groundhog Day)?
2. How might I be acting out this situation?
3. What is at the heart of my concern? (One or two sentences)
4. What is the right topic to discuss?



Step 2: Start with HEART

Get Clear...What do I really want?

1. What do I really want for myself? The other person? The relationship?
2. How would I behave if I really did want that?
3. Am I making a Sucker's Choice?
(A sucker's choice is the worst of an either/ or situation. It sets up a false dilemma.)

Step 3: LEARN to Look and Make it Safe

Silence & Violence

1. Is safety at risk? What are the indicators?
2. What is my usual style with this person in a similar situation (do I go into silence or violence)?
3. What is our mutual purpose? (Are we willing to create one?)
4. Is there mutual respect? If not, what will it take to create it?

Step 4: MASTER My Stories

Uncovering our Stories

1. Am I telling a Victim, Villain, or Helpless Story?
2. What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the situation?
3. Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do what they are doing?
4. What should I do right now to move toward what I really want?
5. What story might the other person be telling about me?



Step 5: STATE my Path

Delivering the Message

1. Share my Facts: Start with, “I have noticed that...”
2. Tell my story as a *Story*, not as a *Fact*. Use statements such as “I am beginning to wonder ...”
3. Did I ask a question—then ask some more so that I can understand their reasonable, rational and decent thought process. For example, “How do you see the situation....?”
4. Did I remember to talk tentatively and encouraging testing (of your story)?

Step 6: EXPLORE Others’ Paths

Understanding Their View

1. What did they see and hear?
2. What did they tell themselves?
3. What actions did they take?

Step 7: Move to ACTION

Who does What by When with Follow-up

1. IF appropriate, decide in advance how the final decision will be made (what decision making model will be used?)

Common Decision-Making Models

Command: One person decides with no involvement from others.

Consult: Everyone gives input, then a subset of one or more make the decision.

Vote: All have a voice but the majority rules.

Consensus: Everyone must agree to support the decision.

These options represent different levels of involvement, from one to everyone. Increased involvement adds to the benefit of increased commitment and the pain of decreased efficiency. Choose the level of



involvement that yields the greatest benefit while minimizing pain as possible. Be very clear and upfront how the decision will be made; what decision making model will be used.

Applying Crucial Conversations Principles in a Meeting Context

Pre-Meeting

Think Through

Purpose (Why are we meeting and on what topics?)

Outcomes (What will we achieve in the end?)

Steps (What is the flow or agenda?)

- Regarding Outcomes ask yourself,
 - What do I really want as a result of this meeting?
 - What do I need people to know?
 - How do I need them to feel?
 - What, if anything, do I need them to do?
- Based on the above, who has mutual purpose with this and should attend? (Remember there are trade-offs here so involve the minimal number of people possible to get the best decision in the time allotted.)
- Publish the purpose, outcomes and steps to participants in advance of the meeting invitation. Label each agenda item with the following if a decision is required: How will the decision be made? (Consensus, Consult, Vote, or Command-See text box). One possible outcome around a given topic may be to simply create dialogue on a given topic and fill the pool of meaning without necessarily having to push to closure or to a decision at that time.

During the Meeting

- Reiterate the Purpose, Outcomes, and Steps at the outset and ensure that there is Mutual Purpose around them.
- Stick with the steps you outlined and expressly Make it Safe for others to challenge the process if it seems as if what is being discussed is not fulfilling the stated Purpose or leading to one of the Outcomes.
- Appoint someone to pay specific attention to the *quality of the process as opposed to just tracking the content*. Everyone in the group however should be on the lookout for signs of silence or violence. If you see any, *stop talking content and fix the process*. For example, if you see signs of debate or surrender, this means that you have a problem with the Mutual Purpose. Ask yourself, is this a clear problem or a misunderstanding? Then deal with it accordingly.
- Promote the use of STATE skills to make points (Facts first then interpretations) and balance those with good inquiry skills (i.e. Asking good questions, paraphrasing, mirroring, and priming). Groups will tend to do more advocacy rather than practice inquiry so just Exploring Others Paths will improve the effectiveness of most meetings.
- Move to Action on every agenda item by documenting who does what by when.

Post Meeting



Follow up!