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# crucial conversations



TOOLS FOR TALKING WHEN  
**STAKES ARE HIGH**

NEW FOREWORD BY STEPHEN R. COVEY

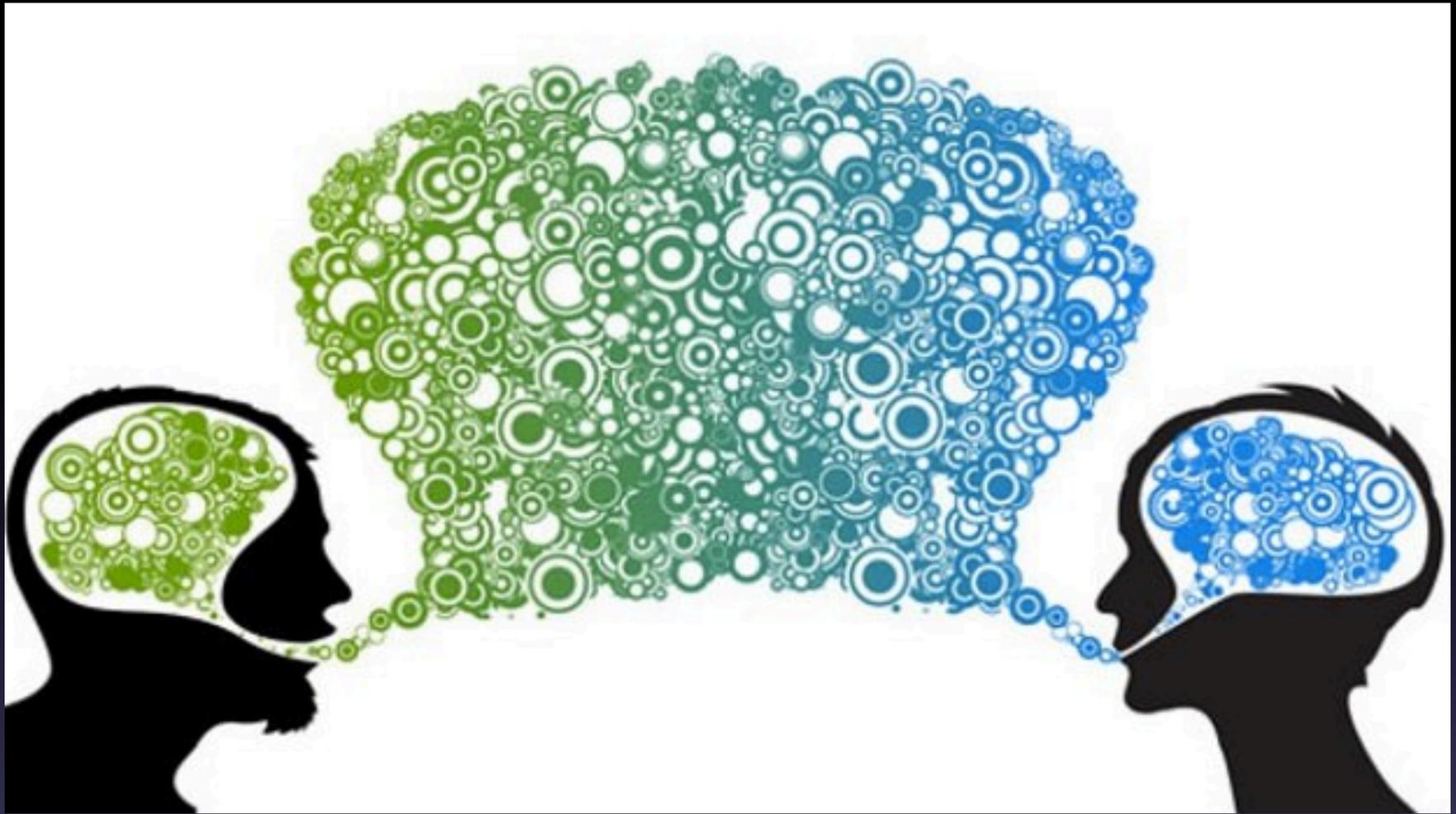
*NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHORS  
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Communication:  
The Root Cause of Most  
Successes and Failures

Todd R. Jenkins, MD, MSHA

# Crucial Conversations





- Each of us enters conversations with our own opinions, feelings, theories, and experiences about the topic at hand.



## **The Fool's Choice**

The belief that we have to choose between telling the truth and keeping a friend/relationship

**Successful dialogue results when everyone feels safe to add their meaning to the *shared* pool of meaning**

## Handling crucial conversations – 7 steps



1. **Start with Heart** (empathy and positive intent).
2. **Learn to Look** (and stay in the dialogue).
3. **Make it Safe** (prevent fear, encourage open dialogue).
4. **Master My Stories** (avoid clever stories).
5. **STATE My Path** (separate facts from story).
6. **Explore Other's Paths** (listen with empathy).
7. **Move to Action** (who is going to do what by when).

# Crucial Conversations

## Principle 1 – Start with Heart

- “If we could just fix them, all would go better”
- The only person we can continually inspire, prod, and shape, with any degree of success, is the person in the mirror



# Crucial Conversations

- Signs that your motives are wrong
  - Winning is your focus
  - Punishing the person is your focus
  - Keeping the peace is your focus
- “When adrenaline does our thinking for us, our motives flow with the chemical tide.”

# Crucial Conversations

## Principle 2: "Learn to Look"



# Crucial Conversations

- Silence – actions to purposefully withhold information from the pool of meaning
  - Masking – understating or selectively showing our true opinions (sarcasm, sugarcoating, and couching)
  - Avoiding – steering completely away from sensitive subjects
  - Withdrawing – pulling out of a conversation altogether

# Crucial Conversations

- Violence – actions to convince or compel others to your point of view. You are trying to force meaning into the pool.
  - Controlling – coercing others to your way of thinking
  - Labeling – putting a label on people or ideas so we can dismiss them
  - Attacking – moving from winning the argument to making the other person suffer

# Crucial Conversations

## Principle 3: “Make It Safe”

- Mutual Purpose – The Entrance Condition
  - All perceive that you are working toward a common outcome in the conversation, that you care about their goals, interests, and values. And vice versa.
    - C = Commit to seek Mutual Purpose
    - R = Recognize the purpose behind the strategy
    - I = Invent a Mutual Purpose
    - B = Brainstorm new strategies

# Crucial Conversations

- Mutual Respect – The Continuance Condition
  - “Respect is like air. As long as its present, nobody thinks about it. But if you take it away, it’s all that people can think about.”
  - Telltale signs of loss of respect:
    - Pouting, name-calling, yelling, and making threats

# Crucial Conversations

## Principle 3: Make it Safe

- Strategies to Restore Safety
  - Apologize (when appropriate)
  - Contrast to Fix Misunderstanding
    - Utilize “Do and Don’t” statements
  - Create a Mutual Purpose (CRIB)

# Crucial Conversations

## Principle 4: “Master Your Stories”

- Claim 1 – “Others don’t make you mad. You make you mad. You and only you create your emotions.”
- Claim 2 – Once you’ve create your emotions, you only have two options:
  - Find a way to master them
  - Fall hostage to them

# Crucial Conversations

## Principle 4: “Master Your Stories”

### **The Path to Action**

**Our Stories Create Our Emotions—We Create Our Stories**



**Path to Action**

# Crucial Conversations

## Principle 4: “Master Your Stories”

- Retrace Your Path
  - ACT – Notice your behavior.
    - Are you in some form of silence or violence?
  - FEEL – Get in touch with your feelings.
    - What emotions are encouraging me to act this way?
  - TELL STORY – Analyze your stories.
    - What story is creating this emotion?
  - SEE/HEAR – Get back to the facts.
    - What evidence do I have to support this story?

# Crucial Conversations

- Victim Story
  - Make us out to be innocent sufferers
  - The other person is bad, wrong, or dumb and we are good, right, or brilliant



# Crucial Conversations

- Villain Story
  - Turn normal, decent human beings into nasty villains
  - We overemphasize the other persons guilt or stupidity



# Crucial Conversations

- **Helpless Story**
  - There was nothing that I could do
  - We make ourselves out to be powerless to do anything healthy or helpful



# Crucial Conversations

- Why Do We Tell Clever Stories
  - Clever stories match reality
  - Clever stories get us off the hook
  - Clever stories keep us from acknowledging our own sellouts

# Crucial Conversations

- How do we overcome our stories? Ask:
  - Am I pretending not to notice my role in the problem? (Victim)
  - Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do this? (Villain)
  - What do I really want? (Motives)
  - What would I do right now if I really wanted these results? (Helpless)

# Crucial Conversations

## Principle 5: "State Your Path"

- S.T.A.T.E. Your Path
  - S = Share your facts
  - T = Tell your story
  - A = Ask for others paths
  - T = Talk tentatively
  - E = Encourage testing

# Crucial Conversations

“The *best* at dialogue speak their minds completely and do it in a way that makes it safe for others to hear what they have to say and respond to it as well. They are both totally frank and completely respectful.”



# 7. Explore Others' Paths

*How to listen when others' blow up or clam up*

- **A**sk to get things rolling
- **M**irror to confirm feelings
- **P**araphrase to acknowledge their story
- **P**rime when you're getting nowhere

# Crucial Conversations

- Strategies to Continue Dialogue When You Disagree (ABC's)
  - A = Agree
    - Agree when you share views
  - B = Build
    - If others leave something out, agree where you share views, then build
  - C = Compare
    - When you do differ significantly, don't suggest others are wrong. Compare your views.

## 8. Move to Action

*How to turn Crucial Conversations into action and results*

- Agree on who will do what, by when, and what follow-up action will be taken. Then follow up.

# Crucial Conversations

- Four Methods of Making Decisions
  - Command
    - Outside forces place demands on us or we turn decisions over to others
  - Consulting
    - Decision makers invite others to influence them before they make decisions
  - Vote
    - Best suited for situations where efficiency is most important
  - Consensus
    - Talk until everyone honestly agrees to one decision

# CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS MODEL

**BEFORE**

**WORK ON ME FIRST**

Get Unstuck  
Start with Heart  
Master My Stories

**DURING**

SILENCE

SAFETY

MY MEANING

STATE My Path

POOL of  
**SHARED  
MEANING**

THEIR MEANING

Learn to Look  
Make It Safe  
Explore Others' Paths

SAFETY

WOLLENCE

**AFTER**

**MOVE TO ACTION**

Who does What by When  
Follow up

# Crucial Conversations

## Scenario 1

You have a faculty member who is on a research track, but has not been able to develop a research portfolio and has not been successful in securing grant funding. The faculty member is an excellent clinician and educator and is a valuable member of the faculty; however, they must improve their research productivity. Describe strategies to utilize in the discussion with this faculty member regarding improving their productivity.

# Crucial Conversations

## Scenario 2

During an Annual Faculty Review, a faculty member challenges you regarding their compensation in relation to their overall productivity. The faculty member is quite productive; however, their compensation is in line with other faculty members at a similar level of productivity. Describe strategies to utilize in the discussion with this faculty member regarding their compensation and productivity.

# Crucial Conversations

## Scenario 3

You receive reports that a faculty member has been disruptive in the OR and has acted unprofessionally in other areas. The faculty member does not have a history of this type of behavior and, in general, is in good standing in the Department. Describe strategies to utilize in the discussion with this faculty member regarding their unprofessional behavior.