**Crucial Conversations**



**Quotes:**

* In truth, everyone argues about important issues. But not everyone splits up. It’s *how* you argue that matters - CC
* To know and not to do, it really not to know. – Covey
* He that complies against his will is of his own opinion still – Samuel Butler
* If you can’t get yourself right, you will have a hard time getting dialogue right
* Respect is like air, as long as its present nobody thinks about it – but the moment you take it away, it’s all that people can talk about!
* Lord, help me forgive those who sin differently than I
* One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears – by listening to them
* Goals without deadlines aren’t goals, they’re merely directions
* Good words are worth much and cost little
* I can win an argument on any topic, against any opponent. People know this, and steer clear of me at parties. Often, as a sign of their great respect, they don’t even invite me,

**Main Ideas:**

* **Create dialogue – tools for talking/listening/acting – practice – master CC**
* Nothing fails like success – When a challenge in life is met by a response that is equal to it, you have success. But when the challenge moves to a higher level, the old, once successful response no longer works – it fails; thus, nothing fails like success
* What is a Crucial Conversation – A discussion between two or more people where: 1. Opinions vary 2. Stakes are high 3. Emotions run strong
* Benefits Study’s - <https://www.vitalsmarts.com/resource-center/research/>
* Fool’s Choice – option 1 – speak up and act insubordinately, option 2: suffer in silence
* Dialogue – the free flow of meaning between two or more people
* Pool of Meaning – everyone enters with their own opinions, feelings, theories, and experiences about the topic at hand. This unique combination of thoughts and feelings makes up our personal pool of meaning. When two or more of us enter CC, we don’t share the same pool of meaning.
  + The goal is to grow the pool of shared meaning which helps individuals make better decisions because there is more information and creates a higher group IQ
  + The pool of shared meaning is the birthplace of *synergy*
  + The greater the shared meaning in the pool, the better the choice, unity, conviction of the group

1. **Start with Heart – *How to stay focused on what you really want***–
   1. Begin high-risk discussions with the right motives, and stay focused no matter what happens
      1. How to Maintain focus? Know what you want – What do I really want here?, don’t settle for or make fool’s choices (either/or)
   2. Watch out for dialogue killers – winning the conversation, punishing others, or keeping the peace
   3. Work on me first, us second

**Action** –

* What am I doing, and if I had to guess, what does it tell me about my underlying motive? What do I really want for myself? What do I really want for others? What do I really want for the relationship? How would I behave if I really wanted these results? **Refocus your brain**. **Find your bearings -**  refuse to take the wrong path by being influenced by others who are picking fights, your hard wiring that brings emotions to a quick boil, and our deeply ingrained habit to win. **Take charge of your body –** by asking ourselves questions, it reminds us of our goal and it juices up our brain in a way that helps keep us focused.
* **Search for the elusive AND (Refuse the fool’s choice):** start by clarifying what you really want, then what you really don’t want, then present yourself with a more complex question – How can you \_\_\_\_\_\_ AND avoid \_\_\_\_\_?

1. **Learn to look – *How to know when safety is at risk –*** 
   1. What do you need to see in order to catch problems before they become too severe?
      1. The moment a conversation turns crucial – watch for your signs – physical, emotional, behavioral
      2. Signs that people don’t feel safe (silence or violence) – look for fear
         1. People rarely become defensive simply because of what you’re saying – they only become defensive when they no longer feel safe!
         2. The 3 most common forms of silence are masking (sarcasm/surgarcoating), avoiding, and withdrawing
         3. 3 forms of violence are controlling, labeling, and attacking
      3. Your own Style under Stress – pg 62, test – 68-69
         1. I need to focus on mastering my stories
2. **Make it Safe – *How to make it safe to talk about almost anything –*** 
   1. The goal here is to spot safety risks as they happen by stepping “out” of the conversation and then building safety and getting back to talking about just anything
      1. Example 74-76
   2. There are 2 conditions that must be understood when making it safe, the first is Mutual Purpose
      1. **Mutual purpose** means that others perceive that you’re working toward a common outcome in the conversation – that you care about their goals, interests, and values
      2. Here are two crucial questions to help us determine when mutual purpose is at risk – Do others believe I care about their goals in the conversation and do they trust my motives?
      3. Examples – 78, I’ve got some ideas for….
      4. **Mutual Respect**  is the continuance condition of dialogue. This is the ability to REMAIN in dialogue. Respect is like air, as long as its present nobody thinks about it – but the moment you take it away, it’s all that people can talk about!
      5. Feelings of disrespect often come when we dwell on how others are different than ourselves. We can counteract these feelings by looking for ways we are similar!
      6. In essence – use mutual purpose to start and use mutual respect to keep dialogue continuing

**Action –**

1. Apologize when appropriate – an apology is a statement that sincerely expresses your sorrow for your role in causing – or at least not preventing – pain or difficulty to others
2. Contrast to Fix Misunderstanding – contrasting allows us to step out of the argument and rebuild safety
   1. Contrasting is a don’t/do statement that:
      1. Addresses others concerns that you don’t respect them or that you have a malicious purpose (the don’t part) What I don’t want to do….The last thing I wanted to do….What I would like to avoid is….I don’t want you to think…
      2. Confirms your respect or clarifies your real purpose (the do part) I think….What I am trying to accomplish is….What id like to do is…
   2. Contrasting is NOT apologizing, contrasting provides CONTEXT and proportion ex. – 86-87
3. How to create a mutual purpose using **C-R-I-B**
   1. Commit to seek mutual purpose – it seems like we are both….I commit to…..
   2. Recognize the purpose behind the strategy – pg 94-98 When we find ourselves at odds, it’s because we’re asking for one thing and the other person is asking for another. We don’t think we can find a way out because we equate what we’re asking for with what we actually want. In truth, what we’re asking for is the STRATEGY we’re suggesting to get what we want. We confuse wants or purpose with strategies
      1. We must first know what the real purposes are. Step away from the strategies and explore the purposes behind them
   3. Invent a Mutual Purpose – When we find out that our genuine wants and goals create a zero sum game, we cannot discover a MP, we have to invent one by moving to more encompassing goals – ones with longer term purposes
   4. Brainstorm New Strategies – with a clear MP, you can join forces in searching for a solution that serves everyone
4. **Master My Stories – *How to stay in dialogue when you’re angry, scared, or hurt***
   1. Emotions don’t just happen:
      1. Claim 1: No matter how comfortable it might make you feel saying it – others don’t make you mad. YOU make you mad, scared, annoyed or insulted. You and only you create your emotions.
      2. Claim 2: Once you’ve created your upset emotions, you can act on them or be acted on by them. You can either find a way to master them or fall hostage to them. Ex. – 105
   2. The best at dialogue aren’t held hostage by their emotions, nor do they tr to hide or suppress them – the act ON their emotions – they influence and often change them by thinking them out
   3. Actions themselves can’t and don’t cause emotional reactions – just after we observe what others do and just before we feel some emotion about it, we tell ourselves a story!
      1. Stories provide our rationale for what’s going on – they’re simply our interpretation of the facts
      2. They’re theories that we use to explain why, how, and what
   4. People who excel at dialogue are able to influence their emotions during CC
   5. If you want improved results from our CC, change the stories you tell yourself – even while you are in the middle of the fray

**Path to Action:**

**Action:**

1. Retrace your path to action:
   1. (ACT) – Notice your behavior – Ask:
      1. Am I in some form of silence or violence?
   2. (FEEL) – Get in touch with your feelings
      1. What emotions are encouraging me to act this way?
   3. (Tell Story) – Analyze your stories
      1. What story is creating these emotions?
      2. Is it the right feeling? The right story?
      3. Challenge the illusion that what you’re feeling is the ONLY right emotion under the circumstances
      4. Remember to not confuse stories with facts!
   4. (SEE/HEAR) – Get back to the facts
      1. Separate fact from the story by focusing on behavior – watch for hot words – “he made a sarcastic comment”
      2. What evidence do I have to support this story?
2. Watch out for “clever stories” – Victim/Villain/Helpless and tell Useful stories
   1. Start telling Useful Stories – ones that create emotions that lead to healthy action – such as dialogue
   2. Victim – it’s not my fault – turn them into ACTORS by:
      1. Am I pretending not to notice my role in the problem?
   3. Villain – it’s all your fault – turn them into humans by:
      1. Why would a reasonable/rational/decent person do what this person is doing?
   4. Helpless – there’s nothing else I can do – turn them into the able by:
      1. What do I really want? For me, others, and the relationship?
      2. What would I do right now if I really wanted these results?
   5. Clever stories match reality, get us off the hook, keep us from acknowledging our own sellouts – if we don’t admit to our errors, we inevitably look for ways to justify them
   6. You don’t start telling these until after you failed to do something you knew you should have done
3. **STATE My Path – *How to speak persuasively, not abrasively –*** 
   1. The goal here is to understand the skills for talking when what we have to say could easily make others defensive and explore how these skills help us state our opinions when be believe so strongly in something that we risk shutting others down rather than opening them up to our ideas.
   2. When topics turn from things to people – it’s always more difficult
      1. 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 well – they are both totally frank and completely respectful!
   3. One way to maintain safety during crucial conversations is to carefully blend three ingredients – confidence, humility, and skill.
   4. **Share Your Facts –** The best way to share your view is to follow your path to action from beginning to end – See/hear, Tell a Story, Feel, Act
      1. Facts are the least controversial, facts are the most persuasive, facts are the lease insulting
      2. If you start with your story, and in doing so – killing safety, you may never actually get to the facts
      3. The goal is to let others see your experience from your point of view – starting with your facts
   5. **Tell Your Story –** Remember that the other person can still become defensive when you move from the facts to the story
      1. Why share your story? Because the facts alone are rarely worth mentioning – it’s the facts plus the conclusion that call for a face to face
      2. Remember that this will take confidence, don’t pile it on, look for safety problems and then use contrasting
   6. **Ask for other’s paths –** This is an opportunity to demonstrate humility by being open to learning
      1. Be willing to abandon or reshape your story as more information pours into the pool of meaning
   7. **Talk Tentatively –** *“The How”* – The goal here is to soften the message here because we are trying to add meaning to the pool, not force it down people’s throats
      1. Change – “the fact is” to “In my opinion” Swap everyone knows that for I’ve talked to three or four people who think that, soften it’s clear to me to I’m beginning to wonder if…
      2. The more tentatively we speak, the more open people become to your opinions
      3. Remember – tentative, not wimpy - do not start with a complete disclaimer
         1. Too Soft – It’s probably my fault
         2. Too Hard – You wouldn’t trust your own mother…
         3. Just right- I’m starting to feel like you don’t trust me, is that what’s going on here? If so, I’d like to know what I did to lose your trust
   8. **Encourage Testing –** The goal here is to invite opposing views
      1. Does anyone see it differently? I really want to hear from you..
      2. Play devil’s advocate – model disagreeing with disagreeing with your own view
      3. Do it until your motive becomes obvious – you can argue as vigorously as you want for your POV, as long as you are even more vigorous at encouraging others to disprove it
4. **Explore Others’ Paths – *How to listen when others blow up or clam up***
   1. The goal here is help others feel safe
   2. Start with heart – be curious, sincere, stay curious, be patient
      1. Why would a reasonable, rational and decent person say this?
      2. When others start becoming furious, you must become curious
      3. Be patient when exploring how others think and feel. Encourage them to share their path and then wait for their emotions to catch up with the safety
         1. Once the chemicals that fuel emotions are released, they stay in the bloodstream for a time, even after thoughts have changed
   3. Ask, Mirror, Paraphrase, or Prime (AMPP) – power listening tools
      1. **Ask** to get things rolling – Seek to understand others’ views
         1. What’s going on?
         2. I’d really like to get your opinion on this
         3. Please let me know if you see it differently
         4. Don’t worry about hurting my feelings, I really want to hear your thoughts
   4. **Mirror** to Confirm Feelings – Play the role of the mirror by describing how thay are acting/look
      * 1. You say you are okay, but by the tone of your voice you seem upset
        2. You seem angry at me
        3. You look nervous, anxious…
      1. We create safety when our tone of voice says were okay with them feeling the way they are feeling
   5. **Paraphrase** to Acknowledge the story – put the story in your own words
      1. Simply rephrase what the other person has said, and do it so in a way that suggests that it’s okay, you’re trying to understand, and it’s safe for him or her to talk candidly
      2. Don’t push to hard, if you’ve used AMP and they are moving to silence or violence – back off and ask them what they want to see happen
   6. **Prime** when you’re getting nowhere – use this when thinking that others would like to open up, but still don’t feel safe.
      1. This power listening tool refers to offering your best guess at what the other person is thinking or feeling before you can expect them to do the same. You have to pour some meaning into the pool before the other person will
      2. Don’t use this unless the other AMP tools did not succeed
   7. Let’s say AMPP worked, the other person shared their path – but what if you disagree?
      1. ABC – Agree, Build, and Compare
         1. Start with an area of agreement – a lot of the times we are simly in violent agreement
         2. Build on the agreement – I agree and in addition…
         3. Compare rather than disagreeing. Rather than suggesting he or she is wrong, suggest that you differ
      2. Agree when you agree, Build when others leave out key pieces, and compare when you differ – don’t turn differences into debates
5. **Move to Action – *How to turn crucial conversations into actions and results***
   1. Who? Does What? By When? How will you follow up?
   2. Decide How to decide – pg 187
      1. Command
      2. Consult
      3. Vote
      4. Consensus

**Implement:**

* **Start with Heart:**
  + What am I doing, and if I had to guess, what does it tell me about my underlying motive? What do I really want for myself? What do I really want for others? What do I really want for the relationship? How would I behave if I really wanted these results? **Refocus your brain**. **Find your bearings -**  refuse to take the wrong path by being influenced by others who are picking fights, your hard wiring that brings emotions to a quick boil, and our deeply ingrained habit to win. **Take charge of your body –** by asking ourselves questions, it reminds us of our goal and it juices up our brain in a way that helps keep us focused.
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**Main Themes –**

* Start with yourself before trying to work on others – you are the only person you can work on anyways
* Create dialogue – make it safe
* When emotions start cranking up, key brain functions start shutting down!
* Actions themselves can’t and don’t cause emotional reactions – just after we observe what others do and just before we feel some emotion about it, we tell ourselves a story!
  + Stories provide our rationale for what’s going on – they’re simply our interpretation of the facts
    - They’re theories that we use to explain why, how, and what
* Learn to look by asking yourself whether you’re in dialogue or out of it, Make it Safe!