

# Crucial Conversations Cheat Sheet

## Before the conversation you need to know two things:

1) Don't believe the Fool's Choice.

Here's some examples of the Fool's Choice:

"I either have to damage this relationship by being honest or suffer in silence."

"I have to salute or stay mute."

Instead of believing in the Fool's Choice, realize that life isn't either/or; there is a whole lot of "and". So instead of seeing the "either" or the "or" look for the middle ground, look for the "and."

Taking our two examples above we can have a conversation that doesn't require us to compromise our feelings and also doesn't hurt the other person.

2) Prepare mentally for the conversation.

Understand the pool of shared meaning:

In order to create healthy dialogue you need to pour information into the pool of shared meaning. You don't have to agree with every idea that ends up in the pool. You just have to get them in there.

When it matters most, we do our worst.

Why?

Well, first of all, we're designed wrong. Don't let your body and adrenaline take over. When someone says something you disagree with about a topic that matters a great deal to you, the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Your adrenaline kicks up, your body diverts blood away from your brain and to the muscles used for hitting and running. "As a result, you end up facing challenging conversations with the same intellectual equipment available to a rhesus monkey. Your body is preparing to deal with an attacking saber-toothed tiger, not your boss, neighbor, or loved one."

Secondly, we're under pressure. These conversations are often spontaneous and surprise us. We usually aren't prepared.

Third of all, You're stumped. You weren't ready. You don't know where to go.

And lastly, we act in self-sabotaging ways. When we're doped up on adrenaline, we behave in a way that is actually creating the very thing you didn't want in the first place. You get caught in an unhealthy, self-defeating loop. The more you push against each other, the more you create the very behaviors you both despise.

# Animals Amplified

Based on the book *Crucial Conversations* by  
Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

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## Ready for the crucial conversation?

### Step 1:

Know your motives.

What do you want for yourself? For others? For the relationship?

How would you behave if you really wanted these results?

Don't lose sight of what those goals are by resorting to other motives like winning, punishing (getting revenge), or keeping the peace.

If things get heated, stop and ask yourself: What do I really want here?

Look for an **"and"**, clarify what you do want, and what you don't want to happen. For example: Is there a way to tell your peer your real concerns and not insult or offend them?

### Step 2:

Remember safety.

Learn to recognize when other people don't feel safe and when you don't feel safe. Avoid them, or you, drifting into silence (masking, avoiding, withdrawing) or violence (controlling, labeling, or attacking) by ensuring that you are conveying:

- 1) That you care.
- 2) That they can trust you.
- 3) That you respect them.

If necessary, step out of the dialogue and use the following tools:

Apologize- when appropriate.

Contrast- if someone is getting the wrong impression, make sure that you clearly communicate what you don't mean to say/do and what you do mean to convey.

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Find mutual purpose- use the following system to find a mutual purpose.

- Commit to seeking a mutual purpose.
- Recognize the purpose behind the strategy.
- Invent a mutual purpose.

Brainstorm new strategies together.

## Step 3:

Watch out for stories.

Recognize the stories you're telling yourself. Notice if you're doing any of the following:

- Holding feelings inside.
- Avoiding.
- Taking cheap shots.
- Masking.

When others do something that makes you feel a certain way and get emotional, there's an intermediate step in between those two things; it's why everyone might react differently to the same situation. What happens in between is we tell ourselves a story. We add our perceived meaning to the action. We make a judgement about what motivated that action. These stories often include a why, how, and a what.

Why it happened. How we should feel about it. What we should do about it.

Here's how we counteract these stories:

Act: Notice your behavior, ask: "Am I in some sort of silence or violence?"

Feel: What emotions are encouraging me to act this way?

Tell your story: Analyze your stories: What story is creating these emotions?

See/Hear: Get back to the facts: What evidence do I have to support this story?

If you find yourself justifying your actions you need to look at it from a 3rd person's perspective.

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Challenge the feeling that you're "right" and ask yourself if this is the ONLY way to feel under these circumstances.

Get back to the facts.

When we feel the need to justify our ineffective behavior, or disconnect ourselves from our bad results, we tend to tell our stories in 3 ways:

- 1) "It's not my fault." When you use this story you intentionally ignore the role you have played in the problem.
- 2) "It's all your fault." We overemphasize the other person's guilt or stupidity. We assume the worst motives and ignore anything good or neutral.
- 3) "There's nothing else I can do." These stories help us explain why we can't do anything to change our situation.

Tell the rest of the story, not just what makes you a victim, the other person a villain, or what leaves you helpless. Turn the victims in to actors, villains into humans, and the helpless into the able.

Questions to ask yourself?

- Am I pretending not to notice my role in the problem?
- Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do what this person is doing?
- What do I really want? For me? For others? For the relationships?
- What would I do right now if I really wanted these results?

## Step 4:

STATE.

Share your facts - No feelings here, just literally what happened. Google facts if you're struggling, in this day and age it can be hard to remember what they are.

Tell your story - Okay now it's time for your feelings. You get to share. You can always throw in phrases like "I know you didn't mean it..." or "I'm sure you didn't realize..."

Ask for others' paths and thoughts- Ask how they see things, and then listen, like really listen. Listen with the intent to understand.

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Talk tentatively- Be careful, be cautious, and be sensitive to your words. No accusations, no judgements, no pointing fingers.

Encourage testing-

- Invite the opposing views.
- Mean it.
- Play devil's advocate.
- Do it until your motive becomes obvious.

**"The more you care about an issue, the less likely you are to be on your best behavior."**

## Step 5:

Explore others' paths.

"...when most people become furious, we need to become curious."

Encourage others' to re-trace their paths by using the following tools.

1) Ask:

"what's going on? I'd really like to hear your opinion? Please let me know if you see it differently. Don't worry about hurting my feelings. I really want to hear your thoughts."

2) Mirror:

"You say you're okay, but by the tone of your voice, you seem upset."

"You seem angry at me."

"You look nervous about confronting him. Are you sure you're willing to do it?"

3) Paraphrase to Acknowledge the Story:

"Let's see if I've got this right. You're upset because I've voiced my concern about xyz and this seems blankity blank to you."

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4) *Prime when you're getting nowhere:*

"Are you thinking that the only reason we're doing this is because of XYZ? That maybe we don't care about you?"

Remember that understanding doesn't equate with agreement!

5) *In order to move forward from understanding use your ABC's:*

**Agree** - Look for things you agree on. Most arguments are about 5-10% of facts and stories when they agree on 95% of things.

**Build** - Look for what's missing from a person's argument. So instead of, "Wrong. You forgot to mention..." say "Absolutely. In addition, I noticed that..." Point out areas of agreement and then add elements that were left out.

**Compare** - If you fully disagree compare your path. Instead of telling the other person they're wrong, try something like, "I think I see things differently. Let me describe how."

Finally, agree on how to move forward: who's going to do what, when, and how will we follow up.

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