

Guide for Crucial Conversations

Adapted from "Crucial Conversations, 3rd edition: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High



When the stakes are high, emotions are strong, and opinions on how to move forward are not aligned or are opposing, we can use the following principles to engage in effective crucial conversations.

Principle #1: Start with Heart

It is easy to give in to our emotional impulses and make poor choices in the heat of the moment. Getting the right focus involves knowing and focusing on what you truly want and refusing the fool's choice (when we mistakenly think there are only two options).

Principle #2: Learn to Look

Become aware of non-verbal conversation cues (including your personal cues) that suggest a dialogue is breaking down, so you can bring it back on track.

Principle #3: Make it Safe

Conditions of safety- you care about their concerns (mutual purpose) and you care about them (mutual respect). Look for mutuality, build and rebuild safety, share good intent, apologize when appropriate.

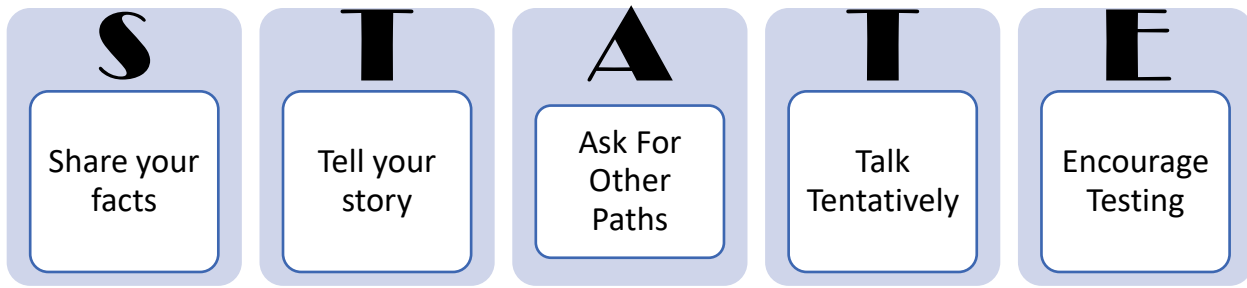
Principle #4: Master your Stories

Staying in constructive dialogue requires us to manage emotions and understand the stories we tell ourselves. These stories also explain why people react emotionally, and why the same circumstances may trigger different responses in different people.



Principle #5: State your Path

Share your views persuasively.



Principle #6: Explore Others' Path

By the time conversations turn crucial, the other party is already moving through their emotions. Besides managing our own emotions, we must help others to retrace their path. To do that, we can use the following listening tools.

Ask questions

Mirror what you are seeing and hearing

Paraphrase what you understand their story to be

Prime the conversation by offering a safe way to start the conversation

Principle #7: Move to Action

Finally, we must convert the agreement into results, through specific decisions and follow up. Consider the following:

- Dialogue is not decision-making
- Decide how to decide
- Who should be involved
 - Who cares? Who wants to be involved
 - Who knows? Who has the expertise?
 - Who must agree? Who holds power?
 - How many people should be involved? Do we have enough people to make a good choice?
- Say it out Loud
- Make assignments
 - Who
 - What
 - When
 - How will you follow-up
- Document your work

