

**Crucial
Conversations**

**Effective
Communication
when the
Stakes are High**

Experience Works Conference

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Richmond, VA



Virginia Cooperative Extension

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Why Crucial Conversations?



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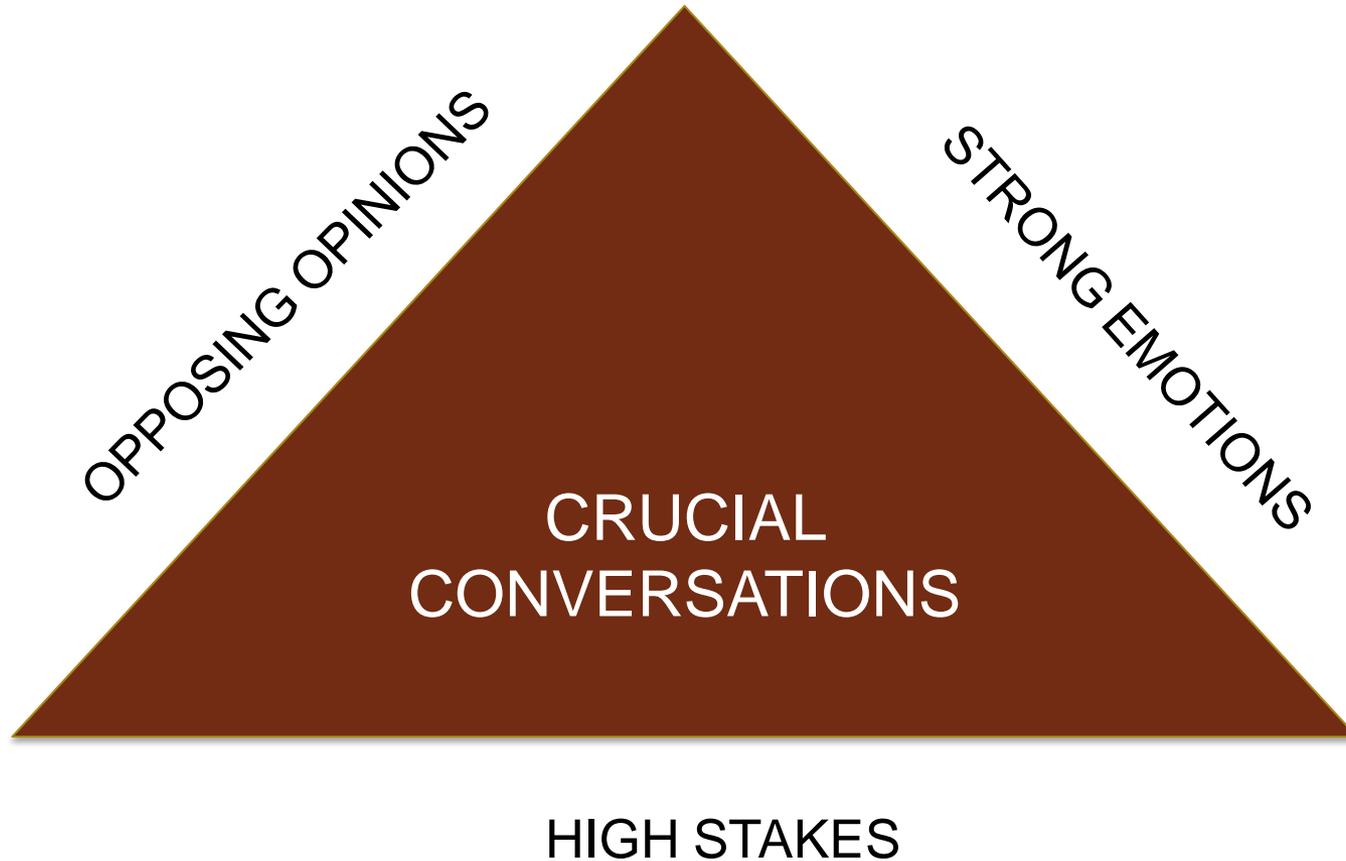
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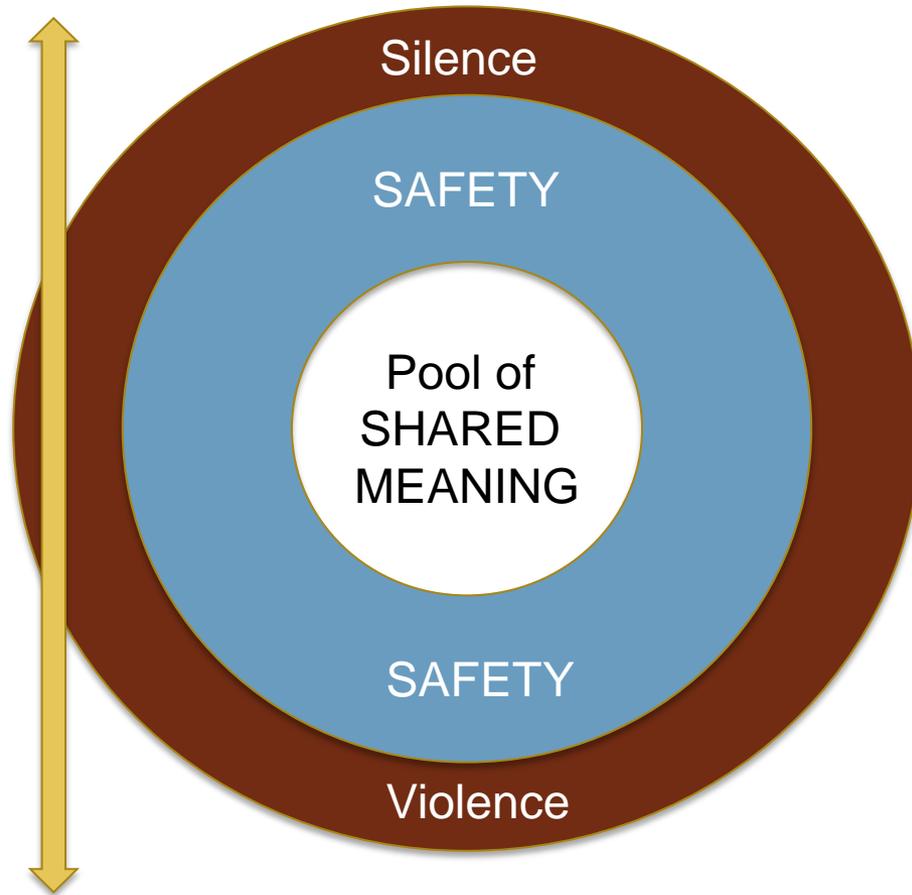
PROBLEM

- We're all stuck or not achieving what we want in a variety of areas, ranging from awkward or failing relationships to dysfunctional teams, to cost, quality, or safety problems at work.

SOLUTION

- Learn how to identify the crucial conversations that are the key to organizational, team, and interpersonal success.







The Biological Fool's Choice

http://www-tc.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/education/viewing/images/2416_bridge_bridgekids.gif



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Anytime you find yourself stuck, there's a crucial conversation you're either not holding or not holding well.

THE LAW OF CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

CPR

- **Content:** a single instance of a problem; the action itself or its immediate consequences.
- **Pattern:** a recurring problem – a pattern of behavior over time.
- **Relationship:** how the problem is affecting your working relationship (e.g. trust or competence).

Your Style Under Stress



<http://aghlc.com/images/tough-conversation.jpg>



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Silence

- **Masking**
 - Understating or selectively showing true opinions; sarcasm, sugarcoating
- **Avoiding**
 - Steering away from sensitive subjects; talk, but not about real issues
- **Withdrawing**
 - Pulling out of conversation all together

Violence

- **Controlling**
 - Coercing others to your way of thinking; cutting off, overstating facts, changing subjects, speaking in absolutes
- **Labeling**
 - Putting label on people or ideas to dismiss them under stereotype or category
- **Attacking**
 - Belittling and threatening so others suffer

While we are acutely aware of how others contribute to unhealthy conversations, we are often unaware of the ways in which

WE ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROBLEM



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PROBLEM

- The first thing that deteriorates during a crucial conversation is not our behavior (that comes second), but our motive.

SOLUTION

- Learn how to stay focused on what you really want and get better results.

Behavior

Unhealthy Motives

- Be Right
- Look good/save face
- Win
- Punish, Blame
- Avoid conflict

Motives of Dialog

- Learn
- Find the truth
- Produce results
- Strengthen relationships

Restart Your Brain...

1) What am I behaving like I want?

2) What results do I really want

- For myself?
- For others?
- For the relationship?
- For the organization?

3) How would I behave if I really did?



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PROBLEM

- When it matters the most and our emotions kick in, we often do our worst – and we feel like we are doing the right thing.

SOLUTION

- Learn how to create emotions that make you want to return to healthy dialogue.



Downward Spiral

<https://globalmalnutrition.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/spiral2.gif>



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The Path to Action



How to stay in dialogue when you're
angry, scared, or hurt

MASTER MY STORIES



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Three Clever Stories

- **Victim Stories**

- “It’s not my fault!” We are the innocent sufferers

- **Villain Stories**

- “It’s all your fault!” Emphasize others’ nasty qualities and rely on ugly labels

- **Helpless Stories**

- “There’s nothing else I can do!” Convince us that we have no healthy options for action



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Tell the Rest of the Story

- What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the problem?
- Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do this?
- What should I do right now to move toward what I really want?

My Crucial Conversation

The Facts	My Story	The Question I'll Ask

STATE My Path

Five steps for sharing tough messages can be easily remembered with the acronym, STATE

How to speak persuasively,
NOT abrasively

- **S**hare your facts
- **T**ell your story
- **A**sk for others' paths
- **T**alk tentatively
- **E**ncourage testing



How to Talk Tentatively

Too Forceful

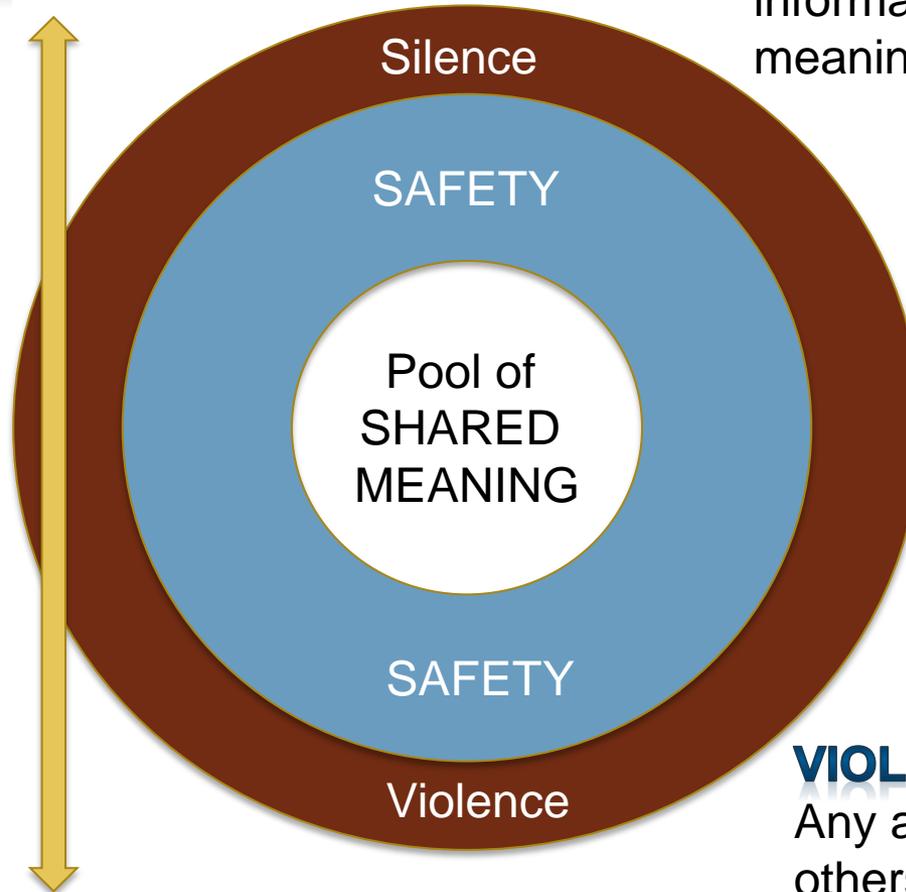
- The fact of the matter is...
- That's a dumb idea...
- The only reasonable option is to...
- If I agreed with you, then we'd both be wrong.

More Tentative

- In my opinion...
- Maybe it would make more sense to...
- I believe that what we should do is...
- I'm wondering if that example applies to our company...



BE AWARE



SILENCE:

Any action taken to withhold information from the pool of meaning

VIOLENCE:

Any action taken to compel others toward your point of view



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RESPECT IS LIKE AIR.

You don't really notice it until it's not there – and then it's all you notice.



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Rebuild Safety

- Mutual Purpose:
 - You believe that I care about your goals and vice versa
- Mutual Respect:
 - You believe that I care about you as a person and vice versa.

Then step back in.
APOLOGIZE
CONTRAST



Create a Mutual Purpose

- Commit to seek Mutual Purpose
- Recognize the purpose behind the strategy
- Invent a Mutual Purpose
- Brainstorm new strategies

Scenario

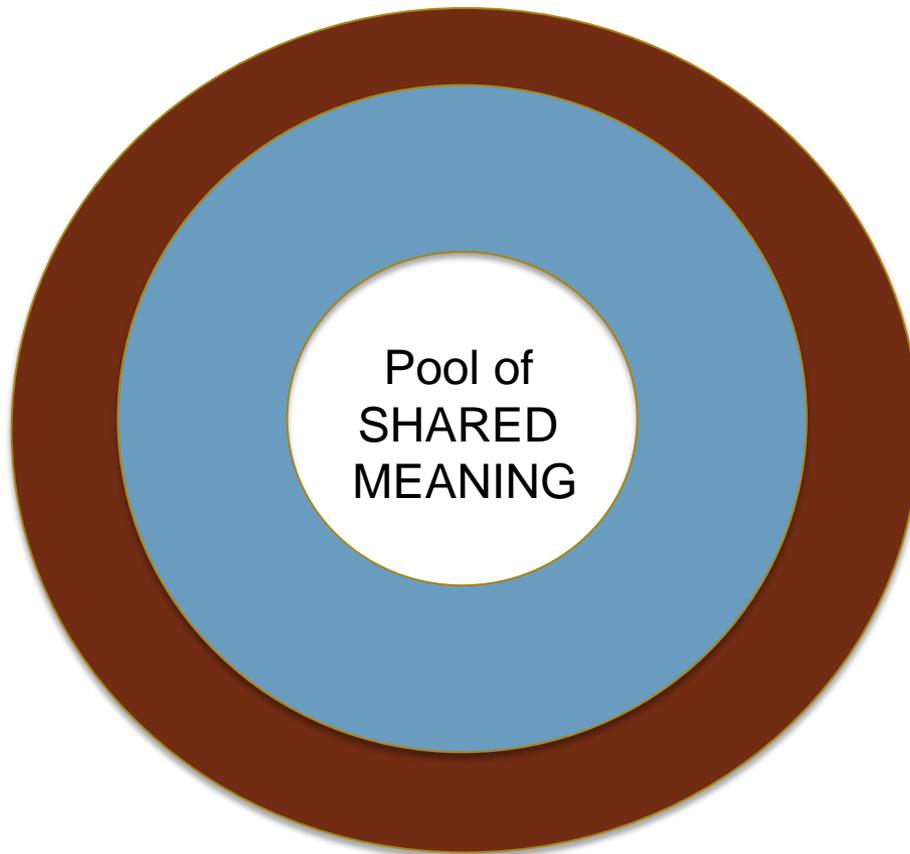
Power-Listening Skills

- **A**sk
- **M**irror
- **P**araphrase
- **P**rime

To keep ourselves from feeling nervous while exploring others' paths, remember we are trying to understand their point of view, not necessarily agree with it!

A BIT OF ROLE PLAY





Having more meaning in the pool, even jointly owning it, doesn't guarantee that we all agree on **WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO WITH THE MEANING.**
-CC, 2ND Edition, page 177

Move to Action

- Document the following factors:
 - *Who*
 - Does *What*
 - By *When*
 - How will we **Follow Up**



Thank you! Any Questions?

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Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler. (2012). *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when the Stakes are High*. McGraw Hill: New York.



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