Overview of Crucial Conversations®
via an Illustration

Professional Development & Enrichment Conference
2017 Conference Workshop
University of Puget Sound

Developed & Delivered by

Betsy BeMiller
Workplace Resolutions, LLC
Conflict & Dispute Resolution Systems & Services at Work

Betsy BeMiller founded her own business, Workplace Resolutions, LLC, for applying leadership, communication and conflict resolution skills to employment and in the workplace. She has synthesized her four decades of experience, knowledge and skills into an approach that is highly facilitative, comprehensive and holistic for assisting individuals, workgroups and/or entire organizations through conflict and back into productivity. She assists organizations in training employees in communication and conflict resolution skills, facilitating work groups to resolve conflict, mediating sensitive workplace issues, designing systems to handle conflicts and solving personnel challenges through coaching and collaboration.

Betsy, an associate with VitalSmarts™, is a certified trainer in Crucial Conversations® and Crucial Accountability®. She has been a trainer also for The Ken Blanchard Companies’ Situational Leadership© II and Gung Ho®.

Betsy’s clients include public agencies (federal, state, county, municipal, ports, utilities), universities (Univ. of Washington, Univ. of Puget Sound) & colleges (Evergreen State, Green River, Highline, Pierce, Clover Park, Bates) and many organizations (nonprofits, corporations, businesses, etc.)
3 Elements of a Crucial Conversation Situation

NOTES:

Your Situation

Is there a crucial conversation you would like to have – but haven’t (possibly because you are unsure about how it would go)? (Even if not, briefly describe a potential crucial conversation with your boss to use here.)
Video 1: Bruce initiates a conversation with Michelle

NOTES:

What makes Michelle’s conversation with her boss, Bruce, a crucial conversation?

If you are Michelle, what subjects do you want to discuss?

Video 2: Michelle responds to what Bruce has to say

NOTES:

Which of the subjects you recognized did Michelle address?

Is Bruce's success helped by Michelle’s response? Why or why not?
Video 3: Michelle’s response, Part II

NOTES:

Which of the subjects you recognized did Michelle address in this video?

List some potential impacts of this response of Michelle

How might Bruce’s success be affected by Michelle’s response?

Application

How do these three videos influence your thinking about your situation (from page 3)
Our Brain during a Crucial Conversation

As Stress Increases . . .

. . . blood flows from our “thinking” brain to our Reptilian brain.

Adrenilne increases and our brain interprets and sends the message: Fight, Freeze or Flight!

Under stress, we tend to respond . . .

non-assertively         aggressively

NOTES:

Video 4: Michelle accesses “thinking” brain functioning (over Reptilian reaction)

NOTES:

Which of the subjects you recognized did Michelle address in this video?

Application

How will you manage your emotions during a crucial conversation with your “boss” so that you will not shut down or ramp up?

concepts and language adapted from Patterson, Kerry; Grenny, Joseph; McMillan, Ron; and Switzler, Al:

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## Keys to Michelle’s Success in Her Crucial Conversation with her Boss, Bruce

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<tr>
<th>Skill / Concept</th>
<th>Utilization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Controls her emotions</td>
<td>Asks herself, “What do I really want for myself, Bruce and for our professional relationship?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates <em>Mutual Respect</em></td>
<td>Her tone and language demonstrate respect</td>
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| Demonstrates *Mutual Goals* | She demonstrates that she cares about Bruce’s goal, “I can see we are in a tough spot here . . . .”  
“I don't want to disappoint our customers any more than you do.” |
| S-T-A-T-E s her concerns | She Shares facts first.  
She Tells her “story”—her interpretation of his behavior.  
She Asks if her interpretation is true for him.  
She talks Tentatively.  
She Encourages testing of her stories. |
| Acknowledges the other | “Thank you for understanding.” |
| Asks for commitment | “Can we agree we will stick to the process in the future?” |
| Asks to continue talking about planning and projected timeframes | “I cannot help but think that we should revisit the plan. Otherwise, we either sacrifice quality or burn out our people.” |

**NOTES:**

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concepts and language adapted from Patterson, Kerry; Grenny, Joseph; McMillan, Ron; and Switzler, Al: *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*, New York: McGraw-Hill

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Application
With a partner, review the previous page ("Keys to Michelle’s success in hold her crucial conversation with her boss, Bruce") and the next page (a tabular overview of Crucial Conversations® skills).

Discuss what of these keys and skills each of you could utilize in a crucial conversation with your “boss.”

Invitation to Crucial Conversations® Book Club Learning

Potential Format
Three 2-hour sessions in January & February, 2017
Up to 30 participants per session
Discussion format, with specific, focused discussion of concepts, tools and strategies

Potential Advance Provisions

Study assignments and questions for self-observation/reflection

concepts and language adapted from Patterson, Kerry; Grenny, Joseph; McMillan, Ron; and Switzler, Al: Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High, New York: McGraw-Hill

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<th>Skill</th>
<th>Or Try . . .</th>
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| **Results and Relationships are suffering** | You need to hold a **Crucial Conversation**  
- Identify what is keeping you stuck  
- Backtrack from the results you're not happy with  
- Separate content from process; fix the process | Get coaching from a friend.  
Use this sheet as a guide. |
| **You need to initiate a Crucial Conversation, or one is evolving** | **Start with Heart: How Can I Work on Me First?**  
- Focus on What You Really Want for: you; them; the relationship (your long-term results)  
- Avoid Fool's Choice (think AND not OR) | Focus on the long-term.  
**Master Your Stories.** |
| **If someone Misunderstands your intent regarding Purpose or Respect** | **Contrast**  
"I don't think/mean/want _____ (their fear/misunderstanding)."  
"I do think/mean/want _____ (your real purpose/meaning)."  
**Apologize** when it's not a misunderstanding—you really were rude, undermining, etc. | Go back and establish or reinforce **Mutual Purpose.** |
| **The discussion is going in circles.**  
People are arguing.  
You're beginning a tough project or discussion. | **Create Mutual Purpose with CRIB**  
Commit to seek **Mutual Purpose.**  
"Can we look for something we both agree on?"  
Recognize the Purpose behind the Strategy.  
"Why do you want" "This is why I want _____ ."  
Invent a Mutual Purpose.  
"So, if you get _____ and I get _____ , we're both happy?"  
Brainstorm alternative strategies  
"What ideas do you have?" "I was thinking it may help if ..." | They may have a hidden issue that is getting in the way. **Explore** their Path.  
Look for a higher goal that includes both of your purposes. |
| **If you are getting emotional or telling clever stories** | **Master Your "Clever" Stories—Tell the Rest of the Story**  
**Victim Story:**  
"What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the problem?"  
**Villain Story:**  
"Why would a reasonable, rational, decent person do this?"  
**Helpless Story:**  
"What should I do right now to move toward what I really want?" | Ask a trusted friend about your role and possible motives for them, like:  
**Circumstances**  
**Honest Mistakes**  
**Downward Spirals** |
| **If you have a tough message, refuse the Fool's Choice by being honest and maintaining safety.** | **S-T-A-T-E Your Path**  
Share your Facts: "I noticed ..." "Twice you ..."  
Tell your Story: "I'm beginning to wonder if ..." "It seems to me..."  
Ask for Other's Paths: "How do you see it?" "Help me understand"  
Talk Tentatively: Own your story and avoid absolutes.  
Encourage Testing: "Do you see it differently?" | Re-establish or reinforce **Mutual Purpose.**  
**Contrast** to ensure they don't mistake your intent.  
**Explore** if they move to **Silence** or **Violence.** |
| **If someone else is going to Silence or Violence, their full meaning isn't getting into the Pool.** | **Explore Others' Paths with AMPP**  
Ask: "I want to know what you think about..."  
Mirror: (Silence) "You seem reluctant. Are you sure you're OK with it?"  
(Violence) "Wow, you seem really upset. What's up?"  
Paraphrase: "So you're saying ______."  
Prime: "Do you think that ______?" | Go back and establish or reinforce **Mutual Purpose.**  
Allow time to cool off and try talking later. |

| Move to Action | Decide rightly. Determine Who, does What, by When, and Follow up. | Hold each other accountable |

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