

Crucial Conversations Cheat Sheet

What is a crucial conversation?

1. Opinions differ
2. Emotions are strong
3. The stakes are high

Healthy Dialog

- The goal for a crucial conversation is to stay in a state of **healthy dialog**: information can freely flow between everyone involved.
- When we can maintain a state of healthy dialog, we can have conversations about even the most difficult topics.
- How can we stay in a state of healthy dialog when emotions are strong, opinions differ, and the stakes are high?
 - “The best way to work on us is to start with me.”

Staying in Dialog: Self-Reflective Questions

1. What do I want for myself?
2. What do I want for others?
3. What do I want for the relationship?
4. How would I behave if I want these results?

Safety

- **Safe conditions** in a conversation are those in which everyone can freely exchange information to add to the pool of shared meaning.
 - Content is less critical than conditions!
 - Do you trust others' motives? Do they have your best interests at heart?
 - Has the blood left your brain?
 - Withdrawal or attacking is a sign that someone no longer feels safe!
- How can we restore safety when someone withdraws or attacks, and avoid responding in kind?

Restoring Safety

1. Express that you are working towards a common goal/mutual purpose.
2. Express empathy. Genuinely seek to understand and work from the other person's point of view.
3. Maintain and demonstrate respect. Lack of respect shifts the conversation from focusing on resolving the problem to focusing on retaining dignity.

Break the Cycle of Escalation

1. Apologize when appropriate (must be genuine!).
2. Use contrasting statements (“I don't want to _____, I do want to _____”).
3. Commit to pursuing a common goal, and brainstorm solutions to meet that goal.