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# Crucial Conversations

# Introduction



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*Developing Leaders for Florida Agriculture & Natural Resources*

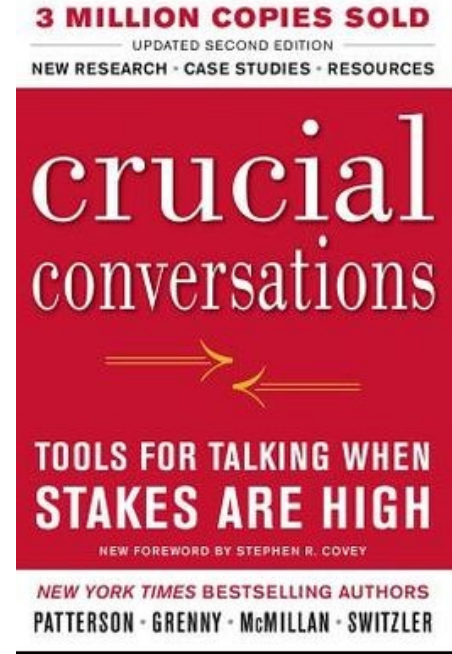


**UNIVERSITY** *of* **FLORIDA**

**A D V A N C E M E N T**

# Road Map

- Defining Crucial Conversations
- Exploring Your Style Under Stress
- Dialogue Tools





# Crucial Conversation Definition



- A conversation where:
  - Opinions vary
  - Stakes are high
  - Emotions run strong

# Examples



- Ending a relationship
- Talking to a co-worker about offensive behavior
- Asking a friend to repay a loan
- Talking to a team member who isn't keeping commitments



# Three Resolutions

- We avoid them.
- We face them but handle them poorly.
- We face them and handle them well.

# Conversations Go Poorly Because



- Biology
- Catch us by surprise
- Confusion
- Self-defeating behavior



# Fool's Choice

- We believe we have two options:
  - Tell the truth
  - Keep a friend
- Candor vs Kindness





# The One Thing

- Dialogue – free flow of meaning between two or more people





# Pool of Shared Meaning

- Enter conversations with our own opinions and experiences which propel our actions.
- Make it safe for everyone to add meaning
- Everyone is exposed to better information and build off another
- Otherwise, they sit back quietly, rarely commit to a final decision and criticize and resist



# Dialogue Tool #1

## Start with the Heart



- Work on yourself first
- High risk discussions must start with the right motives
- Don't be afraid to step away from the interaction
  - What do I really want for myself?
  - What do I really want for others?
  - What do I really want for this relationship?

# What Do I Really Want



Dialogue Killers	Dialogue Promoters
Save Face	Learn
Look Good	Find the Truth
Keep the Peace	Make Effective Decisions
Avoid Conflict	Get Results
Win	Build Relationships
Be Right	
Punish	

# Search for the Elusive And



- Clarify what you really want
- Clarify what you really don't want
- Present your brain with a more complex problem
  - How can I have a candid conversation with a teammate about doing her job **AND** avoid creating bad feelings or wasting our time?

# Dialogue Tool #2

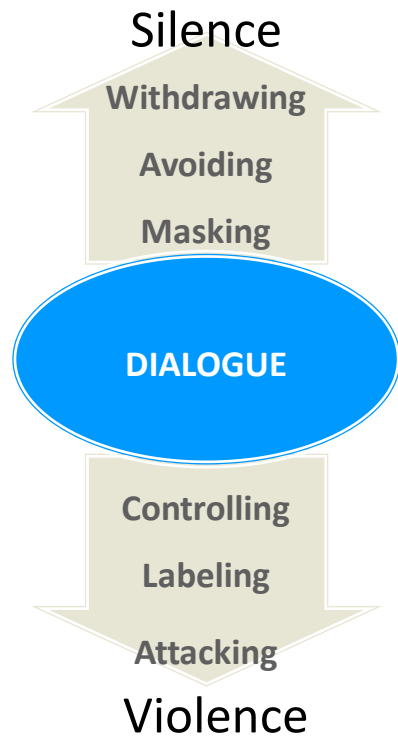
## Learn to Look



- Monitor content and conditions of conversations
- The sooner you notice it's become a crucial conversation, the easier to get it back on track
  - Physical, behavioral, emotional cues
  - Signs people don't feel safe
  - Your own style under stress



# Silence & Violence



**Withdrawing**—Pulling out of communication completely; physical, emotional, psychological

**Avoiding**—staying away from unsafe topics or issues

**Masking**—understating, sugar coating, sarcasm,

**Controlling**—coercing others through how we share our views—interrupting, overstating, absolutes

**Labeling**—trying to win or have others give in through ridiculing

**Attacking**—making sure others hurt; emotional, physical, psychological

# How Silence Sounds



- Masking

Oh yeah that'll work like a charm. Offer people a discount and they'll sign up just to save \$5. Where do you come up with this stuff?"

- Avoiding

"How does your new suit look? Well you know blue's my favorite color."

- Withdrawing

"Excuse me, I've gotta take this call."



# How Violence Sounds



- Controlling

“I’ve worked with our supervisor for a long time, I know this is her preferred method.”

- Labeling

“You're not going to listen to them are you? First, they're from headquarters. Second, they're engineers. Need I say more”

- Attacking

“I dare you to try and see what happens”

# Your Style Under Stress



- *Any surprises?*



# Dialogue Tool #2 Learn to Look Make It Safe



- What's at risk?
  - Mutual Purpose
  - Mutual Respect
- Choose a Solution
  - Apologize
  - Contrasting
  - Create a mutual purpose

# Contrasting



- Don't/Do Statements
  - Addresses other's concerns that you don't respect them or have a malicious purpose
  - Confirms your respect or clarifies your purpose

# Contrasting Practice: The Raw Meat



You just told your spouse that the meat he or she just prepared on the grill is “a bit too rare for your taste.”

Your spouse comes back sharply with: *“I do my best and it’s never good enough for you!”*

# Contrasting Practice: The Messy Cubicle



You've just told a person who shares an office cubicle with you that you'd rather she not leave her pizza boxes, Chinese food containers, and other lunch materials on your desk.

This time your coworker says with a hurt expression: *“I thought we were a team. I thought that we worked really well together. What happened?”*



# Dialogue Tool #3

## Master Your Stories



- Don't be led by your emotions, lead them.
- Emotions happen
- Where are they coming from?
- Are there facts to support them?



# Clever Stories

- It's not my fault
- It's all your fault
- There's nothing else I can do

Too often, we judge other groups by their worst examples while judging ourselves by our best intentions. President George W. Bush



# Dialogue Tool #4

## STATE Your Path



- Share your facts
- Tell your story
- Ask for others' paths
- Talk tentatively
- Encourage testing



# Dialogue Tool #5

## Strategies for Listening



- Be Sincere
- Be Curious and Stay Curious
  - Why would a reasonable person act like this?
- Be Patient
  - Thoughts vs Emotions



# Decision Making

- Dialogue isn't decision making.
- Decide how to decide
  - Command
  - Consult
  - Vote
  - Consensus

# Closing Thoughts



- Choose 1-2 skills to focus on
- Dialogue is a skill that can be improved
- We've never mastered it



**Thank you**