

How to have a Crucial Conversation

If you're stuck in some aspect of your life, either at home or at work, there may be a crucial conversation you're not holding or not holding well. A crucial conversation is any conversation where the stakes are high, opinions differ, and emotions run strong.

So how do you know you need to have a crucial conversation?

Are you getting results you don't want? Do you have persistent, recurring problems? Is trust or respect diminishing? Are you shutting down instead of dealing with the issue?

When most people face such a conversation, their natural tendency is to clam up, but as time wears on, things could become tense and the situation may worsen. Holding a crucial conversation is the healthy and helpful alternative as it allows you both to speak candidly and honestly which can strengthen relationships and solve problems. Given the importance of crucial conversations here are some steps to help you succeed.



Before the Conversation

1. **Start with Heart:** Before you begin, examine your motives. Ask yourself what you really want for you, for the other person, and for the relationship? This question taps in to your emotional intelligence and provides an opportunity to diffuse any strong emotions.
2. **Stick to the facts:** Share your position, ask for their point of view, talk tentatively, and encourage testing. Make sure you identify only the facts of the situation and the outcome you have drawn as a result of those facts.
3. **Identify a Mutual Purpose & Desired Outcome:** Identify goals both you and the other person care about. Clearly outline the actions or outcomes you'd like to see. If you can't identify these beforehand, ask the other person how you can solve the issue together.
4. **Practice:** Practice these skills ahead of time to prepare for your meeting.



At the Beginning of the Conversation

1. **Get Buy-In:** Get agreement from the other person to have the conversation. If the other person wants to discuss something else or isn't prepared, schedule another time to meet.
2. **Clarify & Agree:** Reach agreement with the other person that there is an issue, clarify what the issue is, and clearly articulate what a successful resolution would look like for both parties.



During the Conversation

1. **Make It Safe:** The remedy to defensiveness in crucial conversations is to make it safe. To create safety, help others understand that you respect them and care about their interests as much as you do your own. When they believe this, they open up to your views. When they don't, they shut down. After you create a safe environment, confidently share your facts and your position.
2. **Invite Dialogue & Listen:** Once you've safely stated your point of view, invite differing opinions. Encourage the other person to disagree with you and listen to what they have to say. Those who are successful at crucial conversations want to learn, if you're inauthentic, they'll resist you. If you are open to hearing others' points of view, they'll be more open to yours.



At the End of the Conversation

1. **Move to Action:** When ending a crucial conversation, make a note of WHO does WHAT by WHEN, and how you will FOLLOW UP. This will help you turn a conversation into real action and results.

Want to learn more?

Email training@programmed.com.au to attend the next **Crucial Conversations** workshop run by the Group Learning & Development team.