

Crucial Conversations

Discussion Questions

Whether it's with a gathering of family members, friends, co workers, or colleagues, a weekly discussion of Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High (McGraw-Hill 2011) can go a long way to deepening your understanding of ways to step up to and handle the crucial conversations you face. Here are some suggested discussion questions:

Chapters 1 & 2

1. What are the three elements that make a conversation crucial?
2. What are some examples of typical crucial conversations?
3. How do we typically handle crucial conversations?
4. Why are we often on our worst behavior?
5. What is dialogue? What is the Pool of Shared Meaning? How does the Pool of Shared Meaning both motivate and enable people to make better choices?

Chapter 3

1. What does the expression "work on me first" mean? Why is it important?
2. What's the meaning of the expression "Start with Heart"?
3. Why is it important to stay focused on what we want?
4. Why is it important to ask what we want for ourselves, others, and the relationship? What do our wants often change to?
5. When we stop, take a breath, and ask ourselves what we really want, how does it affect our immediate physical and emotional response?

Chapter 4

1. Why do we typically get caught up in the content of a crucial conversation and miss the conditions?
2. What two aspects of conversations are masters of dialogue constantly monitoring? What conditions do they pay attention to?

3. How can you tell when a conversation turns from routine to crucial?
4. When this happens, what reactions do you typically notice in yourself?
5. Why should you be watching for safety?
6. What is your own Style Under Stress? Does it vary at work and at home?

Chapter 5

1. What is Mutual Purpose?
2. Why is Mutual Purpose the entry condition of dialogue? Why is Mutual Respect the continuance condition of dialogue?
3. What do Mutual Purpose and Mutual Respect have to do with safety?
4. What role does an apology play in restoring safety?
5. What is Contrasting? When people misunderstand your purpose or respect, how can Contrasting help?

Chapter 6

1. Who makes us angry?
2. What role do stories play in the creation of our feelings and actions?
3. What are Victim, Villain, and Helpless Stories?
4. When we're feeling upset, why is it important to get back to the facts?

5. Why should we ask what role we may be playing in the problem?

6. Why should we start by assuming that others are reasonable and rational?

Chapter 7

1. When we care the most about something, how are we likely to express ourselves?

2. In order to make it safe for others to hear our views, why start with the facts? Why not start with our story? Why share our story at all? How should we share our story?

3. Why ask others to share their views?

Chapter 8

1. When others start to attack us verbally, what part of their Path to Action do they typically share?

2. How do we help them share what they're really thinking?

3. What does it mean to 'explore others' paths'?

4. What is it we're trying to do when we use our AMPP skills?

Chapter 9

1. When a crucial conversation comes to an end, what mistakes do we often make?

2. What are the four different methods of decision making? Why is it often important to decide up front which method you're going to use?

Chapters 10-11

1. Discuss which of the cases in the "Yeah, but" chapter most applies to you. How can you use the advice for that case to improve a particular result or relationship?

2. What two principles are most helpful to keep in mind when you're just beginning to apply the crucial conversations skills to your every-day conversations?

3. How can you use the "Coaching for Crucial Conversations" table to help you prepare to hold a specific crucial conversation?

Note: These discussion questions are not intended for use in corporate training and are only meant for informal reading groups or book clubs. For inquiries regarding training courses, please call us at 1.800.449.5989 or visit us at www.vital-smarts.com.