



..... Introduction



Today, more than ever, the ability to engage in crucial conversations is important for both personal and professional growth. The Mastering Crucial Conversations series equips participants with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate difficult conversations confidently and effectively.

These conversations often involve disagreement or conflict, and instead of avoiding them, we can learn how to step into them with professionalism that fosters understanding, collaboration, and ultimately better outcomes.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

2

Mastering Crucial Conversations

Introduction

Today, more than ever, the ability to engage in crucial conversations is important for both personal and professional growth. The Mastering Crucial Conversations series equips participants with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate difficult conversations confidently and effectively.

These conversations often involve disagreement or conflict, and instead of avoiding them, we can learn how to step into them with professionalism that fosters understanding, collaboration, and ultimately better outcomes.

Three Important Reasons for Crucial Conversations

1. Make good decisions that resolve conflict.
2. Understand others' opinions and find common ground.
3. Allows compromises based on all perspectives presented.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

3

Introduction to Mastering Crucial Conversations

Today, more than ever, the ability to engage in crucial conversations is important for both personal and professional growth. The Mastering Crucial Conversations series equips participants with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate difficult conversations confidently and effectively.

These conversations often involve disagreement or conflict, and instead of avoiding them, we can learn how to step into them with professionalism that fosters understanding, collaboration, and ultimately better outcomes. By doing so, anyone with these skills can transform disagreements into meaningful dialogues that result in improving relationships and with better results. In fact, the skills we're introducing today are backed by decades of social science research. This evidence-based approach gives people practical strategies that were tested in real-life situations.

The program also provides a framework structure that guides people through each crucial conversation, which they can turn into actionable steps that lead to positive outcomes. By mastering the art of crucial conversations, people naturally create a more open and collaborative environment where diverse perspectives are valued and respected. Instead of avoiding conflict or resorting to unproductive communication patterns, people can learn how to address challenging topics with empathy, respect, and clarity. This not only strengthens relationships but also fosters a culture of trust and growth within teams and organizations.

However, Mastering Crucial Conversations goes beyond simply teaching communication techniques. It also empowers people to shift their mindset and approach difficult conversations with confidence and assertiveness. By embracing these skills, people learn to navigate complex situations with grace and professionalism, fostering understanding, collaboration, and ultimately achieving better outcomes.

Crucial Conversation

A Crucial Conversation is a discussion between two or more people in which they hold *opposing opinions* about a *high-stakes issue* where *emotions run strong*.



Definition of a Crucial Conversation

A Crucial Conversation is a discussion between two or more people in which they hold *opposing opinions* about a *high-stakes issue* where *emotions run strong*.

Examples:

- **Opposing Opinions Example:** You ask your boss for a promotion. You think you're ready. She doesn't agree.

This scenario is common and often ends in working relationships that suffer. However, this is an opportunity for a crucial conversation that can lead to a better working relationship for both parties.

- **High-Stakes Issue Example:** In a meeting with co-workers, you must pick a new marketing strategy, or the company will go under.

When under this type of high-stakes pressure, knowing how to conduct a successful crucial conversation is important to reach successful goals not for only those at the table but for everyone working in the company.

- **Strong Emotions Example:** Your spouse thinks you were flirting with someone, but you think you were only being polite.

That's a hot topic! But it's also a great example of a personal crucial conversation that most people want to get resolved in a positive way as soon as possible.

The Downside of Avoiding Crucial Conversations



Avoiding crucial conversations has a ripple effect. In fact, without positive and productive crucial conversations, serious misunderstandings will happen.

Consequences might include lack of professional development, poor performance feedback, or loss of a valuable employee.



8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

5

The Downside of Avoiding Crucial Conversations

What happens when crucial conversations are avoided or poorly handled?

Avoiding crucial conversations has a ripple effect. In fact, without positive and productive crucial conversations, serious misunderstandings will happen. Consequences of the misunderstandings include obstruction of professional development, ineffective performance feedback, loss of a valuable employee and loss of company revenue.

Case in point. “Meghan, a bright, ambitious, young professional was hired into a management role at an educational software company on the West Coast. She was brought in to revolutionize a new area, reporting directly to the Chief Operating Officer (COO). A thought leader in her industry, Meghan was exactly what the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) wanted in a new hire. Her job performance was impeccable. Meghan was a model employee, bringing innovative ideas to the table and working hard to make sure her team met — and often exceeded — its goals.

When the COO became threatened by her potential, Meghan found herself out of a job. Rather than engage in a crucial conversation with the COO or create a new vertical for Meghan to manage, the CEO found it easier not to make waves. The good news: Meghan landed on her feet. Within two weeks, she accepted a position with a company that acknowledged her tremendous talents. Her new employer offered her a far more generous salary, a great benefits package, a signing bonus — and equity ownership in the company.”

Question to Group: Obviously, the CEO in this scenario does not exhibit good leadership qualities by sticking his head in the sand. Does anyone want to suggest positive actions the CEO might take to handle this differently for a better outcome for everyone involved?

Creating a Safe Environment for Crucial Conversations



When people feel fear, they start responding with fight or flight behaviors.



When people feel safe, they can talk about anything and openly listen to others.

The *message* is not the problem. The problem is the listener doesn't feel safe *hearing the message*.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

7

Section Two: Creating a Safe Environment

Why foster a safe place for crucial conversations?

Gifted communicators keep a close eye on safety because nothing kills the flow of meaning like fear. Because, when there's fear in the room, people start to push too hard, or withdraw and hide which is a fight or flight emotional response.

On the other hand, by keeping it psychologically safe for people they are allowed to not only talk about anything but also listen to others without fear of attack.

Keep in mind that rarely do people fear what you're saying. Rather, they get defensive when they don't feel safe.

So, the *message* is not the problem. Instead, the problem is the listener doesn't feel safe *hearing the message*.

In other words, the content (what is said) is not nearly as important as the conditions in which the conversation takes place (how the environment feels).

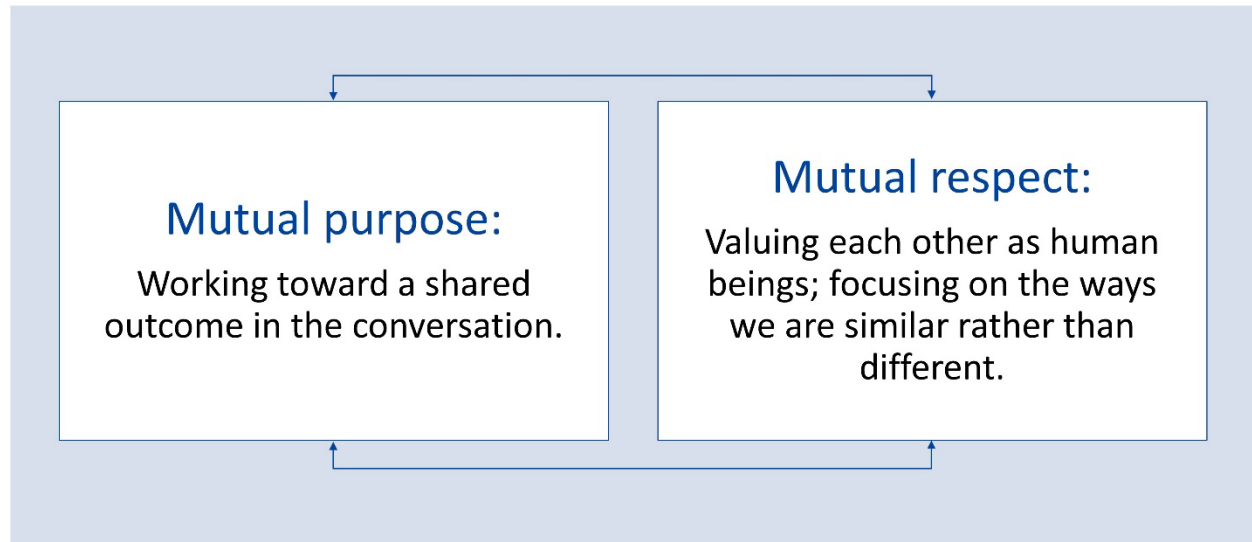
To the group: Can anyone share an instance when they received difficult feedback and did not feel defensive? Can you explain why you were able to listen and respond so well to the feedback?

A few possible answers:

1. Did you believe the other person had your best interest in mind?
2. Did you respect the other person's opinion?
3. Did you trust the motives and ability of the other person?

If your answers are yes, then, even if you didn't like the feedback, perhaps you didn't feel as if you had to defend yourself. Therefore, you felt safe.

Working Towards Mutual Purpose and Mutual Respect



8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

8

Working Towards Mutual Purpose and Mutual Respect

Mutual purpose: Working toward a shared outcome in the conversation.

The entry condition of safe dialog is “Mutual Purpose.” This is the idea that two parties come to a conversation with a common goal. When this is in place, members believe everyone is working toward a common outcome and cares about everyone's goals and interests. The instant people perceive disrespect in a conversation, the interaction is no longer about the original purpose — it's now about defending dignity.

The best at dialogue use four skills to create a Mutual Purpose. If it helps you remember what to do, note that the four skills used in creating Mutual Purpose form the acronym CRIB. CRIB stands for **Commit**, **Recognize**, **Invent**, and **Brainstorm**. These four skills are used to create a shared purpose by the commitment to seek a mutual purpose, recognize the purpose behind the strategy, invent a mutual purpose and brainstorm strategies to achieve that purpose.

Mutual respect: Valuing each other as human beings; focusing on the ways we are similar rather than different.

Mutual Respect is the requirement for continuing dialogue. When people start to feel that others don't respect them, the conversation immediately becomes unsafe. So, starting a conversation based on mutual purpose is the first step to addressing a crucial issue. In other words, everyone's views and feelings are treated as equally worthy of consideration.

To spot when respect is violated and safety turns south, watch for signs that people are defending their dignity. Emotions are the key. When people feel disrespected, they become highly charged. Their emotions turn from fear to anger. Then they resort to pouting, name-calling, yelling, and making threats. To determine when Mutual Respect is at risk, ask yourself, “Does everyone believe that I respect them?”

Setting the Right Tone and Creating a Safe Space



Make it safe. Create a sense of safety by making it your goal when faced with a Crucial Conversation.



Notice when safety is at risk. When stakes are high, emotions run strong, and opinions vary, we often feel threatened.



Speak honestly without offending. When you speak honestly without offending, you can prevent clam-ups and blow-ups and keep the dialogue open.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

9

3 Tips for Setting the Right Tone and Creating a Safe Space for Open Dialog in Crucial Conversations

1. Make it safe.

Create a sense of safety by making it your goal when faced with a Crucial Conversation. Remember, human beings are wired to look for threats. When people feel threatened, they move to silence or verbal violence, flight, or fight, neither of which are great for problem-solving. All you need to do to destroy safety in a Crucial Conversation is nothing. Remember, during the first tense seconds of the beginning of a conversation, others are scanning your every facial tick or leg crossing for evidence of your intentions such as:

- a. Do you mean to harm?
- b. Are you out to get them?

Your job is to generate evidence that you aren't!

2. Notice when safety is at risk.

When stakes are high, emotions run strong, and opinions vary, we often feel threatened. This is why we often resort to silence or verbal violence when faced with a Crucial Conversation. Again, it's the age-old case of fight or flight.

3. Speak honestly without offending.

When you speak honestly without offending, you can prevent clam-ups and blow-ups and keep the dialogue open. This is why it's important to start with the heart by remembering - and holding ourselves accountable to - the real goal, the pure goal.

To recap, we look for signs that fear is present in a conversation and identify the mutual purpose, we demonstrate mutual respect and, we speak honestly without offending.

Crucial Conversation Skills



1

Start with the Heart.

Start with yourself. Strive to be more aware of your emotions and intentions before you start a conversation.

2

Learn to Look.

Become aware of the signs when a conversation is going off track. Recognize when safety is at risk.

3

Make it Safe.

Create a safe environment for the conversation. Ensure everyone feels comfortable to speak freely.

4

Master your Stories.

Be clear about the stories you tell yourself about the situation. Separate facts from feelings and avoid jumping to conclusions.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

11

Section Three: Mastering Dialogue Skills

Introduction to the 4 Crucial Conversation Skills

1. Start with the Heart.

Start with yourself. Strive to be more aware of your own emotions and intentions before you start a conversation. Doing so helps you to be more open and honest in your communication, which helps you avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.

Here are some tips on how to teach yourself to “Start with the Heart”:

- Keep an emotions diary and develop your feelings vocabulary.
- Reflect on behaviors you encounter each day.
- Know who and what pushes your buttons.
- Ask yourself why you do the things you do.
- Don't treat your feelings as good or bad.
- Observe the ripple effects of your emotions.
- Check how you look when you're speaking.

2. Learn to Look.

Strive to be more aware of the signs when a conversation is going off track and train yourself to recognize when safety is at risk. For example, Learn to Look for crucial conversations, safety issues, and your style under stress.

3. Make it Safe.

It's up to you to create a safe environment for the conversation so that everyone feels comfortable to speak what's on their minds.

Here are some tips on how to "Make it Safe":

- Spot the turning point of when a conversation turns into a crucial conversation.
- Watch for signs of safety issues such as silence or violence.
- Beware of reverting to an unproductive style under stress.

4. Master My Stories.

Be clear with yourself about the stories that you tell yourself about the situation. Learn to separate fact from fiction and avoid jumping to conclusions.

Tips for Staying Focused on the Goal



Before you begin a crucial conversation, you must have a goal in mind and identify what you're hoping to achieve.



Use a non-blaming communication style while recognizing that complex, interpersonal problems have complex, interpersonal causes.



Phrase requests toward the positive and be open to accepting criticism if it's on-topic. Lose your need for total victory and don't forget to listen.



Overall, stay focused on your goals and avoid distractions by letting your brain have the time it needs to stop one task before starting another.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

12

How to Stay Focused on the Goal During Conversations

When having a difficult conversation, before you begin, it's important to have a goal in mind and identify what you're hoping to achieve. This can help you stay focused on the topic at hand and avoid getting sidetracked.

One way to identify your goal is to reset your motives. You can radically change your motives by thoughtfully answering a simple question: What do I really want?

Answering this question at four levels is also helpful:

1. What do I really want for me,
2. for the other person,
3. for the relationship, and
4. for other stakeholders?

Another way is to know your heart. In high-risk discussions, stay focused on what you really want (your big-picture goal, such as a stronger relationship), so you don't get sidetracked by conversational games, such as trying to win, punish the other person, or keep the peace.

Practice and use a non-blaming communication style while recognizing that complex, interpersonal problems have complex, interpersonal causes. To do this you must avoid blaming the other person for the problem and instead focus on the problem itself. Also, try to understand the other person's perspective and always be open to feedback.

Phrase requests toward the positive and be open to accepting criticism if it's on-topic. Lose the need for total victory and don't forget to listen. Therefore, you must focus on what you want to happen instead of what you don't want to happen. For example, instead of saying "Don't be late," say "Please be on time." You must also be open to accepting criticism if it's on-topic and lose the need to always be right. Don't forget to listen and try to understand the other person's perspective.

Overall, stay focused on your goals and avoid distractions. To do this, you must let your brain have the time it needs to stop one task before starting another. This technique helps you avoid getting sidetracked and stay focused on the topic at hand.

Examples of how these skills can be applied in various situations:

One example is when a manager is presenting a new idea and communicates their vision to their team by helping them understand what is possible and clearly outlines the steps needed to achieve that goal.

Another example is when confronting a coworker about his/her behavior. First, it's important to express your concerns without casting blame. Also try to understand the other person's perspective and be open to feedback. Start the conversation by expressing your concerns and then ask for their perspective on the situation. However, remember to be respectful and only address the issue at hand.

When asking a roommate to move out, first think about what you're going to say before having the conversation. In other words, be clear with yourself why you've made this decision. If things weren't always smooth sailing, write a list of what worked and didn't work about living together. After reviewing your list, spend some time thinking about what worked well and try and recall specific moments of pleasure with your living situation. If you have these positive memories in your heart and mind when you talk to your roommate, your conversation will be more graciously received, and you'll feel better about it.

Emotions Impact Communication and Decision-making



There are three important parts of an emotion with each part playing a role in the function and purpose of your emotional responses.

- 1 **Subjective component.** How you experience the emotion. ✓
- 2 **Physiological component:** How your body reacts to the emotion. ✓
- 3 **Expressive component:** How you behave in response to the emotion. ✓

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

14

Section Four: Handling Emotions

Emotions Impact Communication and Decision-making

The Three Components of Emotion

First, it's important to understand the three critical components of an emotion. Each element plays a role in the function and purpose of your emotional responses.

1. Subjective component: How you experience the emotion
2. Physiological component: How your body reacts to the emotion
3. Expressive component: How you behave in response to the emotion

Emotions have a significant impact on communication and decision-making during crucial conversations. In fact, emotional intelligence, or your ability to understand and manage emotions, plays an important role in the decision-making process.

Research shows that experiencing fear increases perceptions of risk, feeling disgusted makes people more likely to object. Conversely, feeling joy or anger causes people to leap into action.

In addition, emotions help a decision-maker determine which parts of a decision are the most relevant to their specific situation. They may also help people make faster decisions. However, it's important to recognize that emotions can also cloud judgment and lead to poor decision-making if not managed properly.

Techniques for Managing Emotions - Yours and Others



Be aware of your emotional state.



Recognize others' emotional signs.



Be aware of others' emotional state.



Communicate your feelings effectively to others.



Learn how you communicate under stress.



Focus on the positive to control emotions.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

15

Techniques for Managing Emotions

Here are six techniques for managing both your emotions and the other persons emotions during crucial conversations:

- Be aware of your own emotional state. Use mindfulness techniques such as focusing on your breath. This helps you stay centered and take your attention off the physical signs of panic.
- Be aware of the others' emotional state. Practice empathy. This involves considering the other person's feelings and emotions and trying to understand their perspective.
- Learn how you communicate under stress. Learn to do this by taking inventory of your behaviors that helps you identify your areas of improvement.
- Recognize others' emotional signs. Use four listening skills to trace the other person's path to action (AMPP). These skills include asking questions, mirroring, paraphrasing, and priming.
- Communicate your feelings effectively to others. Speak directly to the other person in a calm and matter-of-fact tone. This maximizes the chances that others will hear the content of your message, rather than fixate on your emotions. Avoid finger-pointing, whether blaming or literally pointing fingers. Use "I" statements rather than "you" statements.
- Focus on the positive to control emotions. Use empathy. Being able to demonstrate empathy appropriately is vital in positive communication. Skills that enhance empathic listening include quieting your mind to focus on the person speaking, listening to them fully and openly, avoiding interrupting them when they're speaking, and using your own words to reflect back what you heard them say, including the emotional content of the message.

The Importance of Empathy and Active Listening



Active Listening

Listen to the others' perspective and reflect what you hear.

Result: The other person feels heard and understood.

Empathy

Put yourself in someone else's shoes to understand their perspective.

Result: Builds rapport with the other person and finds common ground.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

16

The Importance of Empathy and Active Listening

Empathy and active listening are important techniques for diffusing tense situations during crucial conversations.

Active listening involves listening to the other person's perspective and reflecting back what you hear. This helps the other person feel heard and understood.

Empathy involves putting yourself in someone else's shoes to try and understand their perspective. This helps you build rapport with the other person and find common ground.

Techniques for Reaching a Shared Understanding and Finding Common Ground



- ✓ Be fully present in the conversation.
- ✓ Realize and vocalize the things you agree on.
- ✓ Seek understanding more than being right.
- ✓ Honor the other person.
- ✓ Commit to communicate with kindness.



8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

18

Section Five: Achieving Outcomes

Steps to Reaching a Shared Understanding and Finding Common Ground

When presenting strategies for reaching a shared understanding and finding common ground in crucial conversations, it is important to listen and be fully present in the conversation. You must also realize and vocalize the things you agree on.

Begin the conversation by making a personal commitment to avoid hot words, loaded language, and personal attacks. Also commit to listening and to taking the time to understand the other person's perspective. Ask the other person to make this same commitment and then hold each other to these ground rules.

Seek understanding more than being right while honoring the other person. We must remember that conversation is about more than the topic that is discussed.

When we seek to honor the other person, despite their brokenness and flaws, it allows us to not only create a more pleasant conversation but adds value to their lives.

Also, of great importance is to commit to communicate with kindness. We must remember that conversation is about more than the topic that is discussed. When we seek to honor the other person, despite their brokenness and flaws, it allows us to not only create a more pleasant conversation but add value to their lives.



Brainstorming Solutions to Reach a Consensus

Brainstorming is a group creativity technique that is often used to find a solution or consensus to a problem. This is accomplished by gathering and recording new ideas from team members in a free-flowing manner.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

19

Brainstorm Solutions and Reach a Consensus

What is brainstorming?

Brainstorming is a group creativity technique that is often used to find a solution to a specific problem. This is accomplished by gathering and recording new ideas from team members in a free-flowing manner.

The purpose of brainstorming is to generate all the possible ideas for the issue at hand which allows teams to reach conclusions by consensus, leading to a more well-rounded and informed path forward.

Brainstorming solutions is an important part of reaching a consensus because it helps teams generate many ideas quickly, which are then refined and merged to create the ideal solution or consensus.

However, first establishing ground rules for brainstorming helps maintain the intended spirit and keeps the group from jumping too far ahead in the consensus-decision process before they're ready.

Three possible ground rules for brainstorming are:

1. No criticism or evaluation of ideas during the brainstorming session.
2. Encouragement of all ideas, no matter how unconventional.
3. Combining ideas and prioritizing them from most effective to least effective.

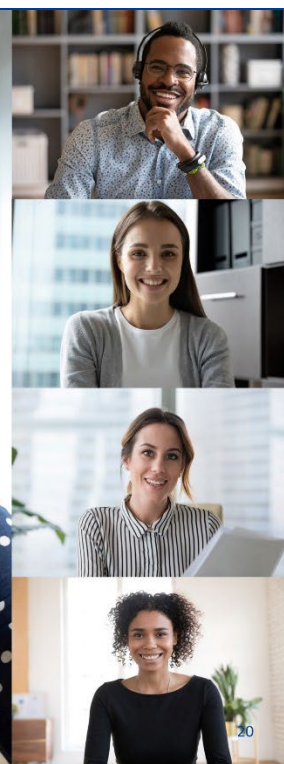
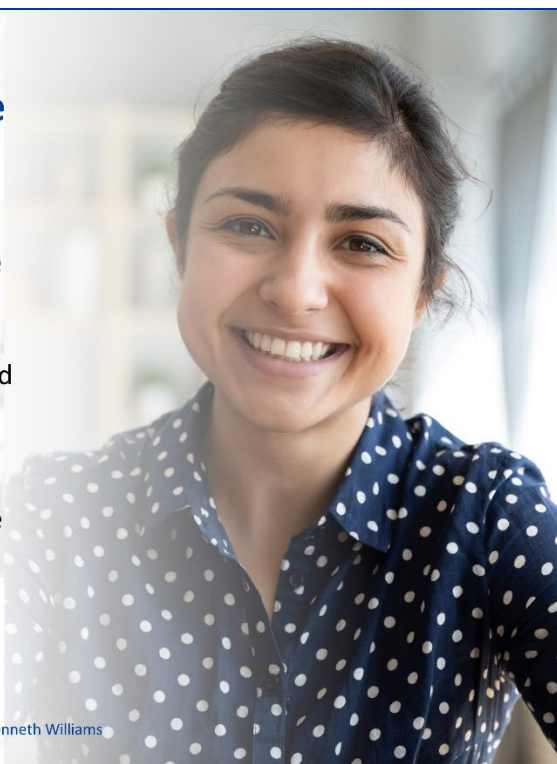
Another important technique is documenting the essential strategies when brainstorming because it helps the team later when they need to go back to reference and analyze the full scope of the discussion.

Benefits of Collaborative Problem-solving and Decision-making

- Results in better decisions because the team participation includes more perspectives.
- Provides better communication and understanding between team members.
- Results in more creativity and innovation because more ideas are generated.
- Increases job satisfaction because all team members are involved.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams



The Benefits of Collaborative Problem-solving and Decision-making

Collaborative problem-solving and decision-making has several benefits:

It provides the basis for making better decisions because it includes more perspectives.

Collaborative problem-solving also naturally improves communication and understanding between team members.

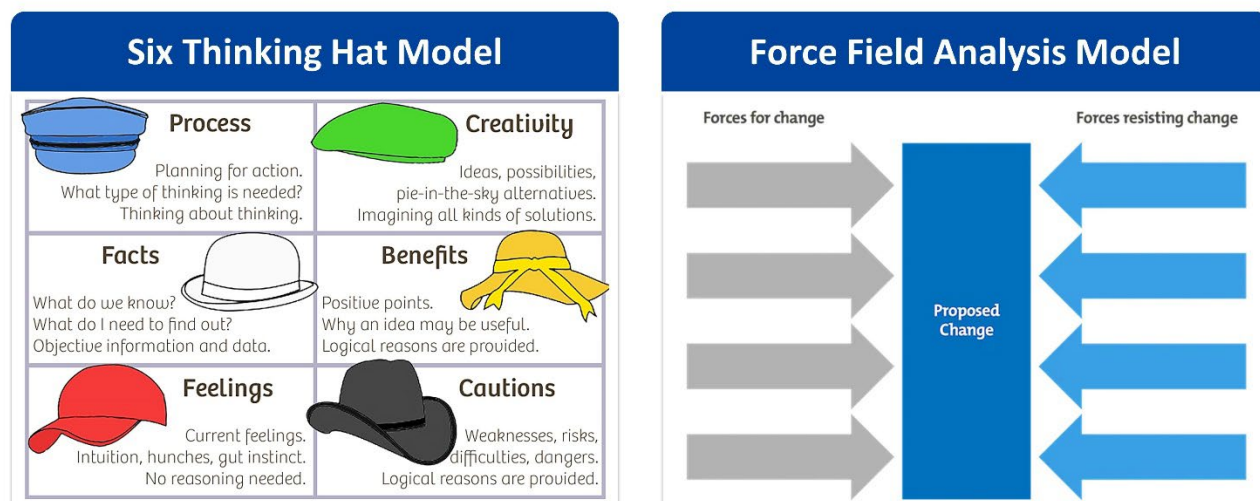
More ideas are generated so it greatly increases creativity and innovation for better decisions.

What's more, collaborative problem-solving increases job satisfaction because it allows all team members to feel included in the decision-making process.

Helps to identify the forces that are driving a particular situation and those that are resisting change.

By identifying these forces, individuals develop strategies to overcome resistance and move forward with their goals.

Two Models for Collaborative Problem-solving and Decision-making



8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

21

Two Models for Collaborative Problem-solving and Decision-making

Here's an example of two simple to implement problem-solving and decision-making models that can be used during a crucial conversation:

The Six Thinking Hats Model

This model is designed to help individuals think about problems from different perspectives. It involves six different "hats" that represent different ways of thinking about a problem. For example, the white hat represents facts and information, while the red hat represents emotions and feelings. By considering the problem from different angles, individuals gain a more complete understanding of the issue and make better decisions.

Here are the six thinking hats and their colors:

1. White hat: Facts and information
2. Red hat: Emotions and feelings
3. Black hat: Critical thinking and judgment
4. Yellow hat: Optimism and positivity
5. Green hat: Creativity and innovation
6. Blue hat: Big-picture thinking and organization

The Force Field Analysis Model:

This model is designed to help individuals identify the forces that are driving a situation and those that are resisting change. By identifying these forces, individuals develop strategies to overcome resistance and move forward with their goals. An example of a driving force is a new technology that helps a company increase efficiency and profitability.

Here are examples of how these models might be used in practice:

Imagine that two colleagues have a disagreement about how to approach a project. One colleague wants to take a more conservative approach, while the other wants to take a more aggressive approach. Using the Six Thinking Hats Model, the colleagues might take turns wearing each “hat” and considering the problem from different perspectives. By doing so, they identify areas of agreement and develop a more nuanced approach to the problem.

Alternatively, they use the Force Field Analysis Model to identify the forces that are driving their disagreement. For example, one colleague is concerned about the risks associated with taking an aggressive approach, while the other is concerned about missing out on potential opportunities when taking a more conservative approach. By identifying these forces, they develop strategies to address each concern and find a solution that works for both parties.

Section Six: Overcoming Barriers

Common Communication Barriers



Communication barriers are anything within your organization that prevents people from receiving or understanding messages, ideas, and information. These barriers also prevent messages from being sent effectively, causing a disconnect within the company.

The three most common types of communication barriers are:

- 1 **Emotional Barriers.** Employees process things differently and may have a fear or social anxiety related to sharing or connecting.
- 2 **Language Barriers.** This represents both verbal and nonverbal communication and can trigger barriers internally and globally.
- 3 **Physical Barriers.** The accessibility of remote workers, different locations, and company leaders can create communication barriers.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

23

Identifying Common Barriers to Crucial Conversations

Communication barriers are anything within your organization that prevents people from receiving or understanding messages, ideas, and information. These barriers can also prevent messages from being sent effectively, causing a disconnect within the company.

Common barriers to effective crucial conversations include fear, anger, and defensiveness. Other barriers include lack of trust, lack of respect, and lack of communication skills.

3 Most Common Types Of Communication Barriers

Although there are plenty of communication barriers to address, there are three extremely common ones.

1. Emotional barriers

Emotions that may create barriers to overall communications. Employees process things differently and may have a fear or social anxiety related to sharing or connecting.

2. Language barriers

This represents both verbal and nonverbal communication and can trigger barriers internally and globally.

3. Physical barriers

The accessibility of other employees and company leaders can create communication barriers. Think remote work, desk-less employees, different offices, etc.

Overcoming Barriers



Emotional Barriers

People experience anger, anxiety, apathy or pride. These obstruct effective communication and cause conflict.

Suggestions

Build trust, listen carefully and value other's input.

Language Barriers

People speak different languages or use different jargon or technical terms. This often leads to misunderstandings.

Suggestions

Use simple language and avoid technical terms and jargon.

Physical Barriers

Noise, distance, closed doors, poor infrastructure, outdated equipment, and distractions like background noise or poor lighting.

Suggestions

Use accessible and quiet locations or headphones.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

24

Suggestions for Overcoming Barriers

1. Example of how emotional barriers happen with a negative and positive outcome.

Emotional barriers happen when people experience emotions such as anger, anxiety, apathy, or pride. Unfortunately, these emotions obstruct effective communication and cause conflict.

One such example is a manager who gives feedback to an employee about their performance. If the employee is angry or anxious about the feedback, they may become defensive and not listen to the manager's feedback. Naturally, this leads to a negative outcome where the employee doesn't improve their performance. Conversely, if the manager builds trust with the employee by listening to them and valuing their input in the past, they are naturally more open to feedback which improves their performance.

2. Example of how language barriers happen with a negative and positive outcome.

Language barriers happen when people speak different languages or use different jargon or technical terms. In turn, this makes communication difficult and leads to misunderstandings.

Imagine a doctor who must explain a medical procedure to a patient who speaks English as a second language. During the conversation, the doctor uses medical jargon and technical terms that the patient doesn't understand. The patient becomes confused and doesn't understand what the doctor is saying. This might lead to a negative outcome where the patient doesn't follow the procedure correctly.

On the other hand, if the doctor is sensitive and aware of the language barrier so uses simple language and avoids technical terms and jargon, the patient better understands his explanation and therefore follows the procedure correctly.

3. Example of how physical barriers happen with a negative and positive outcome.

Physical barriers happen when people are in different locations or when there are obstacles that interfere with the conversation. Examples of physical barriers include noise, distance between offices, closed doors of a manager's workspace, poor infrastructure, outdated equipment, and distractions like background noise or poor lighting.

One example of this is a lawyer who is negotiating a contract with a client. During the conversation, there's a lot of background noise that makes it difficult for the lawyer to hear what the client is saying. In turn, this leads to a poor outcome because the client doesn't understand the terms of the contract. However, if the lawyer is aware of the physical barrier and finds a quiet location for the conversation or uses headphones to block out the noise, the client is more likely to be open to the negotiation and willing to sign the contract.

Would anyone like to share your experiences and insights on overcoming barriers?

Steven Covey

“From my own work with organizations, including families, and from my own experience, I have come to see that there are a few defining moments in our lives and careers that make all the difference.

Many of these defining moments come from “crucial” or “breakthrough” conversations with important people in emotionally charged situations where the decisions take us down one of several roads, each of which leads to an entirely different destination.”



Learn and Use These Valuable Skills in your Daily Personal and Professional Lives

Good communication skills are essential in both personal and professional growth. Effective communication helps improve social, emotional, and mental health, deeper existing connections, new bonds based on trust and transparency, and better problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.

By mastering crucial conversation skills, people can learn to handle high-stakes conversations with skill and confidence. This can propel their career and help them heal their relationships in both work and in their personal lives.

I encourage you to practice and apply the techniques learned in your daily interactions, however, please remember that becoming good at crucial conversations is an ongoing journey and improvements will naturally come with time and practice.

Now, I'd like to leave you with this quote from Steven Covey that speaks to the importance of mastering crucial conversations:

“From my own work with organizations, including families, and from my own experience, I have come to see that there are a few defining moments in our lives and careers that make all the difference. Many of these defining moments come from “crucial” or “breakthrough” conversations with important people in emotionally charged situations where the decisions take us down one of several roads, each of which leads to an entirely different destination.” — Steven Covey

Key Points of a Crucial Conversation



Know the definition of a crucial conversation, reasons for engaging, and the consequences of avoiding them.



Understand and manage emotions, show empathy, and use active listening.



Create a safe environment for these conversations by striving for mutual respect and purpose.



Identify common ground, brainstorm solutions, and use models such as the Thinking Hat and Forced Field Analysis.



Master dialogue skills such as the four crucial conversations skills and stay focused on the goals.



Identify common communication barriers and take appropriate steps to overcome them.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

26

Key Points of a Crucial Conversation

1. Understanding Crucial Conversations includes knowing the reasons for engaging in crucial conversations, the definition of a crucial conversation, and the consequences of avoiding them.
2. Additionally, it's essential to create a safe environment for these conversations by striving for mutual respect and purpose.
3. Furthermore, mastering dialogue skills such as the four crucial conversations skills and staying focused on the goal are important.
4. Emotions must also be handled by understanding and managing them, showing empathy, and by actively listening.
5. To achieve positive outcomes, it's important to identify common ground, brainstorm solutions, and use models such as the Thinking Hat and Forced Field Analysis.
6. Lastly, identify common communication barriers and take appropriate steps to overcome them.

Scenarios



- 1 A manager is unhappy with an employee's performance.
- 2 A coworker is consistently late for meetings and it's affecting the team's productivity.
- 3 A friend is going through a difficult time and needs someone to talk to.
- 4 A coworker is spreading rumors about you.
- 5 A family member is upset with you and won't tell you why.
- 6 You're working on a group project and one member isn't pulling their weight.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

28

Six Scenarios for Participants to Share How They Would Respond

Here are six scenarios with some light role-playing that encourages participants to share how they would respond:

1. A manager is unhappy with an employee's performance.
2. A coworker is consistently late for meetings and it's affecting the team's productivity.
3. A friend is going through a difficult time and needs someone to talk to.
4. A coworker is spreading rumors about you.
5. A family member is upset with you and won't tell you why.
6. You're working on a group project and one member isn't pulling their weight.

Closing



Thank you for attending today's presentation on mastering crucial conversations and especially for your active participation.

In closing, please remember how important it is to master crucial conversations and I encourage you to continue seeking opportunities to practice and refine your crucial conversations skills for not only your professional life but also to enhance and improve your personal relationships.

8/26/2023

Crucial Conversations Series presented by Kenneth Williams

29

I want to express my gratitude to everyone who attended today's presentation on mastering crucial conversations and especially for your active participation.

Also remember how important it is to master crucial conversations and encourage you to continue seeking opportunities to practice and refine your crucial conversations skills for not only your professional life but also to enhance and improve your personal relationships.