

Crucial Conversations Ch 5: Make it safe: How to make it safe to talk about almost anything

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STEP OUT, MAKE IT SAFE, THEN STEP BACK IN

When a situation arises and an attempt at conversation fails, stop, and look (ch 4) for issues of safety. Who feels threatened and why? “Step out” means to step out of the content and look at the process [think “Family Systems Theory” - kengcrawford.com/family-systems-theory/]. One person attempts to broach a difficult topic, and the other person responds with sarcasm. Stepping out of the situation means getting some perspective as an observer of self and others. Once you make it safe, then you can step back in and address other issues, even the sarcasm if that’s still important.

Notice which condition is at risk

- **Mutual Purpose**

Understand the difference between content and delivery – your message is both.

- When were you misunderstood because of something other than words themselves?

Ask yourself the “Start with Heart” questions from Ch 3

- What do I want for me?
- What do I want for others?
- What do I want for the relationship?

What do you want that the others also want? Remember the *mutual* part of mutual purpose. The way to get to what you want is through the path where others also get what they want. Finding common ground enables us to work together toward a solution, which facilitates crucial conversations, in fact it provides the motivation needed to have them.

- Is mutual purpose at risk?
 - Do others believe I care about their goals in this conversation?
 - Do they trust my motivations?
- Find a way to present your position starting with something that will highly motivate the other person to engage the difficult conversation.

- **Mutual Respect** – “Will we be able to remain in dialogue?”

(See video @ <https://www.vitalsmarts.com/skillsvideo.aspx>)

What signs to you give that you don’t respect someone? List them here:

Do others believe I respect them? Why or why not?

[HOW?] Can you respect people you don't respect?

1. Recognize your feelings toward the other person.
2. Realize that disrespect often centers on how others are different from us.
3. Remember that you too are flawed – “Lord, help me forgive those who sin *differently* than I.”
4. Humbly move toward sympathy or empathy with others faults, allowing you to see beyond them someone who is not so unlike you. Search for SOMETHING to respect. Perhaps discovering what motivates, informs or shapes the other person's behavior will enable you to have some appreciation for “where they are coming from.”

WHAT TO DO ONCE YOU STEP OUT

Apologize – when you've clearly violated respect. We may think, “But I'm the victim here. I'm the one who has been wronged. I'm the one who is on the side of right.” All of that may be true. Nonetheless, there is probably something for which you can genuinely apologize. Did you speak harshly? Were you sarcastic or rude? Did you violate someone's authority thereby disrespecting them – even if you thought they didn't deserve respect?

“But why should I apologize first?” We may resent always having to be the bigger person, always having to apologize first. That's fine. But remember the questions of what you want, what you really, really want for self, others and the relationship. Does stubbornly refusing to be the first to apologize help or hinder the process toward mutual purpose and respect?

Contrast to Fix Misunderstanding – When others misunderstand your purpose or your intent, use Contrasting. Start with what you *don't* intend or mean. Then explain what you *do* intend or mean.

I don't want _____

I do want _____

STEP BACK IN - Create mutual purpose –

CRIB to get to mutual purpose. Sometimes we clear up any misunderstanding and there still is not a mutual purpose. In this case, we have to create one. The following process can help:

- **C**ommit to seek mutual purpose
- **R**ecognize the purpose behind the strategies
- **I**nvent a mutual purpose
- **B**rainstorm new strategies

Committing to the process creates allies of adversaries, which in itself strengthens the relationship and helps move toward a more stable and mature relationship, thus opening the way for further conversation and the pursuit of individual and shared goals.