

# Crucial Conversations

This is a full, two-hour professional development session where participants learn and understand the components of crucial conversations and employ tools to effectively communicate with colleagues and students. This session can be modified to approximately 90 minutes, by abbreviating the toolkit presentation, and omitting the recap video.

This session is adapted from the book, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes Are High*, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler. According to the authors, the difference between a crucial conversation, and one that is simply challenging, entails the results, which can have a significant impact on the quality of one's life. When individuals need to have a conversation, and find themselves having difficulties, perhaps they need to have a crucial conversation, yet unable to master one effectively.

Crucial or tough conversations, entail discussions or dialogue between individuals, where: stakes are high, there are strong emotions, and opposing opinions. At the onset of the presentation, participants take a brief assessment, to ascertain how they tend to fare, regarding crucial conversations. Moreover, there is a brief video, which provides a brief synopsis of the book.

While not all crucial conversations begin with, or have, strong emotions, given the subject matter, tone, or delivery about the topic, heightened emotions could prevail and derail a conversation. Conversely, it is natural to have opposing opinions in crucial conversations. These are viewpoints that are varied or different from the other. At issue is, how to reconcile opposing opinions. One would start with facts, have a shared pool of meaning or find common ground, make it safe to talk, and ask for feedback.

Two destructive and significant patterns in relationships, interactions, and conversations is, silence or avoidance, and violence, manipulation, or verbal attacks. Although challenging, it is important to be in tune and recognize when these acts occur. Therefore, it is essential to make one feel safe with assurance of positive intentions.

It starts with mutual purpose, working toward a common outcome, with concern relative to shared goals, interests, and value. This creates a healthy climate for talking. The other condition is mutual respect, which is a fundamental condition of any conversation. Not only is it important to have effective, crucial conversations with adult peers, there is a necessity, common purpose, or goal, in serving students, to help them matriculate to, and through, their postsecondary education and career pathways.

Through application in group work and roleplay, participants will have an awareness, tools, and techniques, to utilize the Crucial Conversations Model, be more inclined to listen without defensive barriers, and gain an appreciation for learning how to have crucial conversations that lead to resolution for all.