

Critical Conversations

Length: 1 day

A critical conversation is a discussion between two or more people where stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong. These conversations, when handled poorly or ignored cause teams and organizations to get less-than-desirable results.

This course will provide you with skills to handle controversial and heated issues. You will learn how to catch problems early and resolve disagreements candidly and respectfully. You will also learn how to discuss issues in a way that makes it safe for everyone to speak. This course is active and engaging, with frequent skills practice, intense class participation, personal reflection, planning, and commitment.

Performance Objectives: Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

- Describe what a healthy critical conversation looks like when being candid and respectful.
- Identify your own communication style “under stress” and ways to decrease vulnerabilities while enhancing strengths.
- Describe how to restore safety to a conversation by fixing misunderstandings, maintaining mutual respect, and establishing mutual purpose.
- Describe how to be persuasive without being abrasive.
- Apply tools to help others stay in dialogue - helping them move away from strong and optional conclusions and back to their observations.

Course Outline

GET UNSTUCK

- Spot the conversations that are keeping you from what you want.
- Avoid moving to silence or violence during critical conversations.
- Share facts, ideas, feelings, and opinions candidly and honestly.

START WITH HEART

- Identify your own style under stress and manage it.
- Stay focused on what you really want and maintain dialogue.
- Understand how motives change when conversations turn critical.

MASTER STORIES

- Stay in dialogue when you're angry,

scared, or hurt—“think” your way to the root cause of negative emotions.

- Discover your stories—how do you justify your behavior?
- Eliminate victim, villain, and helpless stories, and improve your results.

STATE YOUR PATH

- Speak persuasively, not abrasively.
 - Get your meaning across even with potentially threatening messages.
 - Share strong opinions without shutting down contrary views.
 - State your mind while making it safe for others to do the same.
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