

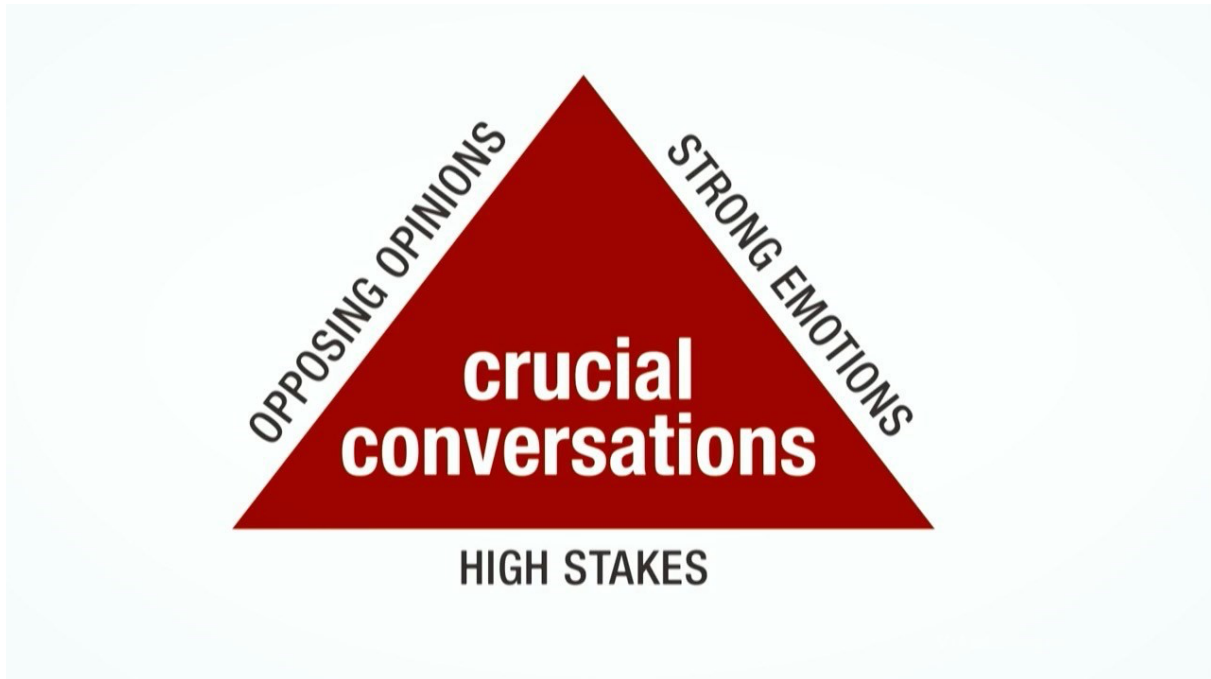
# Crucial Conversations

BCYD – Presenter Ken Russell

## What is a Crucial Conversation?

“A discussion between two or more people where...

- (1) stakes are high,
  - the outcome greatly impacts our lives.
- (2) opinions vary, and
- (3) emotions run strong

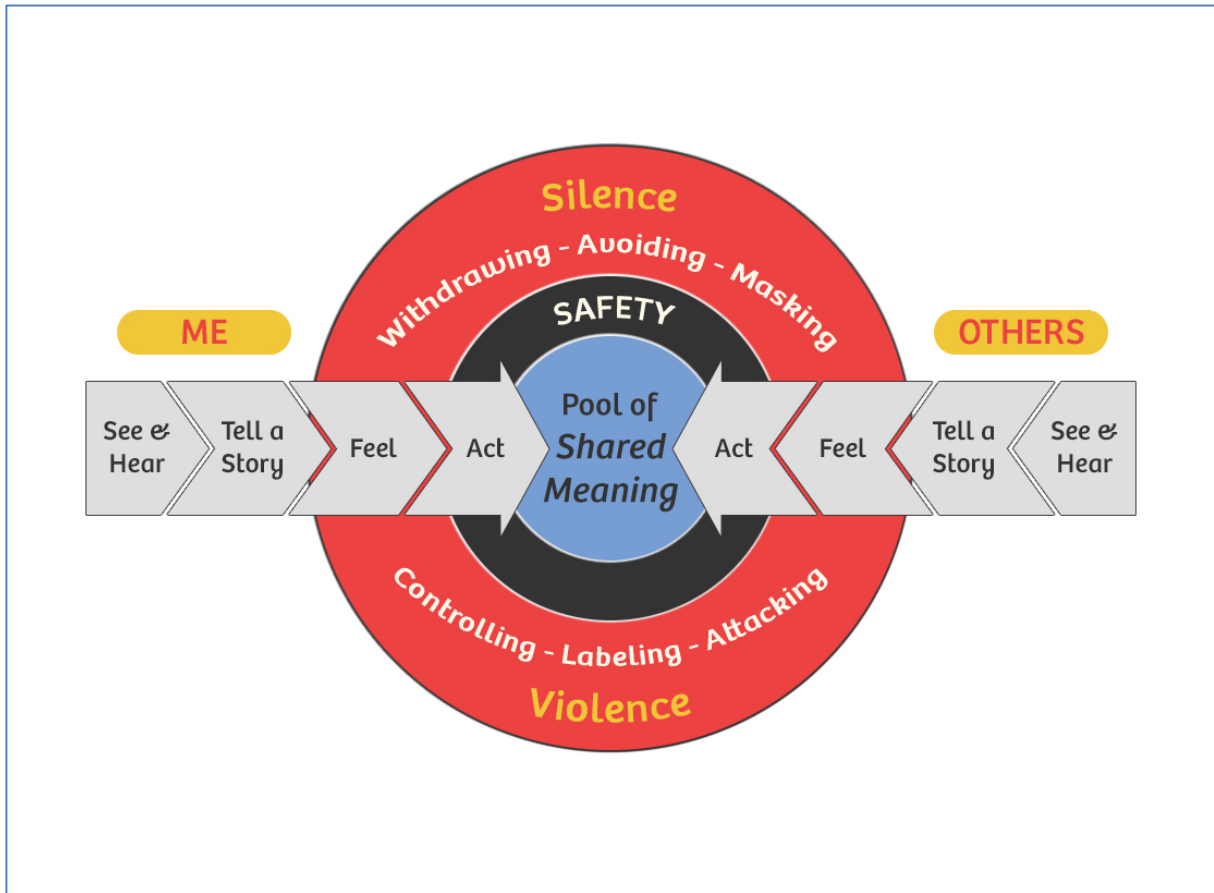


## 3 Ways of handling crucial conversations:

1. Avoid them.
2. Face them and handle them poorly.
3. Face them and handle them well.

## Becoming aware of the moment(s) before you enter a crucial conversation...

1. Notice physical signals
  - a. Body responses: sweaty hands, dry mouth or eyes, etc.
2. Notice emotional signals
  - a. Anger – tightness of shoulders and neck
  - b. Hurt – tightness of chest
  - c. Fear – tightness of stomach
3. Notice behavioral signals
  - a. Raising of voice
  - b. Pointing of finger
  - c. Becoming quiet



**Most people respond to a crucial conversation in one of two ways...**

When people feel unsafe they resort to either silence or violence.

**1. SILENCE:**

QUIETNESS: purposefully withholding information from the dialogue.

- Used to avoid creating a problem.
- Always restricts the flow of meaning.
- Common forms of silence

MASKING: understating or selectively showing what you actually think.

- Sarcasm,
- Sugarcoating,
- Couching, etc.

AVOIDING: not addressing the real issues.

- Changing the subject,
- Shifting the focus to others, etc.

WITHDRAWING: not engaging in the conversation any longer.

- Exiting the conversation or room all together.

## **2. VIOLENCE:**

VERBAL and NON VERBAL VIOLENCE: convincing, controlling, or compelling others to your viewpoint.

- Violates safety by forcing meaning into the pool

### **Common forms of violence**

CONTROLLING: coercing others to your way of thinking

- Cutting others off, overstating your facts, speaking in absolutes, dominating the conversation.

LABELING: stereotyping or categorizing people.

- Name-calling, generalizing

ATTACKING: belittling or threatening the other person.

## **PATH TO ACTION**

# Where Do Emotions Come From?



### **FACTS:**

Reality that can be validated by evidence

### **STORIES:**

Self talk that leads us to make conclusions, assumptions, judgments and assign motives to other people's actions

### **FEELINGS:**

Raw emotions that are not right or wrong. Just how we feel.

### **ACT:**

Silence = withdrawal, avoidance, isolation

Violence = emotional and/or verbal aggression, rage, or manipulation

**“When it comes to strong emotions, you either find a way to master them or fall hostage to them”**

1. Those who are the Worst at dialogue: are held hostage to their emotions and don't even know it.
2. Those who are Good at dialogue: know they need to control their emotions so they fake it.
3. Those who are the Best at dialogue: negotiate their emotions by thinking them out before acting them out.

**Between perception and emotion is the story we tell ourselves about what is happening.**

- **The story we tell ...determines the emotions we have.**

### **Mastering the Art of Stories:**

#### **Stories:**

1. Are interpretations of facts
2. Explain what we see and hear
3. Help us evaluate the situation
4. Tell us what we should do about the situation
5. Once told, they take on a life of their own

#### **Skill for Mastering Our Stories...**

1. To Notice your behavior – ask:
  - Am I in some form of silence or violence?
2. To Get in touch with your feelings – ask:
  - What emotions are encouraging me to act this way?
3. To Analyze your stories – ask:
  - What story is creating these emotions?
4. To Get back to the facts – ask:
  - What evidence do I have to support this story?

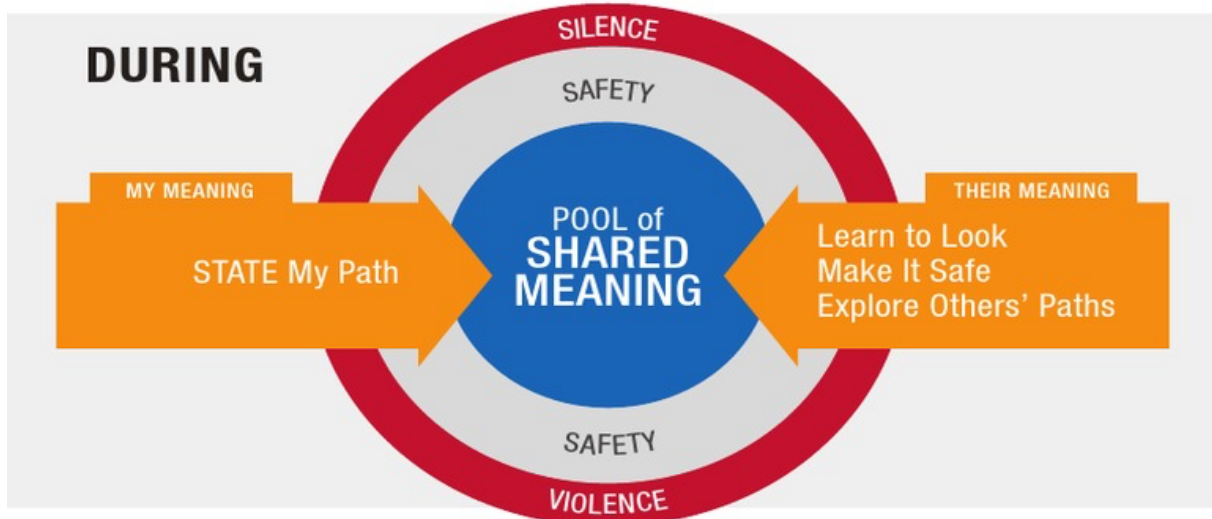
# CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS MODEL

**BEFORE**

**WORK ON ME FIRST**

Get Unstuck  
Start with Heart  
Master My Stories

**DURING**



**AFTER**

**MOVE TO ACTION**

Who does What by When  
Follow up



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## Skill #2: Watch for Three Clever Stories

Victim Stories—“It’s not my fault.”

Villain Stories—“It’s all your fault.”

Helpless Stories—“And there’s nothing else I can do.”

*Clever stories are the ones we tell to justify our silence and violence.*

*Clever stories allow us to feel good while behaving badly, ...even while achieving bad results.*

### 3 Types of ‘Clever Stories’ we tell ourselves...

#### Victim Stories – “it’s not my fault”

1. We are innocent sufferers
2. We ignore the role we play in contributing to the problem
3. We have nothing but the most noble of intentions

#### Villain Stories – “it’s all your fault”

1. We attribute negative motives to the other person
2. We exaggerate our own innocence
3. We over-emphasize the other person’s guilt
4. We dehumanize the other person by making unfair generalizations
5. We justify our own ineffective behavior

#### Helpless Stories – “there’s nothing else I can do”

1. We assume there is no alternative to our predicament
2. This explains why we can’t do anything to change our situation
3. Attribute fixed and unchangeable traits to the other person

### Why we tell clever stories

1. They match reality – on occasion
2. They excuse us from taking responsibility
3. Keep us from having to acknowledge when we have acted against our code of ethics

## **How to turn “Clever Stories” into “Useful Stories”:**

Handling Crucial Conversations successfully requires us to create clever stories into useful stories so we can create emotions that lead to healthy productive action – **DIALOGUE**

**Authentic Dialogue is “the only reliable way of discovering another person’s genuine motives”**

### **To turn victims into victors – ask:**

1. What am I pretending not to notice about how I contribute to this problem?
2. Am I minimizing my role while exaggerating the role of others?

### **To turn villains into humans – ask:**

1. What would cause a reasonable, rational, decent human being to do what they are doing?
2. Replace judgment with empathy and self-justification with personal accountability.
3. Worry less about other’s intentions and more about the effect their actions have on us.

### **To turn the helpless into the able – ask:**

1. What do I really want? For me? For others? For the relationship?
2. What would I do right now if I really wanted these results?

### **Audacious Claim:**

1. Mastering crucial conversations advances your leadership, strengthens your relationships, and improves your health.
2. People who are most influential, who get things done are those who have mastered crucial conversations.