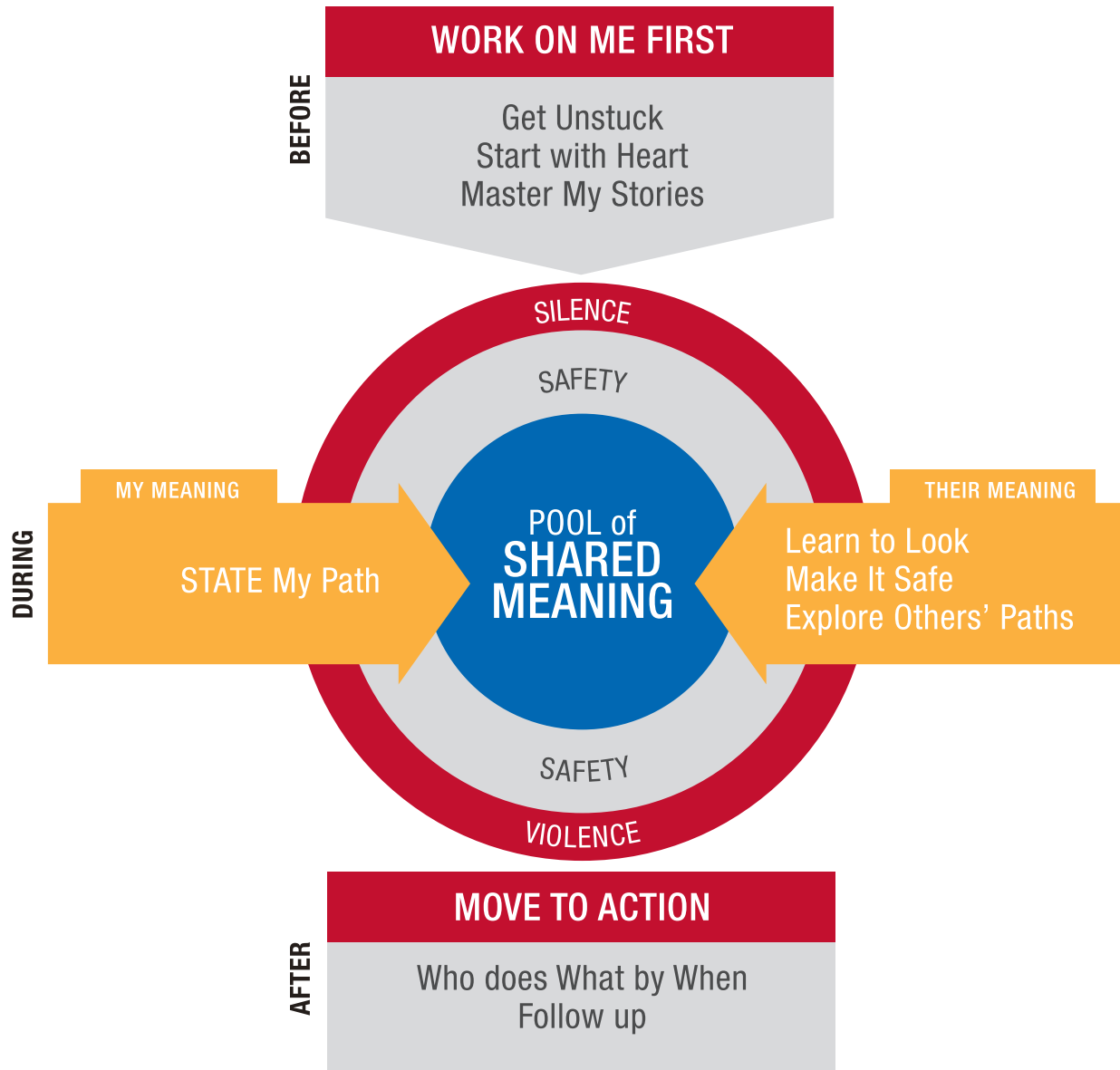




**Vital**Smarts®



# CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS MODEL



**VitalSmarts®**

## SESSION

# 1

# Get Unstuck

## What Makes a Conversation Crucial?



### Professional Life

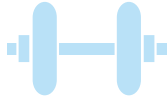
- Your organization isn't hitting the numbers it needs to achieve, quality isn't up to par, and costs are too high.
- People's best ideas aren't being heard and implemented.
- You aren't given the resources you need to complete your objectives.
- Not everyone on the team is pulling his or her weight.
- Despite your best efforts, you chronically miss deadlines.

### Personal Life

- Your sixteen-year-old son barely listens to you and is starting to hang out with a dangerous crowd.
- Your neighbor becomes defensive and angry every time you try to talk with him about how he refuses to keep his two pit bulls locked up.
- Your in-laws drop in without notice and try to take over your life.
- Your spouse is spending far too much time at work, but every time you bring up the issue you end up in a heated argument.

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## Exercises



### Where Are You Stuck?

Where do you feel stuck (personally or professionally)?

### Will the Real Problem Please Step Forward?

#### *Instructions*

As a class, read and discuss the following case:

Your boss has grown accustomed to asking you to produce complex reports for her. She's not asking you because it's part of your job but because you have some background in databases and know how to work with your system. To make matters worse, it's often a last-minute request that takes you away from other priorities. She's just asked for a "special," last-minute report that is very time consuming to produce. Not only is it tough for you to produce, but she's also requiring it by 3:00 p.m. today (way too condensed a time frame). To top it all off, you don't believe it will provide her with the information she really needs. But she's your boss, and if she wants it, she should get it—right?

#### **Discuss:**

Name the Content, Pattern, and Relationship issues you see in this case.

#### **C**ontent:

#### **P**attern:

#### **R**elationship:

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## Summary



## Get Unstuck:

*How to Spot the Conversations That Are Keeping You from What You Want*

### The Law of Crucial Conversations

Anytime you find yourself stuck, there's a crucial conversation you're either not holding or not holding well.

### Skill #1: Identify Where You're Stuck

### Skill #2: Unbundle with CPR

## My Crucial Conversation

1. Unbundle with CPR. Identify:

*Content Issues:*

*Pattern Issues:*

*Relationship Issues:*

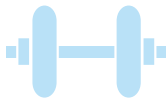
2. Which issue do you need to address, and with whom, in order to get unstuck?

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## SESSION

# 2

### Exercises



## Master My Stories

### The Most Difficult Person—Part 1

#### *Instructions*

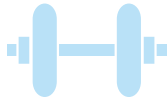
#### **As a class:**

1. Brainstorm some of the types of people you find most difficult. Don't talk about specific people, but *types* of people. For example, maybe it's someone who:
  - Doesn't clean up after him/herself
  - Takes meetings off on tangents
  - Becomes defensive when receiving any type of feedback
2. Choose one of the types you find most difficult and give that type a creative name.

#### **On your own:**

3. Describe the things this type of person does that made you choose the name you did. Write them below.

## Exercises



### The Angry Accountant

#### *Instructions*

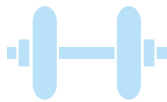
Let's take a look at stories vs. facts.

One of your colleagues has been experiencing some difficulties in interpersonal relationships with coworkers and has asked you for some coaching.

You're about to watch as this person tries to problem-solve with a coworker. You are to provide as many factual observations as you can about what isn't working well in this approach. Be as behaviorally specific as you can in your observations.

What are some of the things the accountant did that didn't work well?

Exercises



The Most Difficult Person—Part 2

Instructions

Go back to the items you wrote on page 6. On your own, use the grid below to separate fact from story.

My Path to Action

Fact	Story

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## Summary



## Master My Stories:

*How to Stay in Dialogue When You're Angry, Scared, or Hurt*



### Skill #1: Separate Fact from Story

### Skill #2: Watch for Three Clever Stories

Victim, Villain, and Helpless Stories propel our emotions and help us justify our behavior.

### Skill #3: Tell the Rest of the Story. Ask:

- "What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the problem?"
- "Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do this?"
- "What should I do right now to move toward what I really want?"

## My Crucial Conversation

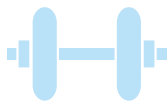
1. What stories are you telling yourself about the situation or the person (Victim, Villain, Helpless)?
2. Tell the rest of the story. Ask:
  - a. What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the problem?
  - b. Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do this?
  - c. What should I do right now to move toward what I really want?

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## SESSION

# 3

### Exercises



## STATE My Path

### No Consequences

#### *Instructions*

- Think of a tough message you'd like to share with someone but haven't because you think he or she may become defensive or upset (use your Conversation Case if it applies).
- If you could say anything without consequences, what would you say?
- Below, write out the first two or three sentences of the conversation.

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## Summary



## STATE My Path:

### *How to Speak Persuasively, Not Abrasively*

To express your views in a way that makes it safe for others to hear them (and even disagree), share your path the way you experienced it—from observations to actions. If you start with the facts and are tentative in encouraging others' points of view, you can be both totally candid and totally respectful.

### **The Skill: STATE My Path**

**S**hare your facts

**T**ell your story

**A**sk for others' paths

**T**alk tentatively

**E**ncourage testing

## My Crucial Conversation

Create a script for how you will begin the conversation. Start with facts, then tell your story, and be sure to end with a question that invites the other person into dialogue.

**FACTS**

**STORY**

**ASK**

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## SESSION

# 4

# Make It Safe I

*People rarely become defensive about what you're saying (the content). People become defensive because of why they think you're saying it (your intent).*

## When You Notice Safety Is at Risk:

### Step out of the content.

- Stop talking about the issues and address the safety concerns.

### Rebuild safety.

- Mutual Purpose: You believe that I care about your goals and vice versa.
- Mutual Respect: You believe that I care about you as a person and vice versa.

### Then step back in.

## Summary



## Make It Safe:

### *How to Talk to Almost Anyone About Almost Anything*

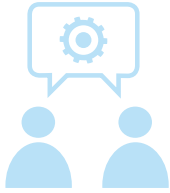
In order to maintain Mutual Purpose and Mutual Respect, use two skills to restore safety.

### **Skill #1: Apologize When Appropriate**

### **Skill #2: Contrast to Address Misunderstandings**

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## Deliberate Practice



### Situation 1: “The Thief”

#### *Initiator*

You’re beginning to suspect that the Respondent (a peer you like and admire) is stealing from the company. At first you heard rumors that he or she was taking supplies home. One day you noticed what looked like a company tablet in his or her hand as he or she left work. You didn’t have enough evidence to take action—just enough to start telling a story. However, you just walked by the Respondent’s work area and noticed an external hard drive that belongs to your company in the Respondent’s backpack. The hard drive is never to leave the office. You’ve decided to talk to your colleague about the problem.

#### **As You Speak:**

You’ve decided to talk about the hard drive in the Respondent’s backpack and share your tentative opinion that it looks like the Respondent is taking something home.

**STATE:** Start by using the STATE skills to describe the facts as well as your tentative conclusion.

**Learn to Look:** Watch to see if the Respondent shows signs that he or she is feeling unsafe or acts defensive because he or she has misinterpreted your intent.

**Make It Safe:** To help establish safety, step out of the issue, use contrasting (don’t/ do) to explain your real intent, then step back into the issue.

## Situation 1: “The Thief”

### *Respondent*

A peer, the Initiator, thinks you’re taking things from the company home. You are, but everyone does it. You and others use the equipment and materials to do office work at home. You just put a hard drive in your backpack to take home to test a new software program. The Initiator saw it and is about to say something to you.

**What to do:** If the Initiator uses the STATE skills well, ask why you’re being singled out when everyone takes things home.

If the Initiator then uses contrasting well, admit that you’ve taken office supplies home. You don’t see it as a problem because you use them to work at home, but you’ll comply if the policy applies to everyone.

If the Initiator does not use the STATE skills well or fails to use contrasting when you become defensive, explain that what you do with the hard drive is your own business.

## Coach

**Read** the Initiator’s “As You Speak” section. The Initiator will start by using the STATE skills. Then he or she will be required to use contrasting.

**Observe** carefully how well the Initiator uses the skills. As the discussion comes to an end, provide the Initiator specific feedback. If the interaction went well, describe what went well and why. If it didn’t go well, describe what didn’t go well and why and ask the Initiator to repeat the interaction using the skills correctly.

**Discuss:** When do you use contrasting? (When others misinterpret your intent.)



## Situation 2: “The Suspicious Boss”

### *Initiator*

You’ve been asking your manager (the Respondent) for new computer software to help increase your efficiency on some of your key tasks. The Respondent keeps reporting back that his or her boss has refused the request for funds. This morning you ran into your manager’s boss and asked the reason for the refusal. She claimed to have heard nothing of the situation. You’re suspicious that your manager hasn’t even asked for the software and is lying about it. You’ve decided to say something to your manager.

### **As You Speak:**

You’ve decided to talk about your conversation with your manager’s boss and share your tentative opinion that your manager isn’t following through but is saying otherwise.

**STATE:** Start by using the STATE skills to describe the facts as well as your tentative conclusion. (Hint: you don’t know for certain that your manager is lying—there’s just a difference between the two accounts of what happened.)

**Learn to Look:** Watch to see if the Respondent shows signs that he or she is feeling unsafe or acts defensive because he or she has misinterpreted your intent.

**Make It Safe:** To help establish safety, step out of the issue, use contrasting (don’t/ do) to explain your real intent, then step back into the issue.

## Situation 2: “The Suspicious Boss”

### **Respondent**

The Initiator, who reports to you, has been asking you for new software for quite some time. You requested money from the capital expenditure committee, but your request was denied. Since your boss heads the committee, you told the Initiator that your boss denied the request. In reality, your boss was gone both times you requested the money.

**What to do:** If the Initiator uses the STATE skills well, say,

*“Are you calling me a liar?”*

If the Initiator then uses contrasting well, acknowledge that it wasn’t specifically your boss who turned down the request but the capital expenditure committee—which your boss heads.

If the Initiator does not use the STATE skills well or fails to use contrasting when you become defensive, say,

*“You must have too little on your plate if you have all this time to harass me. I’ll see if I can get you something useful to do.”*

## Coach

**Read** the Initiator’s “As You Speak” section. The Initiator will start by using the STATE skills. Then he or she will be required to use contrasting.

**Observe** carefully how well the Initiator uses the skills. As the discussion comes to an end, provide the Initiator specific feedback. If the interaction went well, describe what went well and why. If it didn’t go well, describe what didn’t go well and why and ask the Initiator to repeat the interaction using the skills correctly.

**Discuss:** Why contrast using both *don’t* and *do*? (When someone has misinterpreted your intent, it’s important to disconfirm the misinterpretation and confirm your real intent.)

## Situation 3: “Missed Deadlines”

### *Initiator*

The Respondent reports to someone else but is assigned to a task force you lead. He or she is very busy with his or her regular job but routinely takes assignments from you as part of your team. The Respondent tries to fulfill them, but if his or her manager hands down an assignment that competes for his or her time, your work gets dropped—without you knowing about it until after the deadline has been missed. This has happened four times in the last two months. You understand that this will happen from time to time, but it would be nice to be notified before the missed deadline rather than after. The current pattern doesn’t work very well for you, so you’ve decided to say something.

### **As You Speak:**

You’ve decided to talk about the pattern of being surprised by missed deadlines.

**STATE:** Start by using the STATE skills to describe the facts as well as your tentative conclusion.

**Learn to Look:** Watch to see if the Respondent shows signs that he or she is feeling unsafe or acts defensive because he or she has misinterpreted your intent.

**Make It Safe:** To help establish safety, step out of the issue, use contrasting (don’t/ do) to explain your real intent, then step back into the issue.

### Situation 3: “Missed Deadlines”

#### **Respondent**

The Initiator is someone you work with on a cross-functional task force. He or she leads the task force but is not your manager. You enjoy the work you do with the task force, but when things in your regular job stack up you tend to postpone “outside” commitments. You’ve missed four task force–related deadlines in the last four months. The Initiator is about to address this with you.

**What to do:** If the Initiator uses the STATE skills well, become defensive and say,

*“Hey, I’m really busy here. I’ve got a ton of work to do in my regular job. If you don’t want me on the team, just say so.”*

If the Initiator uses contrasting well explain that you understand where he or she is coming from, acknowledge that it’s been a surprise for him or her, and commit to letting him or her know in advance of the deadline instead of after.

If the Initiator does not use the STATE skills well or fails to use contrasting when you become defensive, say,

*“You know, if you really feel that way, maybe I’m not the right person for the team.”*

## Coach

**Read** the Initiator’s “As You Speak” section. The Initiator will start by using the STATE skills. Then he or she will be required to use contrasting.

**Observe** carefully how well the Initiator uses the skills. As the discussion comes to an end, provide the Initiator specific feedback. If the interaction went well, describe what went well and why. If it didn’t go well, describe what didn’t go well and why and ask the Initiator to repeat the interaction using the skills correctly.

**Discuss:** What have you learned from this practice? What, if anything, is difficult? How and where might you use contrasting back on the job?

## My Crucial Conversation

1. What's the worst possible response you could get with your crucial conversation?
2. Is there an apology you might need to extend?
3. If the other person misunderstands your intent, what is a contrasting statement you could use?

*Don't:*

*Do:*

# SESSION 5

## Make It Safe II

### Examples:

#### Commit to Seek Mutual Purpose

*"It appears we're at an impasse. I'd like to see if we can come up with some shared goals."*

*"This doesn't seem to be working. Let's see if we can come up with some common objectives."*

*"It seems like we're stuck here. Why don't we spend some time looking for something that will satisfy both of us?"*

#### Recognize the Purpose behind the Strategy

*"Help me understand where you're coming from."*

*"What are you trying to achieve?"*

*"Why is it you want \_\_\_\_\_?"*

#### Invent a Mutual Purpose

*"So, if we can get the project finished on time AND within the existing budget, we'll both be satisfied—right?"*

*"I want to spend our discretionary fund to redo our branding. You're interested in funding additional R&D. What we both want is to have the best long-term impact on our division's financial goals."*

#### Brainstorm New Strategies

*"What are some ways we could execute on this?"*

*"Now that we're on the same page, let's take time to research some viable options."*

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## Summary



## Make It Safe II:

### *How to Make It Safe to Talk About Almost Anything*

The two conditions of safety are Mutual Purpose and Mutual Respect. Are people at cross-purposes, offended, or both?

#### **Restore safety.**

#### **Create Mutual Purpose.**

- *Commit to seek Mutual Purpose.*  
Commit to search for a goal that will benefit both of you.
- *Recognize the purpose behind the strategy.*  
What you want and what you're asking for are often two different things. One is your purpose; the other is your strategy for achieving it. Recognize the difference.
- *Invent a Mutual Purpose.*  
Don't settle for a compromise. Move to different (often more creative) or higher and more encompassing goals.
- *Brainstorm new strategies.*  
Once you've found a Mutual Purpose, brainstorm mutually satisfactory strategies.

## Deliberate Practice



### Situation 1: “The Workaround”

#### Initiator

You are an HR professional in your organization. You support a vice president (the Respondent) who has been assigned an aggressive head-count target this quarter. This vice president has decided that he or she should be able to bring five contractors on board but classify them in such a way as to avoid counting them as head count. You know that this approach is against policy, and you need to address the situation with the Respondent before he or she proceeds. You want to find a solution that works for him or her that is also within the company policy.

#### As You Speak:

**STATE:** Start by using the STATE skills to describe the facts as well as your tentative conclusion. Begin with:

*“Can we talk about your plan to hire the five contractors? I’m not sure if you’re aware, but any contractors we bring on board will count against your head count.”*

**Learn to Look:** Watch to see if the Respondent shows signs that he or she is feeling unsafe or acts defensive because he or she has misinterpreted your intent.

**Make It Safe:** To restore safety, create a Mutual Purpose: Commit to seek Mutual Purpose, Recognize the purpose behind the strategy, Invent a Mutual Purpose, and Brainstorm new strategies.



## Situation 1: “The Workaround”

### **Respondent**

You’re a vice president, and you’ve just received an aggressive head-count target. You’re responsible for some major initiatives with key deliverables due this quarter and now you’re being told that you can’t hire the resources that were approved six months ago. You’ve just realized that the only way to meet your goals is to hire some short-term help, so you’ve asked your HR representative (the Initiator) to process paperwork for five contractors. You needed these people yesterday, and you’re hoping he or she can move quickly.

**What to do:** Respond to the Initiator with, “What?! I need these resources. You have to make this happen. I’m counting on you!”

If the Initiator tries to seek Mutual Purpose, explain that what you really need is a way to meet the key deliverables due this quarter.

If the Initiator seems to want to control or take advantage of you, don’t back down. State that you’ll call an employment agency yourself to have them send résumés for you to review.

## Coach

**Read** the Initiator’s “As You Speak” section. The Initiator will start by using the STATE skills. Then he or she will be required to create Mutual Purpose using the skills from this lesson.

**Observe** carefully how well the Initiator uses the skills. As the discussion comes to an end, provide the Initiator specific feedback. If the interaction went well, describe what went well and why. If it didn’t go well, describe what didn’t go well and why and ask the Initiator to repeat the interaction using the skills correctly.

**Discuss:** What does it take to find something both people want? (Often you have to look for bigger values or longer-term results. It requires finding the “third way,” which isn’t always easy.)

## Situation 2: “Vacation Plans”

### *Initiator*

You and your significant other (the Respondent) are planning your yearly vacation. You've decided that it's time to do what you've wanted to do since you were a child—you want to spend a week in Malaysia watching orangutans in their natural habitat. You've found an eco-tour that makes all of the arrangements. All you have to do is find a way to get to Malaysia, and the tour group does the rest. You're not sure your significant other will be all that excited to spend a week staring at orangutans, but, hey, if you don't ask, how will you ever get to fulfill a lifelong dream? You don't need to spend a whole week, but it would be nice.

### **As You Speak:**

**STATE:** Start by using the STATE skills to describe the facts as well as your tentative conclusion. Begin with:

*“I’m wondering if for our vacation we could do something I’ve wanted to do all my life. I know this may sound strange, but I’d love to fly to Malaysia and spend a week with a tour group that observes orangutans in their natural habitat. What do you think?”*

**Learn to Look:** Watch to see if the Respondent shows signs that he or she is feeling unsafe or acts defensive because he or she has misinterpreted your intent.

**Make It Safe:** To restore safety, create a Mutual Purpose: Commit to seek Mutual Purpose, Recognize the purpose behind the strategy, Invent a Mutual Purpose, and Brainstorm new strategies.

## Situation 2: “Vacation Plans”

### **Respondent**

You and your significant other (the Initiator) are about to plan your annual vacation. You haven’t thought about it much, but you do know one thing: you like to visit interesting foreign cultures where you can spend time with and get to know the people. Your current interests lie in French culture—particularly Parisians. Your significant other is about to ask you to take a vacation that has been a lifelong dream—a week watching orangutans in Malaysia. Orangutans aren’t people.

**What to do:** Defiantly state that you’re interested in visiting a foreign culture all right, but you want to spend time with people, not orangutans. In fact, you want to go to Paris.

If the Initiator tries to find a Mutual Purpose (perhaps something that meets both your needs), try to brainstorm a vacation that gives you time with both the people of Malaysia (the part you’d find interesting) and the orangutans (the part the Initiator finds interesting).

If the Initiator seems controlling or uninterested in your view, plant a flag. Suggest that it’s Paris or no trip at all.

## Coach

**Read** the Initiator’s “As You Speak” section. The Initiator will start by using the STATE skills. Then he or she will be required to create Mutual Purpose using the skills from this lesson.

**Observe** carefully how well the Initiator uses the skills. As the discussion comes to an end, provide the Initiator specific feedback. If the interaction went well, describe what went well and why. If it didn’t go well, describe what didn’t go well and why and ask the Initiator to repeat the interaction using the skills correctly.

**Discuss:** Why seek Mutual Purpose? Why not simply debate the issue until someone wins?

### Situation 3: “Who Gets the Holiday?”

#### *Initiator*

You and the Respondent have to decide which of you will take off the week between Christmas and New Year’s. Only one of you can. You both want the time off. Your family is flying in from all around the country to honor your parents’ fortieth wedding anniversary. By taking the time off, you’ll have more time to spend with your brothers, sisters, and other relatives who are coming for the event. You’d be staying in town, but you wouldn’t have to be at work all day.

#### **As You Speak:**

**STATE:** Start by using the STATE skills to describe the facts as well as your tentative conclusion. Begin with: “I really need to take off the time between Christmas and New Year’s. If you’ll take your vacation later, I’ll owe you a big favor.”

**Learn to Look:** Watch to see if the Respondent shows signs that he or she is feeling unsafe or acts defensive because he or she has misinterpreted your intent.

**Make It Safe:** To restore safety, create a Mutual Purpose: Commit to seek Mutual Purpose, Recognize the purpose behind the strategy, Invent a Mutual Purpose, and Brainstorm new strategies.

### Situation 3: “Who Gets the Holiday?”

#### **Respondent**

You and the Initiator have to decide which of you will take off the week between Christmas and New Year’s. Only one of you can. You want the time off because you’ve been working hard lately and need to catch up on some sleep. You figure that if you don’t take some time off soon, you’ll come down with strep because you’re falling behind in your sleep. You’ve been feeling exhausted lately.

**What to do:** Indignantly come back with,

*“I really don’t like it when you think you can have your way just because you’re a hotshot or something. I deserve the time off too, you know!”*

If the Initiator tries to seek Mutual Purpose, explain that what you really need is to be able to sleep in a few days or maybe have a long weekend.

If the Initiator seems to want to control you or take advantage of you, stick to your guns. Suggest that you’re going to exercise your seniority by taking your vacation during the holiday season (since you get first dibs).

## Coach

**Read** the Initiator’s “As You Speak” section. The Initiator will start by using the STATE skills. Then he or she will be required to create Mutual Purpose using the skills from this lesson.

**Observe** carefully how well the Initiator uses the skills. As the discussion comes to an end, provide the Initiator specific feedback. If the interaction went well, describe what went well and why. If it didn’t go well, describe what didn’t go well and why and ask the Initiator to repeat the interaction using the skills correctly.

**Discuss:** What is the hardest part of this skill? Why? What can you do to get better at it?

## Situation 4: “Training Dilemma”

### *Initiator*

The Respondent, a nursing supervisor who reports to you, just submitted a request for a special course in providing care at the bedside. You can't approve the request because the course was piloted in another part of the hospital and failed to achieve its advertised benefits. It was popular but ineffective.

The reason for the request is that your hospital's latest employee-engagement survey identified a need for empowering nurses at the bedside. This course is supposed to provide skills to help with empowerment. This part of the request you understand and can support. You have the money, but you're committed to spending it on an “evidence-based” solution—not one that's failed to pass the test.

### **As You Speak:**

**STATE:** Start by using the STATE skills to describe the facts as well as your tentative conclusion. Begin with: “Can we talk about your request for that special course? I don't want to discourage you, but I'm not willing to authorize the training you've requested.”

**Learn to Look:** Watch to see if the Respondent shows signs that he or she is feeling unsafe or acts defensive because he or she has misinterpreted your intent.

**Make It Safe:** To restore safety, create a Mutual Purpose: Commit to seek Mutual Purpose, Recognize the purpose behind the strategy, Invent a Mutual Purpose, and Brainstorm new strategies.

## Situation 4: “Training Dilemma”

### **Respondent**

You are a nursing supervisor. The Initiator is your manager. You recently submitted a request for a special course in providing care at the bedside. The hospital’s latest employee-engagement survey identified a need for empowering nurses at the bedside, and you’ve located a course that’s been used in another part of the hospital for this very purpose.

The reason you’ve asked for this particular course is that the hospital already has people who can train it—making it quick, easy, and less expensive to implement. The Initiator is going to push back on approving this course.

**What to do:** Come back with,

*“But I really want that specific course. People love it, and they say it really helps.”*

If the Initiator tries to seek Mutual Purpose, explain that you don’t absolutely need the specific course. You need a course that will accomplish the empowerment objectives without busting your budget. You also want a course you can implement within the next six months.

If the Initiator seems controlling or uninterested in your concerns, say that everyone knows that these courses are all the same. The smart people just pick the cheapest.

## Coach

**Read** the Initiator’s “As You Speak” section. The Initiator will start by using the STATE skills. Then he or she will be required to create Mutual Purpose using the skills from this lesson.

**Observe** carefully how well the Initiator uses the skills. As the discussion comes to an end, provide the Initiator specific feedback. If the interaction went well, describe what went well and why. If it didn’t go well, describe what didn’t go well and why and ask the Initiator to repeat the interaction using the skills correctly.

**Discuss:** What is the hardest part of this skill? Why? What can you do to get better at it?

## My Crucial Conversation

1. What is your purpose in the conversation?
2. What do you think the other person's purpose might be?
3. How could you create a mutual purpose?



# Move to Action

## Summary



## Move to Action:

*How to Turn Crucial Conversations into Action and Results*

### **The Skill: Document WWWF.**

It's easy to let assignments fall through the cracks. When ending a discussion, document the following:

**W**ho  
does **W**hat  
by **W**hen  
and how we will **F**ollow up

## My Crucial Conversation

How will you establish a way to follow up after the crucial conversation?

Who:

Will do what:

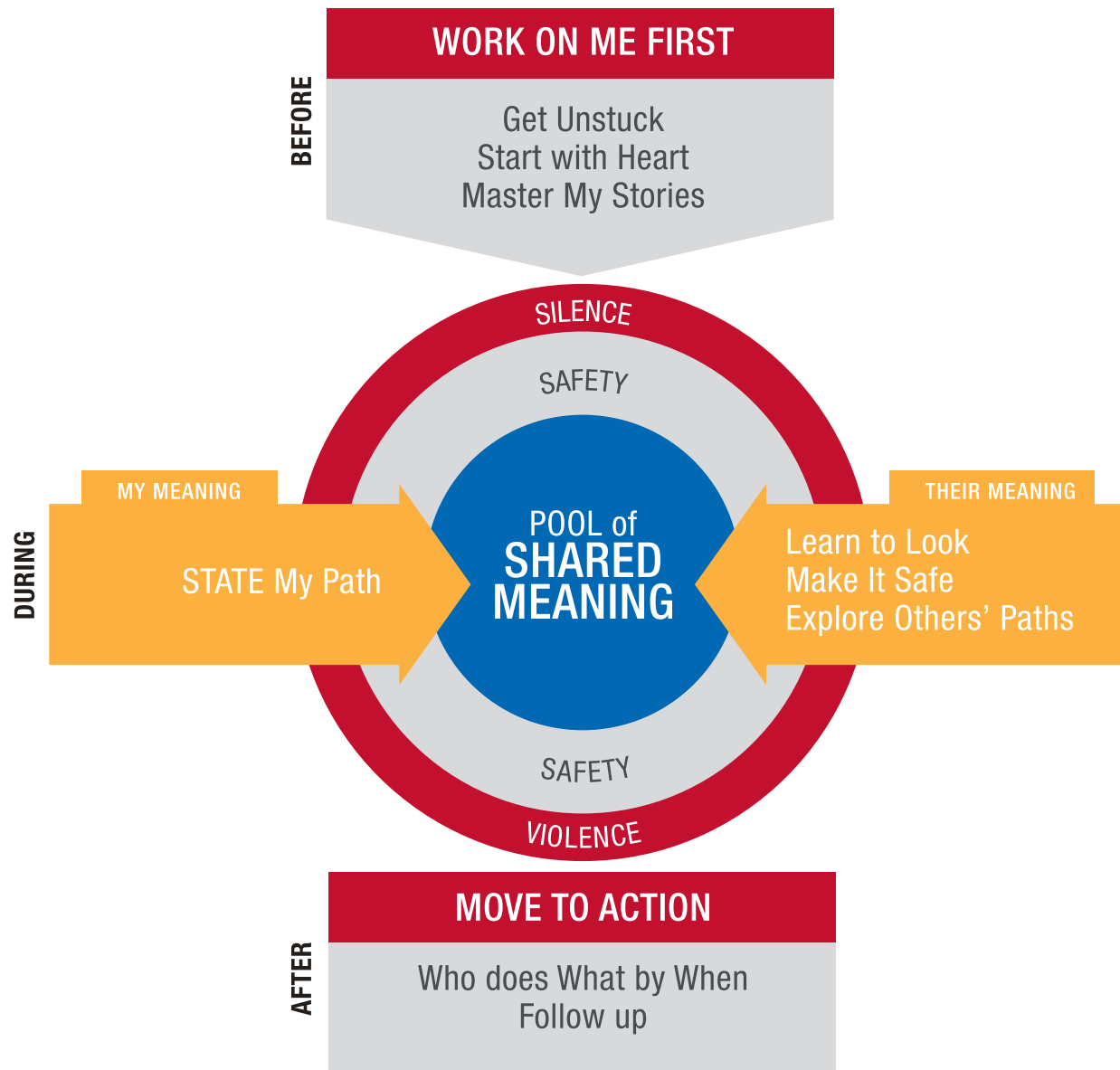
By when:

How we'll follow up:

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SITUATION	PRINCIPLES & SKILLS
<b>1</b> <b>Results</b> and <b>Relationships</b> are suffering.	<b>Get Unstuck</b> —You need to hold a <b>crucial conversation</b> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify where you are stuck.</li> <li>Unbundle with CPR.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> You need to initiate a <b>Crucial Conversation</b> , or one is evolving.	<b>Start with Heart</b> <b>Focus on What You Really Want</b> <i>for: you, them, the relationship, and the organization (your long-term results).</i>
<b>3</b> You are getting <b>emotional</b> or telling <b>clever stories</b> .	<b>Master Your “Clever” Stories</b> —Tell the Rest of the Story <b>Victim Story:</b> “What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the problem?” <b>Villain Story:</b> “Why would a reasonable, rational, decent person do this?” <b>Helpless Story:</b> “What should I do right now to move toward what I really want?”
<b>4</b> You have a <b>tough message</b> and need to be <b>honest</b> and maintain <b>safety</b> .	<b>STATE Your Path</b> <b>Share Your Facts:</b> “I noticed . . .” “Twice you . . .” <b>Tell Your Story:</b> “I’m beginning to wonder if . . .” “It seems to me . . .” <b>Ask for Others’ Paths:</b> “How do you see it?” “Help me understand . . .” <b>Talk Tentatively:</b> Own your story and avoid absolutes. <b>Encourage Testing:</b> “Do you see it differently?”
<b>5</b> Others are <b>already in silence or violence</b> and you missed the early warning signs.	<b>Learn to Look</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>for the signs that a conversation is turning crucial.</li> <li>for early warning signs of silence and violence.</li> </ul>
<b>6</b> Someone <b>misunderstands</b> your intent regarding <b>Purpose</b> or <b>Respect</b> .	<b>Contrast</b> “I <b>don’t</b> think/mean/want _____ (their fear/misunderstanding).” “I <b>do</b> think/mean/want _____ (your actual purpose/meaning).”
<b>7</b> The discussion is going in <b>circles</b> . People are <b>arguing</b> . You’re beginning a <b>tough project</b> or <b>discussion</b> .	<b>Create Mutual Purpose</b> <b>Commit to Seek Mutual Purpose.</b> “Can we look for something we both agree on?” <b>Recognize the Purpose behind the Strategy.</b> “Why do you want _____?” “This is why I want _____.” <b>Invent a Mutual Purpose.</b> “So, if you get _____ and I get _____, we’re both happy?” <b>Brainstorm New Strategies.</b> “What ideas do you have?” “I was thinking it may help if . . .”
<b>8</b> Someone else is going to <b>silence</b> or <b>violence</b> and his or her full meaning isn’t getting into the Pool of Shared Meaning.	<b>Explore Others’ Paths</b> <b>Ask:</b> “I want to know what you think about . . .” <b>Mirror:</b> (Silence) “You seem reluctant. Are you sure you’re OK with it?” (Violence) “Wow, you seem really upset. What’s up?” <b>Paraphrase:</b> “So you’re saying _____.” <b>Prime:</b> “Do you think that _____?”
<b>9</b> You’re ready to <b>Move to Action</b> .	<b>Move to Action</b> —Determine <b>Who</b> does <b>What</b> by <b>When</b> and how we will <b>Follow up</b> .

# CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS MODEL



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## 1

## Get Unstuck

*How to Spot the Conversations That Are Keeping You from What You Want*

### The Law of Crucial Conversations

Anytime you find yourself stuck, there's a crucial conversation you're either not holding or not holding well.

**Skill #1: Identify where you're stuck.**

**Skill #2: Unbundle with CPR.**

**Content:** a single instance of a problem.

**Pattern:** a pattern of behavior over time.

**Relationship:** how the problem is affecting your relationship.

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## 2

## Start with Heart

*How to Stay Focused on What You Really Want*

### Work on Me First

The first step to change starts with a change in heart—which begins when you admit that *you're* the person you should be trying to improve.

**The Skill:** Focus on what you *really* want.

1. "What am I behaving like I want?"
2. "What results do I really want—
  - for myself?"
  - for the relationship?"
  - for others?"
  - for the organization?"
3. "How would I behave if I really did?"

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## 3

## Master My Stories

*Stay in Dialogue When You're Angry, Scared, or Hurt*



**Skill #1: Separate fact from story.**

**Skill #2: Watch for three clever stories.**

Victim, Villain, and Helpless Stories propel our emotions and help us justify our behavior.

**Skill #3: Tell the rest of the story. Ask:**

- "What am I pretending not to notice about my role in the problem?"
- "Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do this?"
- "What should I do right now to move toward what I really want?"

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## 4

## STATE My Path

*How to Speak Persuasively, Not Abrasively*

To express your views in a way that makes it safe for others to hear them (and even disagree), share your path the way you experienced it—from observations to actions. If you start with the facts and are tentative in encouraging others' points of view, you can be both totally candid and totally respectful.

**The Skill:** STATE My Path

**S**hare your facts

**T**ell your story

**A**sk for others' paths

**T**alk tentatively

**E**ncourage testing

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## 5

## Learn to Look

*How to Notice When Safety Is at Risk*

Watch for the signs that a conversation is turning crucial. When people feel unsafe, they typically move to silence or violence. Those who are best at dialogue interpret silence or violence as evidence that others are feeling unsafe and then do what it takes to make it safe.

Remember, the sooner you catch problems, the sooner you can return to dialogue, and the less severe the damage.

**Skill #1: Learn to look for when a conversation becomes crucial.**

**Skill #2: Learn to look for silence and violence in yourself and others.**

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## 6

## Make It Safe I

*How to Make It Safe to Talk about Almost Anything*

The two conditions of safety are Mutual Purpose and Mutual Respect. Are people at cross-purposes, offended, or both?

**Restore safety.** Tools include:

	Clear Problem	Misunderstanding
Mutual Respect	Apologize	Contrast
Mutual Purpose	Create Mutual Purpose (see Cue Card 7)	Contrast

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# 7 Make It Safe II

*How to Create Mutual Purpose*

**The Skill: Create Mutual Purpose.**

- *Commit to seek Mutual Purpose.* Commit to search for a goal that will benefit both of you.
- *Recognize the purpose behind the strategy.* What you want and what you're asking for are often two different things. One is your purpose; the other is your strategy for achieving it. Recognize the difference.
- *Invent a Mutual Purpose.* Don't settle for a compromise. Move to different (often more creative) or higher and more encompassing goals.
- *Brainstorm new strategies.* Once you've found a Mutual Purpose, brainstorm mutually satisfactory strategies.

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# 8 Explore Others' Paths

*How to Listen When Others  
Blow Up or Clam Up*

When others move to silence or violence, we need to encourage them to retrace their Path to Action to its source. When others are sharing feelings or acting inappropriately, it's our job to make it safe for them to share their facts.

**The Skill: Use AMPP to explore others' paths.**

**A**sk to get things rolling

**M**irror to confirm feelings

**P**araphrase to acknowledge the story

**P**riming when you're getting nowhere

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# 9 Move to Action

*How to Turn Crucial Conversations  
into Action and Results*

**Skill: Document WWWF.**

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