

## Crucial Conversations- EQ Matters

***Crucial Conversations, according to Ron McMillan, author of the best selling book, Crucial Conversations, are discussions between two or more people that have three main characteristics: stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong. Everyone encounters crucial conversations at home and at work, which makes managing crucial conversations a core EQ Matters© employability skill!***

**Crucial conversations, according to Ron, are usually handled poorly.** Ron listed three ways of dealing with crucial conversations:

1. •avoid them
2. •face them and handle them poorly
3. •face them and handle them well

EQ Smart people choose number 3 !

Cynthia Kivland, CareerPerformanceStrategies, attended a workshop by Ron McMillan, sponsored by the Chicago Chapter Association of Career Professionals International. Ron and his co-authors believe people can dramatically improve the results of crucial conversations by recognizing they are in a crucial conversation. The easiest way to recognize one is in a crucial conversation is to “intentionally” increase awareness of your emotions. Ron states that during a crucial conversation, people often experience the “emotional” flight or fight reflex. The flight reflex turns into silence and/or avoidance, while the fight reflex turns into violence.

For example, an employee is confronted by her supervisor about performance issues; the employee can ask herself, “What do I really want out of this situation?” Ron advises about not giving into “sucker choices” where choices lead to poor outcomes, but to think about how to get what you really want without having negative consequences on the relationship or outcome. In this example, the employee can think about how she can discuss her performance with her boss rationally, while maintaining candor and professionalism, and without negatively affecting the relationship.

Seven steps are recommended to master crucial conversations, detailed in the book and toolkit entitled DialogueSmarts. DialogueSmarts: Skills for Mastering Crucial Conversations.

**1. Start with Heart** is starting with yourself and examine the role that you play in crucial conversations. We can only control ourselves, so the first step is to manage how you approach a crucial conversation. In this step, Ron encourages you to focus on what you really want - Solve a problem in a way that is mutually beneficial without damaging relationships), and to refuse the sucker’s choices.

**2. The second principle of dialogue smarts, Learn to Look**, involves learning to see any signs of safety that are at risk – i.e. people in the conversation are resorting to silence or violence.

**3. The third principle is Make it Safe** for others to speak candidly without experiencing negative results. People attack or avoid if one of two conditions is violated in a conversation - mutual purpose or mutual respect.

**4. Master my stories is the fourth principle.** Mastering emotions and the stories that create emotions is the primary purpose of this principle.

**5. The fifth principle, State my Path**, involves speaking persuasively, not abrasively. This principle encourages candidness in a way that does not offend or cause others to respond defensively.

**6. Explore Other’s Paths** encourages people to listen to others during a crucial conversation.

**7. Finally, Move to Action** involves making decisions and improving accountability.

**Start to manage your Crucial Conversations through EQ Matters coaching or development programs. Contact Cynthia @ [coach@carrerperformancestrategies.com](mailto:coach@carrerperformancestrategies.com) or 1-877-60-coach.**