

Part 1.3

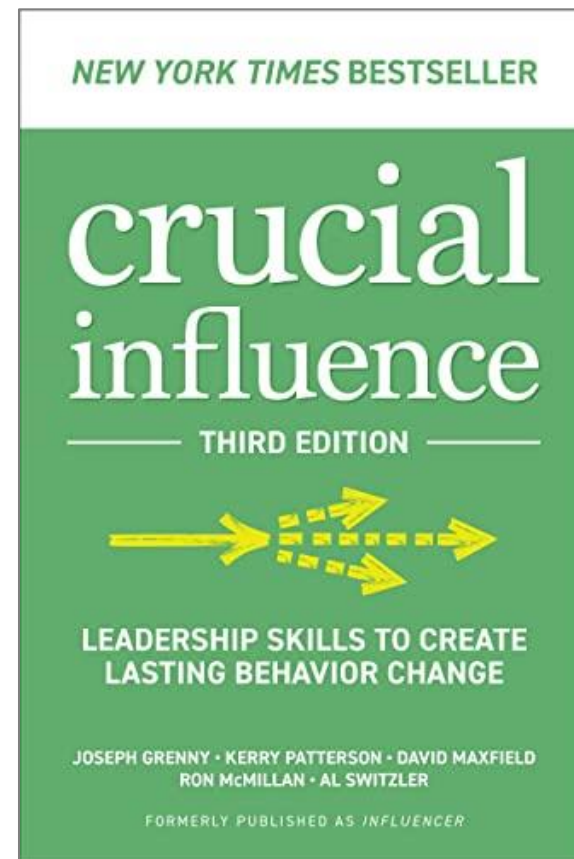
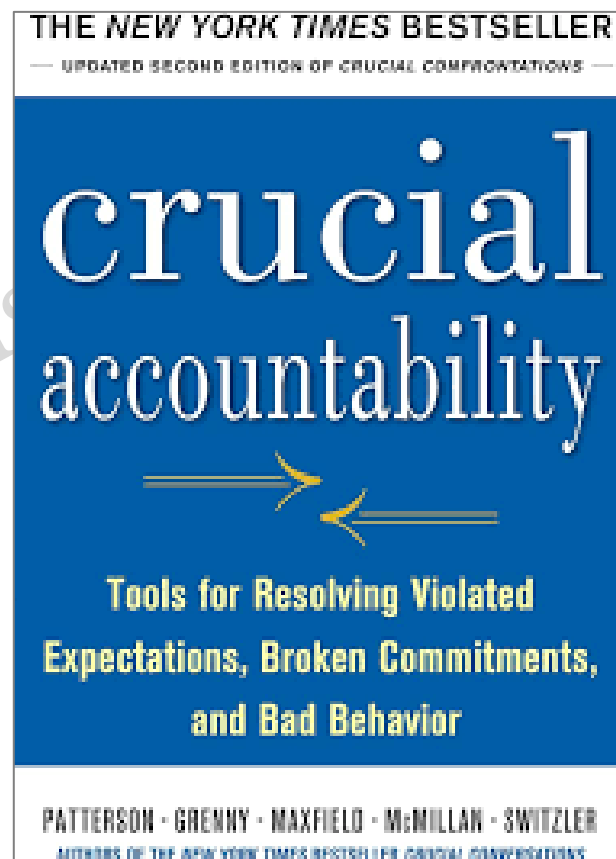
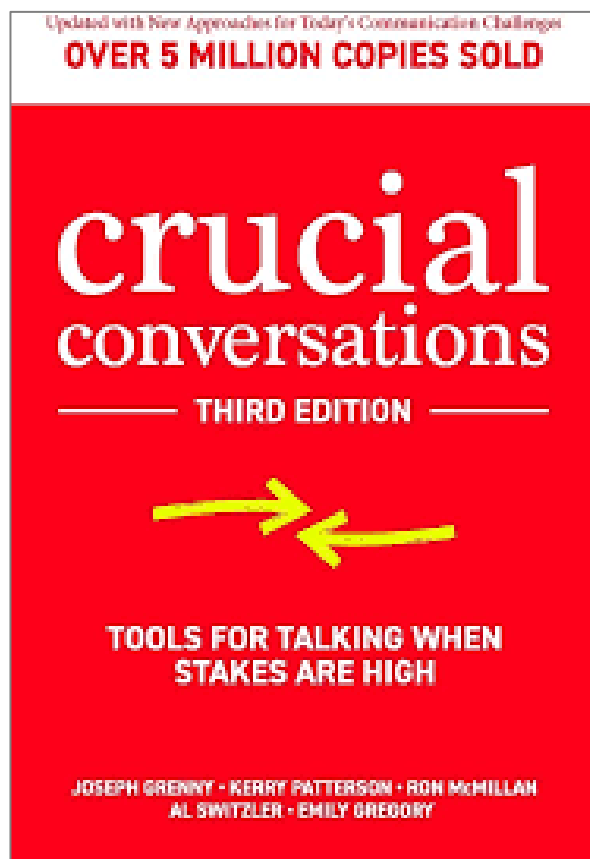
Crucial Conversations

An Introduction

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Difficult Conversations - Examples

- Discussing...
 - A Wage Rise
 - A Resignation, Leaving the Company, Moving to another Project or Team
 - Firing Somebody
 - A Breaking-up, as business partners, or romantic partners
 - Criticizing a dear friend, a manager,...
 - Apologizing
 - Explaining some difficult decision

How do you start such a conversation?

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Do you simulate the conversation in your mind?

Does it help?

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Section 1)

CRUCIAL CONVERSATION

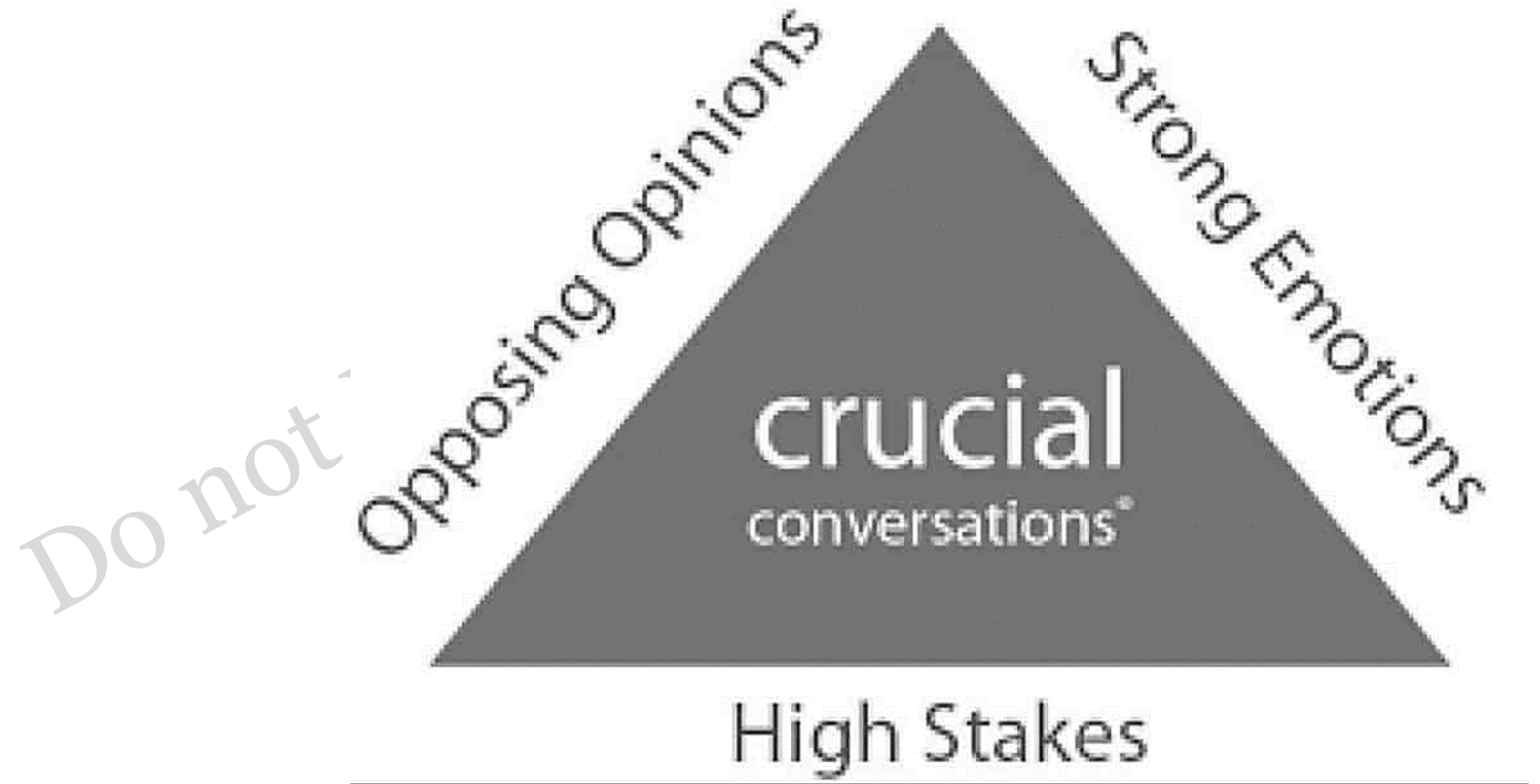
A discussion between two or more people in which they hold

(1) opposing opinions about a

(2) high-stakes issue and where

(3) emotions run strong.

Crucial Conversations



High Stakes Conversations

- High Stakes | نهادهای بالا
- Stakes: What have I put at stake here? | آنچه در وسط نهادهایم
- Compare:
 - You want to buy a second-hand laptop from your coworker
 - You have started a company with your business partner and worked for a decade, and now we want to terminate the partnership

Every action and reaction will be interpreted differently

Stakes

- What we have put into / invested...
 - Time
 - Energy
 - Money
 - Emotions
 - Hopes for the future

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Opposing Opinions

- There are always disagreements,
- I think having ... as a wage is fair.
- The manager might say I can't pay more than 70% of this price.
- Scenario 1:
 - Person 1) I want x.
 - Person 2) I can pay just y. => a simple disagreement, a price negotiation

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Opposing Opinions

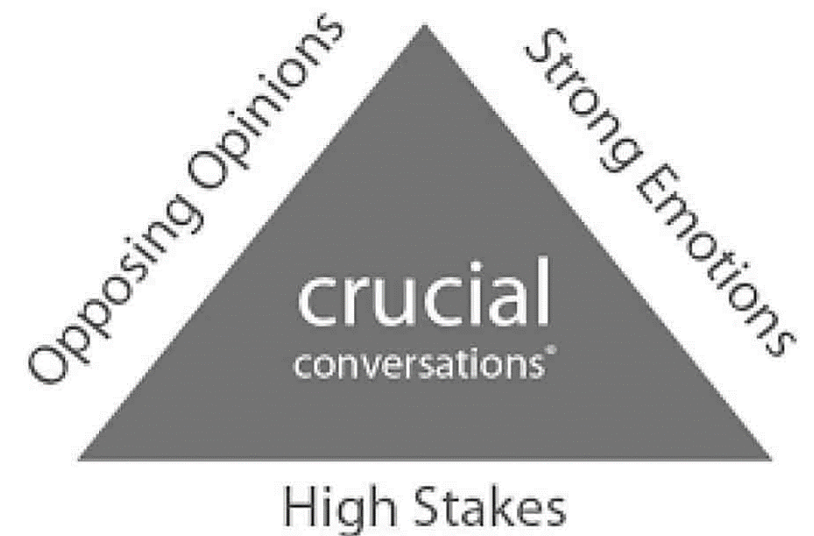
- Scenario 2:
 - Person 1) I want x.
 - Person 2) You don't worth more than Y! Why do you think you worth X?
- Here it is an opposition in beliefs and values
- Now, it's not about 10 or 20% more or less,
it's about our value, capability, and competencies!

Strong Emotions

- Anger or Fear can make a conversation crucial too.
- Example:
 - You hear that the higher-ups are thinking about a scale-down
 - 2 days later, you are asking someone why they haven't delivered the project yet. The deadline was yesterday
 - What is different here than a normal conversation?

Question:

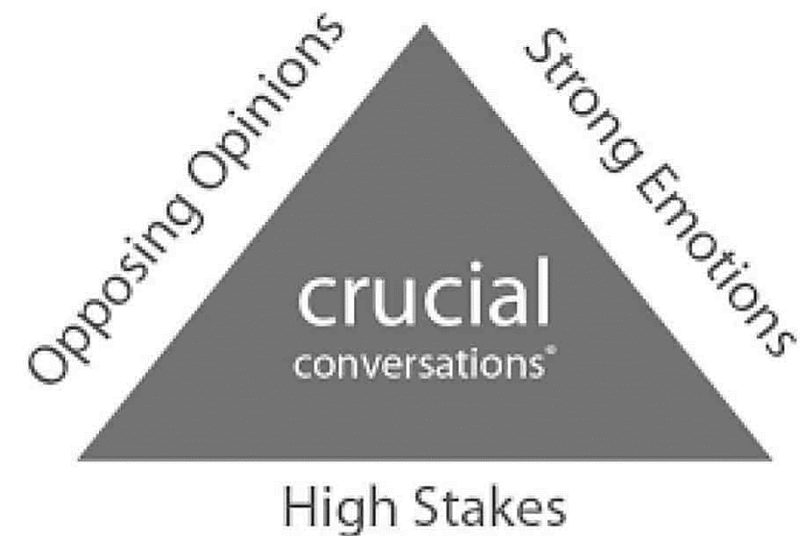
What they all have in common?



Question:

What they all have in common?

Context!



What makes each of these conversations crucial

- The outcome could have a huge impact on either relationships or results that affect you greatly.
- Some element of your daily routine could be forever altered for better or worse. Clearly a promotion could make a big difference.
- Your company's success affects you and everyone you work with.
- Your relationship with your spouse influences every aspect of your life.
- Even something as trivial as a debate over cooking smells can damage your quality of life.

Lag Time is a Factor

- the determining factor between success and failure is **the amount of time** that passes between **when the problem emerges** and **when those involved find a way to honestly and respectfully resolve it**.
- It's the **toxic emotions and dysfunctional behavior** that occurs **in the absence of a forthright conversation** that causes the greatest damage.
- Biased behavior in your workplace is a problem, but its impact is multiplied when people fail to confront, discuss, and resolve the behavior.

Section 2)

CHOOSE YOUR TOPIC

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A **problem well-stated** is a problem **half-solved**.

Charles Kettering

Crucial Conversations are “Topic-rich” Environments

- Human interactions and relationships are complex.

There are multiple issues and side issues and tangents.

- Crucial Conversations are most successful when they’re focused on one issue.

Because human interactions are inherently complex, focusing a Crucial Conversation on **a single topic** takes effort.

- It requires us to thoughtfully **unbundle** and then **prioritize** the issues at hand.

- **Sandrine:** *I'm excited to have you and your team dig in on this project. Let's talk timelines.*
- **Wendy:** *It'll take us just over six months.*
- **Sandrine:** *Oh . . . Well . . . when I looked at it, it seemed like you should be able to finish the whole thing by the end of this quarter*

At this point, we have the first element of a Crucial Conversation—
a difference of opinion.

- **Wendy:** *Well it's a good thing we're talking about it now before we've made any commitments, because there's no way to finish it by then. I mean, that's half the usual time for a project like this.*
- **Sandrine:** *That's why I put you in this role in the first place. You are able to do the impossible. Let me give you the full context of just how important this is. I need you to figure out how to get this done by the end of the quarter. Other project launches are at stake. The accelerated schedules are already in the master plan. Our senior team is counting on us. Or, more specifically, on you.*

- And just like that, the next two elements of a Crucial Conversation come into play.

The stakes are high, and emotions are rising. This is an important project—for Wendy, for Sandrine, and for their organization. Sandrine is feeling pressured and is starting to apply that same pressure on Wendy.

- So what happens next?

- **Wendy:** *Wait a minute . . . you've already made a commitment? You agreed to a deadline before we even talked about whether it was doable?*
- **Sandrine:** *Hey, Wendy, you know we need a big win this year. Look, I really pushed for you to be the one to lead this project. Do you know what I said about you? I said you were a team player. Was I mistaken?*

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- Wow! There is a lot going on in this one conversation.
 - Wendy has put together a timeline, shared it with her manager, and bam! The whole thing has blown up in her face.
 - Not only does she still have to get to agreement with her manager about the project timeline (the original issue), but now there are a whole host of other issues as well.

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- Think about what would be going through your mind right now if you were Wendy.

- “How will I ever get this project done?”
- “She’s setting me up to fail!”
- “This is unfair to my team!”
- “What am I going to say to my family about the crazy long hours I will be putting in?”
- “Can I tell the truth about what I’m thinking right now? Will I lose my job if I do?”
- “Do I even want this career? Do I want to work for Sandrine?”

- Wendy is clearly facing a Crucial Conversation right now.
- But the question is, which conversation?
- What should she, right now in this moment with Sandrine, talk about?

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Why We Usually Choose The Wrong Topic

- When faced with complex problems like this, we rarely stop and ponder which topic we should address.
- Instead, we naturally default to one of two mistaken directions:
 - **Easy over hard**
 - **Recent over right**

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Easy over hard (1/2)

- When faced with a high-stakes, emotional conversation, we have a bias for choosing the topic we think we can win with.
- That usually means we pick something easier than the issue that is really in the way of our most important goals.
- We think, “I’ll just start with this little issue and see how that goes.”
- It’s like we’re testing the waters. Or trying to get across the lake without getting wet.

Easy over hard (2/2)

- For example, if you've concluded your direct report is incompetent at some aspect of his or her job, you might sugarcoat the problem by addressing minor recent mistakes.
- Your unstated hope is that your report will infer how big the problem is without your coming out and saying it.

Nice try. **But easy rarely works.**

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Recent over right (1/2)

- We tend to focus on the **most recent event or behavior** rather than on the one that **matters the most**.
- If a colleague treats your comments in meetings in a way you find disrespectful, you talk about **the most recent slight** rather than **sharing the larger pattern**
- “Hey,” you say after the meeting, “you started talking over me in there when I hadn’t finished my point.”
- Your colleague shrugs and says, “Shoot. Sorry. I guess I got a little too enthusiastic.” You say, “Uh-huh.” But you *think*, “You do that all the time, you self-centered jerk!”

Recent over right (2/2)

- We favor recent over right for a couple of reasons.:
- **First**, we can actually remember the specifics.
- **Second**, we don't want to be accused of dredging up ancient history.

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Three Signs You're Having the Wrong Conversation

One of the best ways to ensure you talk about the right topic is to get good at noticing when you're on the wrong one.

- 1. Your emotions escalate**
- 2. You walk away skeptical**
- 3. You are in a déjà vu dialogue**

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Your emotions escalate

- When you're having the wrong conversation, even if that conversation is going well, you know on some level that you're not addressing or resolving the issue.
- Consequently, you come in feeling frustrated, and that feeling increases as the conversation progresses.
- That's happening right now to Wendy in the conversation above.

When the conversation started, she was feeling confident in her timeline. By the end, she was apprehensive and afraid for her job. That escalated emotion should signal to her that the issue is no longer the project deadline. Something more important needs to be addressed!

You walk away skeptical

- Sure, maybe you come to the end of the conversation with **an agreement**, but even as you walk away, you think to yourself, “Nothing is going to really change here.”
- Or you get to agreement but **doubt** that the changes you settled on **will solve the real problem.**
- Whatever agreement you came to is only so much **window dressing** because it **won't get you to what you really want.**

You are in a déjà vu dialogue

- If you ever have the same conversation with the same people a second time, the problem is not *them*. It's *you*.
- You're having the wrong conversation.
 - If even as you say the words they feel familiar because you've had this conversation before—maybe even a dozen times—you're on the wrong topic.

Skills For Finding The Right Topic

- We need to be skilled in **some elements** of choosing the right topic.
- We need to know
how to *unbundle*, *choose*, and *simplify* the issues involved.

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Unbundle

- There are **three levels of conversations** you may need to have about the issue itself, and a **fourth relating to the process** of the conversation
- A good way to find the right one begins by **unbundling, or teasing apart, the various issues level by level.**
- You can remember these levels with the acronym CPR.

Unbundle: Content (1/2)

- The first time a problem comes up,
talk about the content—the immediate pain
- If either the action itself or its immediate consequences are the issue,
you've got a content problem.

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Unbundle: Content (2/2)

- For example, your coworker failed to get you the progress report you needed in order to finish a report for your manager.
- Now your neck is on the line because your report was late.
- Or you're giving a presentation in a team meeting, and one of your fellow team members keeps interrupting and talking over you.
- If this is the first time this has happened, it's a content problem.

Unbundle: Pattern (1/2)

- The next time the same problem comes up, think pattern.
- Now the concern is not just that this has happened once, but that a pattern is starting to develop, or already has.
- For example, the last three times a really exciting project came to your team, your manager assigned it to others despite your expressed interest.
- The issue is no longer just one assignment; **it's the pattern that's emerging.**

Unbundle: Pattern (2/2)

- It can be **challenging** to **determine when to move from content to pattern**.
- Often, it may feel like you're **jumping to conclusions** if you move to pattern after only a second occurrence of the issue.
- Yet you want to **address patterns early and candidly**, before they become entrenched.
- It can be helpful to think of it this way:

The first time something happens, it's an incident. The second time it might be coincidence. The third time, it's a pattern.

Unbundle: Relationship (1/2)

- Finally, **as problems continue**, they can **begin to impact the relationship**.
- Relationship issues get to deeper concerns about *trust*, *competence*, or *respect*.
- For example, we may begin to **doubt someone's competence** or **question whether we can trust a person to keep commitments**.
- Or we may conclude after repeated incidents that **a person doesn't respect our role or contribution**.

Unbundle: Relationship (2/2)

- With these doubts and questions at the forefront of our thinking, **we begin to (subtly or overtly) relate to them differently.**
- Sometimes a relationship issue can emerge fully formed in the first instance.
- For example, if you see a colleague put sensitive files onto a thumb drive and take the drive home, you may have an immediate trust issue.

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Can you give example about your experience?

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How to decide what the right topic is to address?

How Unbundling helps?

Unbundling helps people see a variety of options:

1. Keep it at content.
 2. Move to pattern.
 3. Talk relationship.
- Unbundling the issues with CPR helps us **gain clarity into the situation.**
 - It also sets us up to make **a conscious choice**—at which level do we want to hold this conversation?

Do You Need to Talk About Process?

- CPR is a powerful entry point as we begin to unravel complex interactions and consider the issues that are keeping us stuck.
- But **not every issue fits neatly into** content, pattern, and relationship
- Occasionally **you'll need to extend your conversation**
to cover **the issue of the process of how we are discussing issues.**

Addressing the Process

- Taking time to address the process of *how* we are communicating is especially important
 - when there are differences in our communication styles
 - or when our mode of communication changes from what we're used to.
- Process issues often come into play across cultures as well.

Virtual Conversations

- Process conversations are also especially important in relationships that are **largely or exclusively virtual**.
- When **contact is infrequent**, it's essential to **talk explicitly about how you will communicate**.

For example, how will you make sure that everyone has a turn to speak? How will you make space for people to pause and think? What tools will you use? What norms should we establish? How will you accommodate different time zones and work patterns? To answer these questions, start by asking yourself, “When do virtual conversations work well for me? And when do they not?”

Remember, **if you don't talk it out, you'll act it out.**

And virtual relationships leave much more room for acting it out!

Choose (1/2)

- The next step in finding the right topic to discuss is to *choose*.
- Choosing is a matter of **filtering all the issues you've teased apart** through a single question: **“What do I really want?”**
- Ponder what your highest priority is; then choose the issue that stands between you and that objective.

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Choose (2/2)

- For example, if what you really want is to solve a project procurement problem,
 1. you may choose to deal with the content issue (“How do we get this to Malaysia in two weeks?”)
 2. rather than the relationship (“I don’t trust that you will handle this right”)
 3. or pattern (“Our fulfillment team frequently puts off doing things until they become crises”) issues.
- You choose to return to the other conversations later.

When have you chosen the wrong topic?

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Simplify (1/2)

- Having made your choice, be sure you can state simply what you want to discuss.
- We're not talking about how you'll start the conversation.
 - We mean narrow the problem down to **a succinct statement**.
- This is harder than it sounds.

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Simplify (2/2)

- Try stopping people who are great during Crucial Conversations right before they address a **concern** (we've done this).
- Ask them, “**What's the issue you want to address?**” You'll find that they take far fewer words to say it than the rest of us. The more words it takes you to describe the topic, the less prepared you are to talk.
 - For example, when we asked one skilled person what his message was in a forthcoming performance review, he said, “I've concluded he is not good at managing people or projects.” Boom! Crystal clear. Simple. He's ready.

Why is this clarity so rare?

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we feel a sense of dread

- As we start to admit the real problem to ourselves,
we panic about *how* we could possibly say it.
- It's less scary when we leave the problem **vague**.
- When you can slosh around an issue in a giant bowl of words, it's **easy to water it down**.
- But when you simply state the essence of what you need to address, you feel a jolting sense of accountability to do so.
- You stare the size of the issue square in the face.

When Panic Happens?

- But that shouldn't create panic. It should create resolution.
- Notice that the panic happens only when you conflate two problems.
- While part of your brain considers "*What's* the real issue?" another part shrieks, "*How* in the world will I say that?" Don't do this!

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A temptation

- If you **worry about the *how*** while trying to be honest about the *what*, you'll be tempted to **water down your message**.
- When that happens, "I don't think you are capable of managing people or projects" starts to sound like "How do *you* think things went on the product launch?"
- We **mince words**, **dance around**, and **sugarcoat** our way into the conversation.

Creating a simple problem sentence

- Creating a simple problem sentence helps you both start with a clear purpose and hold yourself accountable.
- It gives you a standard by which to measure whether you told your full truth. Don't worry about how you'll say it. Just tell yourself the truth about what you want to say.
- Having done that, you can address the next problem:
“How can I both tell the truth *and* strengthen the relationship?”
- This can be tough. But self-honesty is the precondition to honesty with others.

Where shall we start when facing a situation in which we can't imagine a way of addressing the issue without provoking a fight?

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The first step

- Even if you don't know what to say in the moment, stop and clarify what is truly bothering you.
- Only then can you decide what the right next step is.
- Having told yourself the truth (you believe his comment is evidence of either subtle or egregious racism), you can then decide if, when, and how to have that conversation.

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A Clean Question:

What would you like to have happen?

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Section 3)

START WITH HEART

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Speak when you are angry, and you will make
the best speech you will ever regret.

Ambrose Bierce

How to Stay Focused on What You Really Want

- Now that you know what you want to talk about, it's time to turn to the *how* of dialogue.
- How do you encourage the flow of meaning when you're in the thrall of strong emotions talking about things that matter deeply to you with those who disagree vehemently?
- Given that most people's style is based on longstanding habits, it'll probably require a lot of effort.

Work on *Me* First, Us Second

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Remember that the only person you can directly control is yourself.

Focus on What You Really Want

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Do not Distribute

Do not Distribute

Do not Distribute

Do not Distribute