

Crucial Conversations:
Tools for talking when the stakes are high in Special Education

What is a Crucial Conversation?

- Opinions vary
- Stakes are high
- Emotions are strong

***What are some examples of Crucial Conversations in the field of Special Education?**

1. IEP's
2. Staff Meetings
3. Debriefing

***Video Examples of Crucial Conversations**

- The Troubled Couple – Watch this clip and think about:
 - What's going on with these two and why?
 - How did you know:
 - The stakes are high?
 - Opinions vary?
 - Emotion are strong?
- Cross Word
 - Watch as Rick notices that Scott isn't working. He's supposed to be doing a job-related task, not working on a crossword puzzle. Watch the clip and think about:
 - Why did the boss respond this way?
 - What's keeping him from stepping up to the crucial conversation?

When conversations move from casual to crucial:

- We are generally on our worst behavior
- Human nature is to back away from discussions we fear will hurt us or make things worse
 - We're designed wrong – Fight or Flight
 - We're under pressure
 - We're stumped
 - We act in self-defeating ways
- Good news: we can learn to be better communicators
- It takes effort: Practice does not make perfect - Perfect practice makes perfect

The Power of Dialogue

- Dialogue
 - The free flow of meaning between two or more people
- Successful conversations
 - Free flow of relevant information
 - Skilled people find a way to get all relevant information (from themselves and others) out into the open

- They are willing and capably share their views, even when their ideas are controversial or unpopular

*What are some examples of times when you have had to present unpopular or controversial information?

1. Transition/placement
2. Giving feedback to staff
3. Behavior Plans

Filling the Pool of Shared Meaning

- Personal Pool of Meaning
 - Our opinions, feelings, theories and experiences about the topic
- Crucial Conversation
 - Opinions differ: Different pools
- Pool of Shared Meaning
 - Add everyone's meaning to the shared pool

*Why is it so important to add everyone's meaning to the pool?

- As the pool of shared meaning grows, it helps people in two ways
 - As individuals are exposed to more accurate and relevant information, they make better choices
 - Since the meaning is shared, people willing act on whatever decisions they make (committed to act)
 - When people aren't involved = less likely to act
 - Example:
 - IEP – When the family is not involved in the process of IEP development is less likely that they will take any ownership in the plan
 - Developing a behavior intervention or creating a new procedure for data collection

Start with the Heart

- Work on me first
 - The only person we can change is ourselves
 - Improve your dialogue skills
 - You can't change others
- Start with the heart
 - Focus on what you really want
 - Many times during crucial conversations we trick ourselves into thinking we want to win or we want our way to be the only way – What is the real goal
 - Example: If you are debriefing with your team and there is disagreement over how to address a challenging behavior what is the goal? – All information is shared – A strategy is selected that everyone is comfortable doing – the behavior decreases
 - Refuse the Sucker's Choice
 - Sucker's Choices are simplistic tradeoffs that keep us from thinking creatively and getting back to dialogue
 - Win or lose

Focus on what you really want

- Refocus your brain
 - What do I want for myself?
 - What do I want for others?
 - What do I want for the relationship?
- Find your bearings
 - Avoid temptations that lead us down the wrong path:
 - Trying to pick a fight
 - Emotions to a boil quick
 - Try to win
- Take charge of your body
 - When we are first faced with a crucial conversation our body acts as if we are in danger – blood runs to the arms and legs to prepare for fight or flight
 - As we introduce complex and abstract questions to our mind, the problem solving part of our brain recognizes that we are now dealing with intricate social issues and not physical threats

Common Deviations

- Wanting to win
 - Desire to win is built into every fiber
 - Desire to win drives us from healthy dialogue
 - Starts with correcting facts and soon changes into wanting to win
- Seeking revenge
 - Sometimes as anger increases, we move from wanting to win to wanting to harm the other person
- Hoping to remain safe
 - Sometimes we choose personal safety over dialogue
 - Rather than add to the pool of meaning, and possibly make waves along the way, we go to silence
 - We accept the certainty of bad results to avoid the possibility of uncomfortable conversation

Refuse the Sucker's Choice - Two distasteful decisions

- Fight
 - Attack and try to win
- Flight
 - Remain silent and do nothing
- Third choice - Respectful and honest
 - Clarify what you really want
 - Clarify what you really don't want
 - Think of what you are afraid will happen if you back away from your current strategy of trying to win or stay safe
 - Present your brain with a more complex problem
 - Combine the two answers into an and question that forces you to search for more creative and productive options
 - Is there a way to accomplish both?

- During our physical response to danger (fight or flight) the blood in our body moves to arms and legs to prepare
 - We are at our worst in terms of thinking ability
 - By asking a more complex question to ourselves we can reallocate some of that blood to our brain and help deal with the crucial conversation
- Examples
 - I want to express my real concerns
 - I don't want to come across as self-righteous or demanding
 - Is there a way to express my real concerns and not come across as self-righteous or demanding

*What does fight look like in the classroom/during an IEP?

*What does flight look like in the classroom/during an IEP?

*Video Example: Start with the Heart

- The Apology
 - Rick charges into a meeting and takes a few shots at the people who work for him. Then he stops and does something to get him back to dialogue.
 - How does Rick act at first?
 - How does he change this?
 - What had to change in Rick's attitude in order for him to make this change in style and strategy?

Learn to Look

- We usually focus on **content** of discussion
 - Most of the time we focus so much on the content of the conversation we have difficulty dual processing and focusing on the conditions around us
- We are often blind to the **conditions**:
 - The moment a conversation turns crucial
- Signs people don't feel safe

Spot the Crucial Conversation

- Physical signs
- Emotions
- Behavioral signs

**Activity: Take some time with to person next to you to list some possible signs of a crucial conversation*

Physical	Emotional	Behavioral

Look for Safety Problems

- When it is safe people feel free to say anything
 - When you feel unsafe (fight or flight) you start going blind
 - Your peripheral vision actually narrows
 - In fact when you feel genuinely threatened, you can scarcely see beyond what is right in front of you
- When it is unsafe people turn to:
 - **Silence**
 - Or
 - **Violence**

Silence or Violence

- Silence: any act to purposefully withhold information from the pool of shared meaning and avoid potential problems
 - Masking: understating or selectively showing your true opinions
 - Sarcasm and sugarcoating
 - Avoiding: steering away from sensitive subjects
 - Talk without addressing any real issues
 - Withdrawing: pulling out of a conversation altogether
 - Exit the conversation or the room
- Violence: verbal strategies used to convince, control or compel
 - Controlling: coercing others to your way of thinking by forcing your views or dominating the conversation
 - Labeling: putting a label on people or ideas so we can dismiss them under a general stereotype or category
 - Attacking: moved from winning the argument to making the person suffer
 - Belittling and threatening

Your Style Under Stress

- Watch your own behavior
- Step out of an argument and watch for process
 - What are you doing?

- What impact is it having?
 - Alter your strategy if necessary
- Your Style Under Stress Test

*Activity: Take a moment to complete the survey on page 6 and 7 in your handout. Please answer honestly.

- After you have completed the survey you can score your results on page 8.
- Share your results with a partner.

Your Style Under Tress Test

Γ True/False	#	Questions
OT OF	1.	At times I avoid situations that might bring me into contact with people I'm having problems with.
OT OF	2.	I have put off returning phone calls or e-mails because I simply didn't want to deal with the person who sent them.
OT OF	3.	Sometimes when people bring up a touchy or awkward issue I try to change the subject.
OT OF	4.	When it comes to dealing with awkward or stressful subjects, sometimes I hold back rather than give my full and candid opinion.
OT OF	5.	Rather than tell people exactly what I think, sometimes I rely on jokes, sarcasm, or snide remarks to let them know I'm frustrated.
OT OF	6.	When I've got something tough to bring up, sometimes I offer weak or insincere compliments to soften the blow.
OT OF	7.	In order to get my point across, I sometimes exaggerate my side of the argument.
OT OF	8.	If I seem to be losing control of a conversation, I might cut people off or change the subject in order to bring it back to where I think it should be.
OT OF	9.	When others make points that seem stupid to me, I sometimes let them know it without holding back at all.
OT OF	10.	When I'm stunned by a comment, sometimes I say things that others might take as forceful or attacking—terms such as "Give me a break!" or "That's ridiculous!"
OT OF	11.	Sometimes when things get a bit heated I move from arguing against others' points to saying things that might hurt them personally.
OT OF	12.	If I really get into a heated discussion, I've been known to be tough on the other person. In fact, they might even feel a bit insulted or hurt.
OT OF	13.	When I'm discussing an important topic with others, sometimes I move from trying to make my point to trying to win the battle.
OT OF	14.	In the middle of a tough conversation, I often get so caught up in arguments that I miss how I'm coming across to others.
OT OF	15.	When talking gets tough and I do something hurtful, I'm quick to apologize for my mistakes.
OT OF	16.	When I think about a conversation that took a bad turn, I tend to focus first on what I did that was wrong rather than focus on others' mistakes.
OT OF	17.	When I've got something to say that others might not want to hear, I avoid starting out with tough conclusions, and instead start with facts that help them understand where I'm coming from.
OT OF	18.	I can tell very quickly when others are holding back or feeling defensive in a conversation.
OT OF	19.	Sometimes I decide that it's better not to give harsh feedback because I know that it's bound to cause real problems.
OT OF	20.	When conversations aren't working, I step back from the fray, think about what's happening, and take steps to make it better.
OT OF	21.	When others get defensive because they misunderstand me, I immediately get us back on track by clarifying what I do and don't mean.
OT OF	22.	There are some people I'm rough on because, to be honest, they need or deserve what I give them.
OT OF	23.	I sometimes make absolute statements like "The fact is..." or "It's obvious that..." to be sure my point gets across.
OT OF	24.	If others hesitate to share their views, I sincerely invite them to say what's on their mind, no matter what it is.

OT	OF	25.	At times I argue hard for my view hoping to keep others from bringing up opinions that would be a waste of energy to discuss anyway.
OT	OF	26.	Even when things get tense, I adapt quickly to how others are responding to me and try a new strategy.
OT	OF	27.	When I find that I'm at cross purposes with someone, I often keep trying to win my way rather than looking for common ground.
OT	OF	28.	When things don't go well, I'm more inclined to see the mistakes others made than notice my own role.
OT	OF	29.	After I share strong opinions, I go out of my way to invite others to share their views, particularly opposing ones.
OT	OF	30.	When others hesitate to share their views, I do whatever I can to make it safe for them to speak honestly.
OT	OF	31.	Sometimes I have to discuss things I thought had been settled because I don't keep track of what was discussed before.
OT	OF	32.	I find myself in situations where people get their feelings hurt because they thought they would have more of a say in final decisions than they end up having.
OT	OF	33.	I get frustrated sometimes at how long it takes some groups to make decisions because too many people are involved.

Scoring

Your silence and violence scores give you a measure of how frequently you fall into these less-than-perfect strategies. It's actually possible to score high in both. A high score (one or two checked boxes per domain) means you use this technique fairly often. It also means you're human.

Silence	Violence
Masking <input type="radio"/> #5 (T) <input type="radio"/> #6 (T)	Controlling <input type="radio"/> #7 (T) <input type="radio"/> #8 (T)
Avoiding <input type="radio"/> #3 (T) <input type="radio"/> #4 (T)	Labeling <input type="radio"/> #9 (T) <input type="radio"/> #10 (T)
Withdrawing <input type="radio"/> #1 (T) <input type="radio"/> #2 (T)	Attacking <input type="radio"/> #11 (T) <input type="radio"/> #12 (T)
Silence Score:	Violence Score:

If you score high (two or three boxes) in any of the seven dialogue skills, you're already quite skilled in this area. If you score low (zero or one) this may be an area to work on.

Dialogue Skills	
Start with the Heart <input type="radio"/> #13 (F) <input type="radio"/> #19 (F) <input type="radio"/> #25 (F) Score:	STATE my Path <input type="radio"/> #17 (T) <input type="radio"/> #23 (F) <input type="radio"/> #29 (T) Score:
Learn to Look <input type="radio"/> #14 (F) <input type="radio"/> #20 (T) <input type="radio"/> #26 (T) Score:	Explore Others' Paths <input type="radio"/> #18 (T) <input type="radio"/> #24 (T) <input type="radio"/> #30 (T) Score:
Make it Safe <input type="radio"/> #15 (T) <input type="radio"/> #21 (T) <input type="radio"/> #27 (F) Score:	Move to Action <input type="radio"/> #31 (F) <input type="radio"/> #32 (F) <input type="radio"/> #33 (F) Score:
Controlling My Stories <input type="radio"/> #16 (T) <input type="radio"/> #22 (F) <input type="radio"/> #28 (F) Score:	

***Video Examples: Learn to Look**

- Graduation
 - Two couples are about to go to a high school graduation.
 - Watch as they talk to each other.
 - Look for the various forms of silence and violence.
 - See how many you can spot.

***Video Examples: Learn to Look**

- Graduation with Labels
 - This time, watch to see how many you got right.

Make It Safe

- Safety Requires
 - **Mutual Purpose**
 - **Mutual Respect**
- When we recognize a conversation has become unsafe:
 - The worst simply ignore the need for safety - we say whatever is on our mind with no regard for how it will be received
 - The good realize that safety is at risk, but fix it in the wrong way - we try to make the subject more palatable by sugarcoating their message
 - The best don't play games - they know that dialogue is the free flow of meaning with no pretending, sugarcoating or faking

Mutual Purpose

- Crucial conversation go awry not because of the content of the conversation but because others believe that the painful and pointed content means that you have malicious intent
 - In order to restore safety we must create Mutual Purpose
- Others perceive that:
 - We are working toward a common outcome
 - We care about their goals, interests, and values
- Signs Mutual Purpose is at Risk
 - Debate, defensiveness, hidden agendas, and accusations
- Mutual Purpose is not just a technique
 - We must really care about the goals, interests and values of others to return to dialogue

Mutual Respect

- You can't stay in the conversation if you don't maintain Mutual Respect
 - In order to build safety people must perceive that they are respected
 - Respect is like air - If you take it away, it's all people can think about
 - It is now about defending dignity
- Signs that Mutual Respect is at risk
 - Defending dignity, strong emotions turn from fear to anger, pouting, name calling, yelling, and making threats
- Feelings of disrespect often come when we dwell on how others are different from ourselves

- We can counteract these feelings by looking for ways we are similar
- Without excusing their behavior, we try to sympathize and even empathize with them

Step out of the conversation

- When a conversation is unsafe we need to create Mutual Purpose and Mutual Respect
- Step out of the conversation and
 - Apologize
 - Contrast
 - CRIB

Apologize and Contrast

- Apologize when appropriate - apologize for hurt you cause others or when you have not respected others
 - Requires a change of heart - to offer a sincere apology your motives have to change
- Contrast to fix misunderstandings
 - Sometimes others feel disrespected during crucial conversations even though we haven't done anything disrespectful
 - Use "Don't/Do" statement that:
 - Addresses others concern that you don't respect them (don't)
 - Confirms your respect or clarifies your purpose (do)
 - The Don't is more important because it deals with the misunderstanding that has put safety at risk

Contrasting

- Is not apologizing
 - It is not taking back something that we said that hurt others
 - It is a way of ensuring that what we said did not hurt more than it should have
- Provides context and proportion
 - During crucial conversations others may hear what we are saying as bigger than we intended
 - We could be tempted to water down the content
 - Contrasting helps us put things in context instead
- Can be used for first aid
 - Prevention (prior to dropping something into the pool of meaning we think might create a splash) or First Aid for safety problems

***Examples and Activities**

With a partner, read through the scenarios provided on page 10 and develop your own Contrasting statements. Share your contrasting statements with another group.

Touchy employee. You're about to talk to Jacob, an employee who continually lows up when people try to give him feedback. Yesterday a coworker told Jacob that she'd appreciate it if Jacob assisted her with recording data. Jacob blew up. You've decided to say something. You will be giving him feedback and that is usually what sets him off. You really like Jacob and everyone thinks he has a great sense of humor and is extremely good with children.

Formulate a Contrasting Statement.

I don't want _____

I do want _____

Difficult IEP. You are having an IEP meeting with one of your families. The parents/guardians are extremely concerned because you have not written any goals or objectives for the fine motor domain. Their child does not qualify in fine motor. The parents are new to the special education system, but have done a lot of reading about IEP meetings. They have concerns about their child's fine motor skills, but test score indicate that the child is at or above developmental expectations.

Formulate a Contrasting Statement.

I don't want _____

I do want _____

CRIB to get Mutual Purpose

- Commit to seek Mutual Purpose
 - Commit to stay in the conversation until we come up with a solution that serves a purpose we both share
 - We have to be willing to verbalize this commitment even when our partners seem committed to winning
- Recognize the purpose behind the strategy
 - During crucial conversations we rarely argue about our purpose - we usually try to get others to use our strategy
 - We need to ask people why they want what they are pushing - separate what they are demanding from the purpose it serves
- Invent a Mutual Purpose
 - When we actually have a common purpose we can agree on strategies
 - If recognizing common purposes still places you at odds, invent mutual purpose that is more encompassing and motivating
- Brainstorm new strategies
 - With a clear mutual purpose you can brainstorm new strategies - Step back into dialogue - SAFE

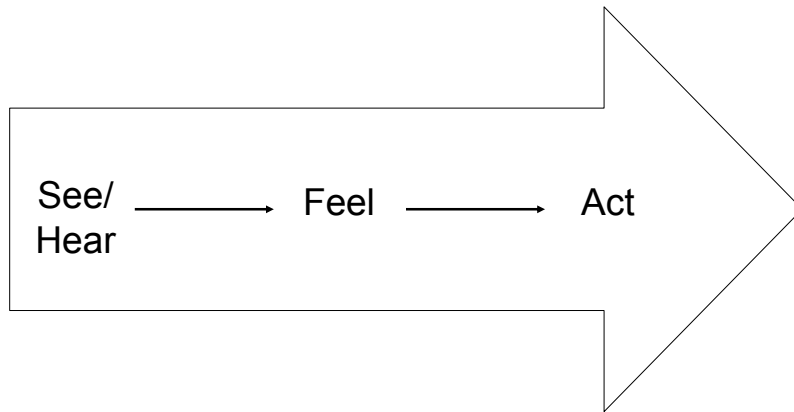
Emotions Don't Just Happen

- Emotions are a significant factor in crucial conversations
- We will begin looking at emotions by examining two unpopular statements
 - Others don't make you mad - You make you mad
 - Only you create your emotions
 - Once you have created your emotions you have two options:
 - You can act on your emotions OR
 - You can be acted on by your emotions
 - Either find a way out or remain a hostage to your emotions

When Emotions Enter the Conversation

- The worst at dialogue treat emotions as the only valid response
 - In their minds the emotions are both justified and accurate
 - They make no effort to change or even question their emotions
- The good realize they must stay in control or things will get worse
 - They fake it and allow things to remain bad rather than potentially get worse
- The best act on their emotions and think them out
 - They have strong emotions and they influence and often change the emotions by thinking them out and asking themselves complex questions

How Feelings Drive Action

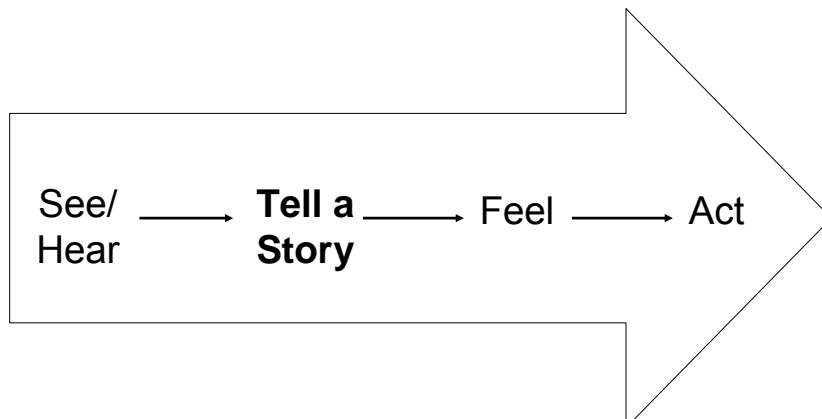


- In our minds the following events occurred:
 - We heard or saw some event
 - The event caused emotions
 - We acted based on those emotions (fight or flight)
- QUESTION: Is there an intermediate step between what we heard and saw and the feelings that were created?

Stories Create Feelings

- Just after we observe what others do and just before we feel some emotion about it, we tell ourselves a story
 - We add meaning, motive and intent to the action we observed
 - Base on these thoughts or stories, our body responds with emotion
- We tell ourselves a story to explain what is going on
 - Interpretations of facts: why, how, and what
 - As we interpret we begin to respond with emotion linked to our judgments of right/wrong, good/bad, kind/selfish, fair/unfair, etc.
- Even if we don't realize it we tell ourselves a story
 - Happens quickly - especially when we perceive danger
- Any set of facts can be used to make an infinite number of stories
- If we take control of our stories they won't control us
 - Once we tell an "ugly" story about what we observe, the story controls us
 - We can tell ourselves a different story and break the loop

Path to Action



*Video Example: Make it Safe

- The Rookie
 - Retrace the path - [What story did Lisa \(the rookie\) tell herself?](#)
 - [How did Marc create safety?](#)

Skills for Controlling Stories

- Retrace your path
 - Notice your behavior
 - When an unhelpful story is driving you to silence or violence, stop and consider how others would see your actions
 - Get in touch with your feelings
 - Next move from what you are doing to exploring the true feelings you have
 - Analyze your stories
 - Given the circumstances are these the right feelings?
 - Am I telling myself the right story?
 - By questioning our feelings, we open ourselves up to questioning our stories - we challenge the idea that our story is the right one
 - Get back to the facts
 - Don't confuse stories with facts - sometimes we don't question stories because we see them as facts - they feel like facts
 - Can you see or hear things you are calling facts?
 - Look for "Hot Words" that describe rather than state (i.e., he said _____ with a scowl.) - These words express judgments and attributes that in turn create strong emotions

Watch for Clever Stories

- Victim Stories - "It's not my fault."
 - Makes us out to be innocent sufferers
 - The other person is bad and wrong and we are good and right
 - Ignore the role you played in the problem - neglect what you did or did not do to contribute
 - We usually tell ourselves we had only noble motives
- Villain Stories - "It's all your fault."

- We place evil motives on the other party and tell others about these evils as if we are doing the world a huge favor
- We exaggerate our own innocence and overemphasize the other person's guilt
- We assume the worst possible motives while ignoring any possible good neutral intentions a person may have
- Helpless Stories - "There's nothing else I can do."
 - We make ourselves out to be powerless to do anything - we convince ourselves that there are no healthy alternatives for dealing with our predicament, which justifies the action we're about to take
 - We tell ourselves we cannot change our situation

Why do we tell these stories?

- They match reality
 - Sometimes the stories are accurate
- They get us off the hook
 - More often than not, our conclusions transform from reasonable explanations to clever stories when they conveniently excuse us from any responsibility - when in reality we have been partially responsible
- Keep us from acknowledging our own sellouts
 - By now it should be clear that clever stories cause us problems
 - We usually don't begin telling ourselves stories to justify our actions until we have done something that we need to justify

Tell the Rest of the Story

- Tell yourself a useful story
 - Clever stories are incomplete - they omit crucial information about us, about others, and about options
 - By including these stories can be transformed into useful ones
- A useful story creates emotions that lead to healthy action such as dialogue
 - Turn victims into actors
 - Am I pretending not to notice my role in the problem?
 - Doesn't mean you were malicious
 - By asking what role you've played, you begin to realize how selective your perception has been
 - Turn villains into humans
 - Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do what this person is doing?
 - As we search for answers our emotion soften - Empathy often replaces judgment
 - No excusing the other person's behavior - we are humanizing the actions to deal with our own stories and emotions - Work on ourselves first
 - Turn the helpless into the able
 - What do I really want? For me? For others? For the relationship?
 - Kill the Sucker's Choice that's made you feel helpless to choose anything other than silence or violence
 - What would I do right now if I really wanted these results?

***Video Example: Tell the rest of the story**

- What's Wrong with Them?
 - Scott and John have submitted a request to division engineering for a redesign. It's rejected.
 - What happens as they tell an ugly story?
 - What happens when they tell themselves the rest of the story?

Sharing Risky Meaning and Maintaining Safety

- Adding delicate, unattractive or controversial opinions to the pool is risky
 - The worst at dialogue either bluntly say everything or remain silent
 - The good at dialogue say some of what's on their minds but understate their views out of fear of hurting others
 - The best speak their minds completely and do it in a way that makes it safe for others to hear what they have to say and respond to it as well
- Maintain safety with:
 - Confidence
 - Confident that you can add to the pool without causing undue offense and that your opinions deserve to be placed in the pool
 - Humility
 - Realize others have invaluable input - Humble enough to realize you don't have an monopoly on the truth
 - Skill
 - Develop the skills needed to communicate the delicate information

STATE My Path

- **S**hare your facts: Start with the least controversial, most persuasive elements from your Path to Action
- **T**ell your story: Explain what you're beginning to conclude
- **A**sk for others' paths: Encourage others to share both their facts and their stories
- **T**alk tentatively: State your story as a story - don't disguise it as a fact
- **E**ncourage Testing: Make it safe for others to express differing or even opposing views

Share your facts

- Facts are the least controversial
 - Facts provide a safe beginning
 - Example: "Yesterday you arrive twenty minutes late for work."
- Facts are the most persuasive
 - More persuasive than subjective conclusions
 - Facts form the foundation of belief - don't start with stories
- Facts are the least insulting
 - Don't start with your story - if your story has an ugly ending it could kill safety in one rash, ill-conceived sentence
- Begin your path with the facts
 - In order to share your story you need to lead others down your path to action

Tell your story

- Risky, but important
 - Even when you start with the facts, the other person may still become defensive when you move from facts to stories
 - It is important to share the story because without the conclusion or judgment you created based on the facts it is unlikely the crucial conversation can be addressed
- It takes confidence
 - It takes confidence to share negative conclusions and unattractive judgments but if you have done the work to think through the facts and draw a reasonable, rationale decent conclusion (not an ugly story) it is important to share
- Don't pile it on
 - Sometimes we let things simmer for a long time and generate a whole list of unflattering conclusions
- Look for safety problems
 - If you notice people becoming defensive and safety becoming an issue, step out of the dialogue and rebuild using contrasting
- Use contrasting
 - Do/Don't - Not an apology

Ask for others' paths

- Ask others to share their views
 - The goal is to learn rather than be right
 - The goal is to make the best decision rather than get your way
- Be willing to abandon or reshape your story as more information is added

Talk tentatively

- Tell your story as a story rather than disguising it as a fact
 - Example: "I was wondering why..."
 - Example: "In my opinion..."
 - Blend of confidence and humility
- Trying to add to the pool not force
 - With both facts and stories, we're not absolutely certain they are true - our observations can be faulty and our stories are educated guesses
- Accurately portrays uncertain view
 - Makes it safe for others to offer other opinions
- Reduces defensiveness
 - One of the ironies of dialogue is that when we're shaping controversial ideas with potentially resistant people, the more forceful we are, the less persuasive we are
- Tentative is not wimpy
 - Don't make a Sucker's Choice - Don't act as if it is not important
 - It is one thing to be humble - don't be clinically uncertain
 - Example: "I know this is probably not true, but..."

Encourage testing

- Make it safe
 - Invite others to talk in a way that makes it clear that no matter how controversial their ideas, you want to hear them

- Invite opposing views
 - If you think others may be hesitant, make it clear that you want to hear their views - no matter their opinion
 - If what they have to say is controversial or even touchy, respect them for finding the courage to express what they are thinking
 - If they have different facts or stories, you need them to complete the picture
 - Example: “Does anyone see things differently?” or “I’d really like to hear the other sides of the story.”
- Mean it
 - Example of not meaning it: “That’s how I see it. Nobody disagrees do they?”
- Play devils advocate
 - Occasionally you can tell that others are not buying into your facts or stories, but they are not speaking up even with invitation
 - Model disagreeing by disagreeing with your own view

*Video Example: STATE my Path

- Quit Playing Hero!
 - Connie thinks that her husband Bruce is undercutting her with the children.
 - First she tells an ugly story, and then she tries to STATE her path.
 - What elements does she use?
 - How does this affect the conversation?

Explore Others’ Paths

- Get ready to listen
 - Be sincere
 - Be curious, not furious
 - Stay curious
 - When people begin to share their volatile stories and feelings, we now face the risk of pulling out our own Victim, Villain, and Helpless stories to help us explain why they are saying what they are saying - we assign negative motives
 - Give your brain a problem to stay focused on: “Why would a reasonable, rationale, and decent person say this?”
 - Be patient
 - When others are acting out their feelings and opinions through silence or violence - they start feeling the effects of adrenaline - it will take time for them to settle down
 - Be patient - wait for their emotions to catch up with the safety that you’ve created

AMMP

- **A**sk to get things rolling
 - The easiest and most straightforward way to encourage others to share their path to action is to invite them to share
- **M**irror to confirm feelings
 - Take the portion of the other person’s Path to Action we have access to and make it safe to discuss it
 - Hold up a mirror to the other person describing how they are acting or sounding

- Especially helpful when another person's tone of voice or gestures (hints about the emotions behind them) are inconsistent with their words
- Example: The person says "don't worry, I'm fine" but the tone of voice and gestures imply that the person is not okay
- Tone of voice is very important - we need to say we're okay with them feeling this way
- **Paraphrase** to acknowledge the story
 - Put the message in your own words - usually an abbreviated form
 - Don't push too hard
- **Prime** when you're getting nowhere
 - Pouring some of your best guesses into the pool about what the person is feeling or thinking

Remember your ABC's

- **A**gree
 - Agree when you do
 - Often people will agree with each other and still continuing arguing - violent agreement
 - Don't turn an agreement into an argument
- **B**uild
 - If others leave something out, agree where you do, then build
 - "Absolutely. In addition, I noticed that..."
 - If you agree with what has been said but the information is incomplete, build
- **C**ompare
 - When you do differ significantly compare your views
 - Compare your path with the other person's path
 - Rather than suggesting that he or she is wrong, suggest that you differ
 - He or she may, in fact, be wrong, but you don't know for sure until you hear both sides
 - Start with a tentative but candid opening such as "I think I see things differently. Let me describe how."

*Video Example: Explore Others' Paths

- The Car
 - Carol and Sam have been visiting with their friends. After their friends leave, Sam seems upset and Carol uses the AMPP skills to find out why.
 - [What skills does Carol use?](#)
 - [Do they work?](#)
 - [What was accomplished by exploring Sam's Path?](#)

Move to Action

- Dialogue is not decision making
- Riskiest times in crucial conversations
 - Beginning: creating safety
 - End: Clarifying conclusions & decisions
- Two potential areas of concern:
 - How will decisions be made?
 - People may not understand how decisions are going to be made

- Are we ever going to decide?
 - The second problem with the decision making occurs when no decision gets made
 - Either ideas slip away and dissipate or people can't figure out what to do with them
 - Or everyone is waiting for everyone else to make the decisions

The Four Methods of Decision Making

- **Command:** Decisions are made without involving others
 - Either outside forces place demands on us
 - Mandates, regulations and policies
 - We turn decisions over to others and follow their lead
 - Either that this is such a low-stakes issue that we don't care enough to take part or that we completely trust the ability of the delegate to make the right decision
- **Consult:** Input is gathered from the group and a subset decides
 - Decision makers invite others to influence them before they make their choice
 - You can consult with experts, a representative population, or even everyone who wants to offer an opinion
- **Vote:** An agreed-upon percentage swings the decision
 - Best suited to situations where efficiency is the highest value - and you're selecting from a number of good options
 - Members of the team realize they may not get their first choice, but frankly they don't want to waste time talking the issue to death
 - When facing several decent options voting is a great time saver
- **Consensus:** Everyone comes to an agreement & supports the final decision
 - You talk until everyone honestly agrees with one decision
 - Can bring tremendous unity and high quality decisions
 - Should be used with (1) high stakes and complex issues or (2) issues where everyone must support the final choice

How to Choose

- Who cares?
 - Determine who genuinely wants to be involved in the decision along with those who will be affected - these are your candidates for involvement
- Who knows?
 - Identify who has the expertise you need to make the best decision
- Who must agree?
 - Think of those whose cooperation you might need in the form of authority or influence in any decision
- How many people is it worth involving?
 - Your goal should be to involve the fewest number of people possible while still considering the quality of the decision along with the support that people will give it
 - Ask: "Do we have enough people to make a good choice?"
 - Ask: "Will others have to be involved to gain their commitment?"

***Video Example: Clarifying up Front**

- The Decision
 - Carl is about to consult with others in order to make an important decision.
 - How does he clarify the process?
 - Why is this clarification important?

Scenario #1: The Wedding

You are planning your wedding with your partner. You are extremely excited about the big day. You've always dreamed of a big wedding with all the perks. You want the event to be a big party that kicks off your new life.

Questions

1. What was difficult about this discussion?

2. What did you do to come to a decision?

Scenario #2: The Behavior Plan

You have come to an IEP meeting with your child's teacher. You are happy with the goals and objectives the team developed and feel your child is making good progress. The teacher told you before the meeting that they would also be discussing an FBA and Behavior Intervention Plan for your child's hitting. You know the team has been using time outs and you understand the need to keep other children safe. You are very hesitant to use any restraints. You have read that restraints are often ineffective and can lead to a situation where children become stronger and better able to get out of restraints. You also feel like there should be a positive approach to the intervention as well.

Questions

1. What strategies did you use during your crucial conversation?

2. What was the mutual purpose of your conversation?

3. What decision was made?

