

EDDP 705 Assignment 2.2

Crucial Conversations

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Description of the Situation

My crucial conversation was with my brother, David, who also works with me. Our family relationship can sometimes affect how we interact at work. Conversations about routine work issues sometimes become tense for reasons unrelated to work. Such interactions are distracting and reduce my ability to work efficiently and effectively. We had our crucial conversation in my office over lunch on a normal workday.

Choosing the Topic

During the conversation, I did not focus on a single incident. The topic I chose was our general failure to keep our work and family relationships separate during the workday (and the subsequent tense communication between us during ordinary work conversations). The problem was not a single disagreement or comment, but a series of them. Our relationship as brothers sometimes interferes with professional communication at work. However, after broaching the topic, I did provide one recent interaction as an example. The topic of tense communication during routine work conversations matters to me because the unresolved tension not only can affect me personally when at work, but can also undermine my credibility as a leader to others in my organization who witness the tension between David and me.

Starting With Heart

I clarified my intention to David at the start of the conversation because I wanted him to know from the outset that the topic was not only important to me professionally, but personally as well. I also clarified that I wanted him to feel respected and heard. I told him that my intention was not to win an argument but simply talk things out. I also started by telling him I respect him as a colleague and love him as a brother. I feel like Starting With Heart actually helped alleviate the tension that usually arises in our work communication.

Mastering My Stories

I thought ahead about the stories I told myself about the situation. I tried my hardest to be fair and separate facts from my own interpretations and biases. In so doing, I reminded myself that David does not intentionally create tension in the workplace. I feel like I remained master of my stories throughout the conversation. It seemed to me that David did, as well, perhaps because I had.

Learning to Look

During the conversation, I watched for any signs of discomfort in David's facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language. I did notice some changes in his tone and position in his chair. I could tell that he felt uncomfortable discussing our lack of boundaries between our family and work relationships. In response, I asked him what his views were and concluded that we are in agreement about the issue and about it needing to be resolved. I paused when tension rose. I checked for understanding. When I did so, his tone of voice changed, and his posture seemed to relax. I feel like Learning to Look helped keep the conversation on track and prevented the typical tension.

Making It Safe

To make David feel safe during our conversation, I stated clearly that my goal was improvement, not criticism. I also stated that I am an equal, if not greater, contributor to the problem. I emphasized our shared goals of effective work and mutual respect. I used the words "we" and "us" rather than "you" and "I." I acknowledged David's invaluable contributions at work, but not in a placating manner. The acknowledgement was organic during the conversation. He had to know I wasn't managing him, so he could be open and honest with me. I feel that Making it Safe kept David engaged and open during the discussion.

Stating My Path and Exploring Others' Paths

I stated my path by beginning with facts. I described specific situations without assigning blame. I explained why the communication pattern concerned me. I shared my perspective in a clear and direct way. I invited David to share his view. I listened carefully. I asked questions to understand his experience. I encouraged him to explain how he sees the situation. Exploring his path helped clarify where confusion and frustration occurred.

Retaking My Pen Using CURE

David basically agreed with me. I used each of the CURE tactics during the conversation, which seems to have precluded the need to Retake My Pen. David was a good listener and offered his own interpretations. Not once during the conversation did I feel we were getting near the tension that typically happens during our work conversations. CURE seems to have prevented the opportunity for me to interpret his words as confrontational, disrespectful, and so on.

Moving to Action

At the end of the conversation, we hugged it out. We also agreed to revisit this conversation, in the moment, if ever our work interactions become tense due to our relationship as brothers. So, our Move to Action was a plan to do so only if required.

Reflection on the Use of the Nine Principles

The nine principles resolved the problem that motivated the crucial conversation. The conversation stayed calm and productive. David responded openly and engaged with the process. Some principles felt more natural. Learn to Look and Make It Safe came easily. Start With Heart and Master My Stories required more effort, especially when emotions surfaced. I need to continue working on those skills. The conversation succeeded. We addressed a recurring issue

and agreed to revisit it if it arises again. I plan to continue using the Crucial Conversations model in my leadership role to address difficult conversations directly and constructively.