

Facilitating Discussion in a Challenging Environment

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The Challenge

Discerning the difference between tough politics and truly dysfunctional environments

“The secret to managing is to keep the guys who hate you away from those who are undecided”

-Casey Stengel

Just Three Things

- Know Yourself
(Self-Awareness)
- Know your Environment
(Situational Awareness)
- Know How to Act/React
(Emotional Awareness)

Know Yourself

“Self-Awareness”

Self-Awareness

- Sum total (thus far)
 - Setbacks, triumphs, family, school, jobs
- Style, Fears, Strengths
 - Charisma, conflict avoidance, blunt
- Peer group, therapy, 12-Step
 - Assessments

Know Your Environment

“Situational Awareness”

Difficult Political Environments

Difficult Political Environments

- Not tough politics
- Not personality conflicts
- Not a “divided Council/Board”
- Not just a problem between Mayor and Council or Council and Manager

We're Talkin' Dysfunction with A Capital "D"

Video clip

Tough Politics

- Characterized by **Rules** – explicit or implicit – but understood by all
- Relies on political process – wins by “**having the votes**”
- Can be emotional – but is **not personal** – respect remains intact
- **Playing to win** – pushing exclusive agenda, freezing out other side...

Tough Politics

- Maximizes **political advantage** – programs, personal profile, reelection
- Predictability, **consistency**, reliability
- Things **get done**

Dysfunctional

“... abnormal or impaired functioning, especially of a bodily system or social group.”

Dysfunctional

- Lack of **Respect**
- Lack of **Trust**
- No **Rules**
- **Unpredictable**, Unstable
- Lack of Progress / **No Progress**

Dysfunctional

- Not Getting **Critical Tasks** Accomplished
- **Not Making Decisions** Efficiently-or at All
- **Not Setting** or Following **Goals/Priorities**
- Divided Council/Board that **can't/won't agree**
- Council/Board **don't trust** each other & **disrespectful** to each other

Dysfunctional

- Council/Board not respectful to and **distrustful of staff**
- Community factions creating **continual roadblocks**/ discontent, attacking Council/staff
- **Manager attacked** / not trusted by Council faction
- Manager attacked by **community faction**

Summary

Tough

- Respect/Trust
- Political Process
- Rules
- Reliable
- Accomplishments
- Play to Win

Dysfunctional

- Disrespect/Distrust
- Disruption/Attacks
- Chaos
- Unpredictable
- No Decisions
- Play to Harm

“Blind Spot”

“ Not being aware of our ‘blind spot’ when driving can result in a nasty accident. Not being aware of our ‘political blind spot’ can result in a nasty accident for the City.”

The Seeds of Discontent

“Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.”

-Bill Gates

The Seeds of Discontent

- **A changing community**
 - Fast growth
 - Increasing racial and ethnic diversity
 - Immigration challenges
 - Deterioration—housing/commercial/infrastructure
 - Rising crime
 - Responses to crime (i.e. relationship between the police and citizens)
 - Increasing income gaps
 - Budget cuts/fiscal stress
 - Shifting expectations between government and its citizens
- **Cataclysmic community event**
 - Scandal
 - Industry closing/leaving

The Seeds of Discontent

- Major **political unrest** (throw the bums out)
- Existing projects/programs become **“unpopular”**
- Citizens - **“Not being heard”**
- **Powerful group**-unhappy

Warning Signs

- Formal **information requests** pile up
- “Citizens for Accountability” groups, “**secret meeting**” claims
- Council/Board focusing on **Parliamentary Procedure**
- **Internal groups align** with citizen group/Council faction
- **Letters to the Editor** or **social media** wars
- Metro or **statewide media** coverage

Video clip

Know How to Act/React

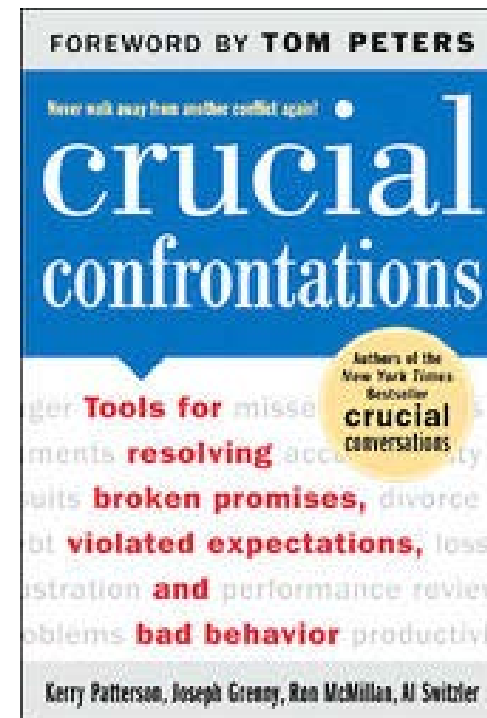
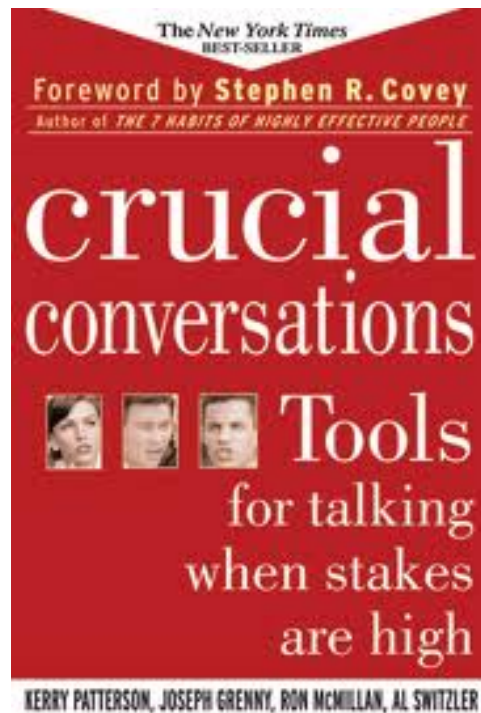
“Emotional Awareness”

“Would you rather be right—
or Effective?”

Emotional Awareness

- **Thick Skin**- it does a body (and soul) good
- **Humility**- if it's a foreign concept- be careful
- **Stress Reactions**- fight or flight?
- **Assessments**- EQI, Style types, etc.

Crucial Conversations/Confrontations



Crucial Conversations & Confrontations

- Communicating when the stakes are high
 - Shared pool of meaning
 - Identify what you want
 - Safety- Signs of Silence/Violence
 - Master your stories
 - State your Path
 - Your style under stress

It's Art AND Science

- **Know Yourself**
 - Cultivate deep self-knowledge
- **Know Your Situation**
 - Learn to recognize the warning signs
- **Know How to Act/React**
 - Practice/Master your approaches

“If absolute power corrupts absolutely, does absolute powerlessness make you pure?”

-Harry Shearer

Questions/Comments?

Additional Information...





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