



# Difficult Conversations

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- How do you define a difficult conversation?
    - Day to day conversations which affect the life of your trainee or you.



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**How many of you have had a difficult conversation with someone?**

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.


# What are some difficult conversations

- Remedial
- Performance issues
- Termination
- Personal issues
- Financial
- Health
- Relationship issues

- Generational issues
- Death of a fellow officer
- Thoughts of suicide
  - Know your department resources
- And sometimes, LIFE IS HARD

- What makes the conversations difficult?
  - Emotions are high
  - Stakes are high
  - Opinions vary
  - You have never had a difficult conversation with anyone





Human nature is to back away from these conversations. But, as trainers, leaders, FTO's you do NOT have that luxury.

Since we can't avoid them....

- We try to avoid or passively address.
- We handle them poorly.
- We can face them and handle them well.

They are uncomfortable.....

- How do we get better?
- Remember the tremendous power of our words.
  - Think before you speak
  - Take a moment to gather your thoughts
- Depending on how your trainee is doing, every conversation may be taken as critical or difficult.
  - You suggest ways to improve—trainee- Oh my God I am failing
  - You walk away to take a private phone call---Trainee- They are talking to their supervisor about my performance.

- As leaders, you already possess the ability to influence the behavior of others (leadership)
  - In difficult conversations you must navigate emotions and get the relevant information out in the open

Core of every successful conversation



- You must have a working rapport with your trainee.
- The trainee must TRUST you enough to tell you they are having issues.
  - If the trainee does not believe you have their best interest at heart, they will not bring their issues to you.
    - You will have a one-way conversation and never establish a dialogue.

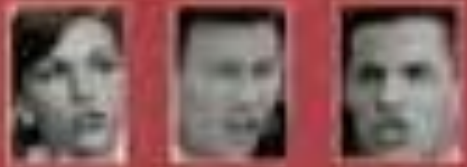
- Create an environment that is open for conversation
  - Eliminate as many distractions as possible
    - PUT YOUR PHONE AWAY
    - Step outside of the patrol car
    - Use an office if possible
- A trainee views you as an authority figure...they must feel safe enough to talk to you about issues/emotions.
  - A free flow of communication



Foreword by Stephen R. Covey

Author of *THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE*

# crucial conversations



Tools  
for talking  
when stakes  
are high

- Free flow of information- What could happen if this is absent?
- A young lady checks into a hospital for a tonsillectomy. The surgeon erroneously removed part of her foot.
- 7 of the 10 staff in the operating room knew the surgeon should not be removing part of her foot but the environment was such they were scared to speak up.

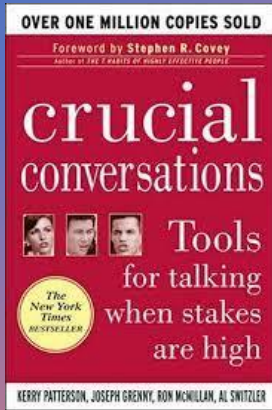
- Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2002). *Crucial conversations*. McGraw-Hill Contemporary.

- Pilots in the cockpit<sub>1</sub>
  - Analysis of “black box” interactions in the cockpit between senior captains and junior pilots.
    - Found repeated instances of junior pilots “trying” to bring issues to the captain's attention to no avail
    - Senior captains ignored them

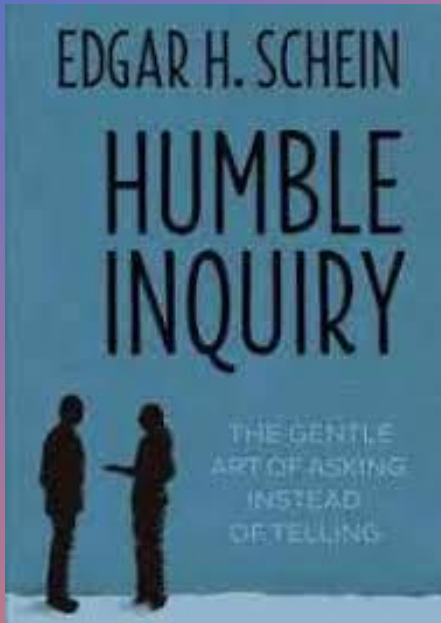
- <sub>1</sub>British Journal of Anaesthesia, 2019. Challenging authority and speaking up. Pattni, Arzola, Malavade, Varmani, Friedman.



- A magic potion to make these conversations easier does not exist.
- They do not get easier with time. Once you have enough of the facts/data then it is time to have a conversation.
- Suggestions:
  - Practice active listening
  - Remove distractions
  - Be honest, and admit if you were wrong
  - Empathy-
  - Be mindful of emotions/opinions/biases
  - Don't argue- use facts instead



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- Resources:
- Sources I used to prepare this presentation.
- There are numerous resources available to you.

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- Thank you.....
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