



USE CPR TO Start the Right Conversation

Engaging in a conversation to address a concern doesn't always go as planned.

Have you ever tried to raise an issue with a colleague and walked away thinking ...

- Oof, that just made our relationship even worse.
- That felt like groundhog day. I'm having the conversation over and over.
- It feels like we had part of the conversation, but didn't get to where we need to go.
- I should've said / I wish I had...

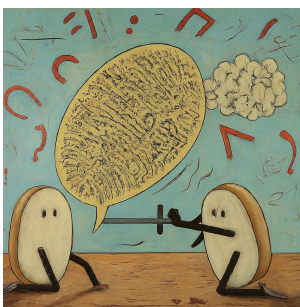
Maybe you avoid the conversation altogether because you don't know where to start?

Or you think to yourself "it is just the way it is," "isn't a big deal," or you can "work around it?"

Unbundle with CPR

If you identified with any of the above, you are not alone. If you want to feel heard and confident behaviors will change and your relationships will improve, use the CPR method.

CPR is a framework developed by Crucial Learning, authors of [Crucial Conversations for Accountability](#). It addresses the key question "Where do I best start the conversation in order to have the most optimal outcome?" Crucial Learning says there are three layers:



- Content** The problem is a single instance you are experiencing
- Pattern** The problem is recurring - addressing the pattern is important if:
 - 1) your actual concern is the pattern and not the single instance and/or
 - 2) you've addressed the single instance previously and see a trend.
- Relationship** You've given feedback on the content and the pattern and now the problem is affecting your working relationship (trust, respect, sense of competence)

Meet Taylor

Let's explore CPR by grounding in an example: Taylor is growing frustrated that their peer, Jordan, doesn't prepare for their 1:1 meetings. Taylor is always the one filling out their meeting agenda early and flagging it is ready for review. Jordan often doesn't bring any topics at all and when they do, no context is provided. This leads to their meetings running over the allotted time, and spending time explaining the context versus collaborating on solutions. Taylor feels Jordan doesn't their time, so they want to offer Jordan some feedback:

Here's how that feedback can look depending on what element of CPR Taylor uses:

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| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Content | “I haven’t received your agenda items for our 1:1 meeting.” |
| Pattern | “There have been several instances this quarter where you did not prepare for our meeting.” |
| Relationship | “I don’t think you respect me nor value my time.” |

Having the right altitude of conversation is crucial to its success.

Taylor has experienced a long pattern of Jordan being unprepared for their meetings. If they just raise the most recent meeting (Content), the conversation may devolve into a debate about the circumstances of a specific instance. Jordan might say “I submitted it 4 hours earlier which should have been fine”, or “I wasn’t able to submit the agenda because my grandmother is in the hospital” Either way, they are missing the big picture because it’s not really about this single instance.

If Taylor jumps straight to “I feel disrespected” (Relationship), it may escalate the dialogue prematurely and feel overblown if Jordan isn’t even aware they are missing expectations. So where do you start?

Start with reflection.

Below are a few reflection questions to help you distinguish which of the three in CPR is at play so you know where you should start your conversation.

1. Ask yourself, “What do I really want?” – It’s important to know what outcome you want to achieve before having the conversation.
2. Determine which element of CPR to use:
 - a. Is this the first time the issue happened? → Content
 - b. Is the issue a pattern of behavior over time? → Pattern
 - c. Have I shared feedback on the Content and/or the Pattern?
 - i. If yes, share the impact on your relationship. → Relationship
 - ii. If no, start by sharing the Content OR Pattern first. → Content or Pattern

Fundamental concepts to internalize as you implement this framework.

1. **These feedback conversations should be sequential.** For example, Taylor should not jump to a Relationship conversation about their lack of trust in Jordan if they have not mentioned anything the prior times they showed up unprepared.
2. But, presuming some of that foundation is there, **have the highest level conversations available to you at that time.** If you know it has been an issue twice before, it may be time to discuss the Pattern. And if you have discussed the Pattern and nothing has changed, it may be time to raise that it is affecting their credibility, or others’ views of their leadership.
3. **Be aware that people may try to pull you back to the Content.** For example, Jordan might argue the merits of

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why they didn't prepare for the most recent meeting rather than acknowledge the pattern). **Don't take the bait!**

For Further Support

Reach out to us [here](#) if you'd like to speak with one of our coaches or consultants about a feedback conversation. We'd love to hear from you!

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