

crucial
conversations®

A PERSONAL SUCCESS STORY

Strengthening Family Ties with Crucial Conversations



“The process brought out in Crucial Conversations works—even when the wounds are as deep as mine.”

Kathy Williams-Palmer, Garland, Texas

My mother and I had a horrible relationship for years. As a child, I had endured a long period of sexual abuse by a close family member. It wasn't until my late twenties that I finally imploded, began working to heal the wounds, and spoke out. My mother would not acknowledge the abuse even though I reminded her of times when she and my father walked in on incidents and times when I had complained as a child. My father apologized for turning a blind eye, but my mother and I fought and argued for years until the day of our crucial conversation.



About VitalSmarts

An innovator in corporate training and organizational performance, VitalSmarts helps teams and organizations achieve the results they care about most.

With award-winning training products based on more than twenty-five years of ongoing research, VitalSmarts has helped more than three hundred of the Fortune 500 realize significant results using a proven method for driving rapid, sustainable, and measurable change in behaviors. VitalSmarts has been ranked twice by Inc. magazine as one of the fastest growing companies in America and has trained more than 500,000 people worldwide.

VitalSmarts is home to Crucial Conversations® and Crucial Confrontations™ Training—powerful tools that build teams, enrich relationships and improve end results. VitalSmarts has two New York Times bestselling books of the same titles, Crucial Conversations and Crucial Confrontations. VitalSmarts also offers keynote speaking, on-site consulting, and executive team development.
www.vital-smarts.com

As I began to heal, I wanted my mother to acknowledge the past abuses that had occurred, but she lived in denial. For years, my emotions ran high every time I visited for family functions. We argued over insignificant topics, retreated into silence often, and even became physically ill. Mother visited the emergency room for chest pains, while I was continually sick with colds and depression.

One day I experienced an epiphany: I couldn't change my mother, I could only change myself. I realized if my mother and I began to treat each other based on today's actions and stopped worrying about changing the past, we would both be able to love each other easier.

After much contemplation and work, I eventually let go of thinking I would be less than whole if I did not have the type of mother-daughter relationship characterized by spending time together lunching or shopping, calling the other person just to talk, or sharing feelings, wishes, and opinions on a personal level.

Though we couldn't enjoy a traditional mother-daughter relationship, I realized I could be the best daughter I'm capable of being. What I really wanted was a decent relationship with her, where I could attend family functions without becoming upset and could ask her

how she is doing and be a part of her life. I was tired of living the fight. I surrendered.

I had the crucial conversation all worked out beforehand. I went to her house. I told my mother that I had a problem with our relationship, stated what I wanted, and kept it safe. I didn't want to fight anymore. I told her what I really wanted—a decent relationship. I then asked her what she thought. She closed her mouth, stood up, and hugged me. She wouldn't let go for a long time. Tears flowed.

Now that almost five years have past, our relationship works. We don't talk often, but I'm willing to help when she asks. Now I show up to family functions and leave without incident. I don't get sick before I have to see her and suffer days of depression after. When an issue arises, I deal with it in the moment—confidently and candidly. The process brought out in *Crucial Conversations*

works—even when the wounds are as deep as mine. Our relationship works now, and that's the best present I could ever give myself or my mother.

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