



crucial  
conversations®

A PERSONAL SUCCESS STORY

## How Do You Spell R-E-S-P-E-C-T?

"I have  
continued  
to hold my  
position



respectfully and firmly."

– **Lisa Salmon**, Leichhardt, Australia

**O**n Saturdays, I teach primary-aged children English. I almost quit this job because, each week, the school Headmaster would storm into my class, scream at the kids, and disrupt my lesson. This behavior bothered me; I was angry and upset, as were the kids. However, I was scared to say anything because he was my boss. I was a new teacher and I figured he had the right—after all, he was the Headmaster.

Still, his actions continued to bother me. I had put in time and effort to develop trust within my class

and as a result, students were learning and engaging with the material. His behavior was upsetting them and me and undermining my hard work. So I decided to try to address the situation.

**“I realized it was my responsibility to create and protect an environment where kids feel safe. I liked my job and I deserved respect and autonomy.”**

— Lisa Salmon

Initially I thought, *Well, I will march into the Headmaster's office and let him know exactly how I feel and he will see the error of his ways. Problem solved.*

Fortunately, I had the insight that villainizing him was probably only going to inflame an already volatile situation. So, I picked up my Crucial Conversations notes for guidance. I had experienced both “silence”—wanting to quit and

feeling powerless to say anything—and “violence”—thinking that telling him exactly what his errors were would resolve the issue. I realized I needed to explore a mature way to deal with the situation.

I asked myself, “Why would a decent, rational human being act this way?” Maybe he believes intimidating children and generating fear is the way a teacher is supposed to behave. Or perhaps he is stressed and does not realize the implications of his behavior.

I realized he had employed me as a qualified teacher and should respect me for my time and efforts. I also realized it was my responsibility to create and protect an environment where kids feel safe in order to carry out the purpose for which he had hired me. I liked my job and I deserved respect and autonomy.

So, I positioned myself near the door and when he came in ready to do his thing I stopped him and said, “I realize you want to speak with the children; please wait until the end of the lesson.” I was firm, clear, and respectful. He said, “Ah, sure,” and left without further ado! When he

returned to give his announcement he did so with a soft and respectful voice. There was an instant change.

In the last six months, I have continued to hold my position respectfully and firmly. He appreciates the control I have of my environment and he understands I respect him but I do not want him to interrupt my class. I did not fight him or try to convince him, I simply and clearly asked for respect.

Last Saturday, he entered my classroom. I saw no animosity or anger in him toward the students or me. One of the students asked for his help and he was kind, gentle and welcoming toward the child. He played with him! The Headmaster laughed! This turnaround is far more than I could have hoped for and is truly worth celebrating.

### **About Crucial Conversations**

*Whenever you're not getting the results you're looking for, it's likely that a crucial conversation is keeping you stuck. Whether it's a problem with poor quality, slow time-to-market, declining customer satisfaction, or a strained relationship, if you can't talk honestly, you can expect poor results.*

*This award-winning training infuses classroom time with original video clips and examples. Course pacing is active and engaging, with structured rehearsals and intense class participation. The Crucial Conversations course delivers a powerful set of influence tools that builds teams, enriches relationships, and improves end results. Participants acquire the skills that help them step up to and handle high-stakes issues.*