



Open the Door

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS



“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

—George Bernard Shaw

Throughout our conversation series, we’ve explored various topics where wealth, family, and longevity intersect. From breaking the silence around money to decluttering your financial life, each article has encouraged you to engage in meaningful dialogue—with both yourself and your loved ones. Now, we’re inviting you to take the next step: opening the door to crucial conversations that can shape your financial and personal future.

Initiating these discussions can feel overwhelming, but they are essential for achieving mutual clarity and understanding about our goals, desires, and intentions around both personal and financial matters. Addressing subjects such as the future of family assets or the inevitable transitions of aging can help set a clear path forward for you and those around you. Our team understands the importance of these conversations and is here to help you navigate them with clarity and confidence.

Getting Ready for Important Discussions

Preparing for these conversations can feel like navigating uncharted waters, but with the right approach, they can lead to meaningful connections and clearer paths forward. Before diving in, consider questions like: “What are the most important things I need to address? Who should be involved? How can I make this discussion productive?” Thinking these through can help you approach these discussions with a calm and focused mindset, allowing for more open and honest exchanges about sensitive topics.

According to insights from the book *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, there are several strategies to help you communicate effectively when it matters most:

01 | START WITH SELF-REFLECTION

Take a moment to check in with yourself before engaging others. Reflect on your own intentions and emotional state. Are you ready to truly listen and consider different viewpoints, or are you more focused on getting your own points across? How do you feel about initiating conversations around specific topics that you may be avoiding? Are there emotions or concerns that are making it difficult to start these discussions? How you begin the discussion will greatly affect its tone.

02 | ENGAGE IN ACTIVE LISTENING

Effective communication is as much about listening as it is about talking. Try using phrases like “I hear you saying...is that right?” to show you’re genuinely interested in understanding the other person’s perspective. This not only helps clear up any misunderstandings but also shows respect and a willingness to engage in a two-way dialogue. People often react to what they think your intentions are, not just your words.

03 | CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

It’s crucial to make sure everyone feels safe sharing their thoughts and feelings. Clearly communicate your intentions and the purpose of the conversation, apologize when necessary, and strive for mutual understanding. This can help reduce defensiveness and keep the discussion focused.

04 | BE AWARE OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Pay attention to your body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. These non-verbal signals can communicate just as much as your words—sometimes even more. Be mindful of these non-verbal cues, as they can either strengthen or weaken your message.

05 | CHOOSE YOUR WORDS THOUGHTFULLY

The language you use can either open up a discussion or shut it down. Aim to use words that are inclusive and show empathy, rather those that might be perceived as accusatory, confrontational, or judgmental.

06 | SET CLEAR GOALS

Have a clear purpose and goals for the conversation. Sharing these with others can help keep the dialogue focused and ensure everyone understands what you hope to achieve.



Real-Life Examples of Crucial Conversations in Financial and Estate Planning

Engaging in meaningful discussions about financial and estate planning can be challenging, but with the right support, these conversations can lead to greater clarity and stronger family bonds. We can provide a comfortable, reassuring environment where delicate topics can be addressed openly and thoughtfully, allowing each family member to express their views. Our collaborative, proactive, well-structured approach to these sensitive discussions can introduce a sense of control and comfort to clients in areas that may have previously felt uncertain or overwhelming.

Here are some common scenarios where we help clients navigate crucial conversations with ease and understanding.

DISCUSSING ESTATE PLANS.

As we get older, having open and clear discussions about estate planning becomes increasingly important. This process often involves deciding who will manage finances, how assets will be distributed, or who will make healthcare decisions if the need arises.

EXAMPLE: We recently worked with a family to organize a thoughtful meeting where they could talk through the distribution of property, heirlooms, and investments, as well as outline their healthcare preferences. Our careful, collaborative planning and facilitation helped each person feel heard and respected, minimizing the potential for future conflicts or misunderstandings.

PLANNING FOR LONG-TERM CARE.

Addressing the potential need for long-term care can be an emotional topic, as it involves planning for future health and potential dependency. We help our clients navigate these conversations with clarity and awareness.

EXAMPLE: A couple reached out to us for assistance in discussing their long-term care preferences with their children. Unsure how to start the conversation about the realities of assisted living versus in-home care, they appreciated our structured yet approachable setting. By guiding the discussion and focusing on their specific needs and financial preparedness, we helped the family engage in an honest conversation that was both reassuring and practical, helping them come to a shared understanding without feeling overwhelmed.

SETTING FINANCIAL BOUNDARIES WITH ADULT CHILDREN.

Establishing financial boundaries with adult children can be challenging, especially when parents want to provide support without jeopardizing their own financial stability. Our deep knowledge of family dynamics and financial planning can help steer these discussions in a way that is constructive and positive.

EXAMPLE: One family came to us for guidance on how to talk to their son about his reliance on their financial support. We worked with the parents to clearly outline their retirement goals and express their desire for their son to become financially independent, communicating their willingness to support him in ways that would help foster responsibility. Our approach created an environment where all parties could speak openly, leading to mutual respect and clear expectations.

PREPARING FOR BUSINESS SUCCESSION.

For business owners, succession planning is a complex topic that requires balancing personal and professional considerations. We offer comprehensive support in these discussions, drawing on years of experience in business and financial planning.

EXAMPLE: We recently helped a client prepare for a family meeting to discuss the future of their business. By providing detailed scenarios and explaining the financial and emotional implications of various options—whether passing the business onto the next generation or considering an external sale—we helped facilitate a constructive, insightful conversation. Each family member was able to voice their concerns and hopes, leading to a decision that respected both the family's legacy and the future of the business.

By involving our team as a trusted advisor, these families were able to approach crucial conversations with confidence and ease, which ultimately allowed them to make informed decisions that aligned with their values and goals.





START TODAY

Discussing sensitive topics around the intersection of wealth, family, and longevity is essential for clear communication and understanding. The earlier you start these conversations, the better equipped everyone will be to handle potential changes or challenges. By using supportive, open-ended questions and fostering a safe environment, you and your family can participate in these discussions with empathy and confidence.

Remember, you don't have to navigate these conversations alone—we are here to support you every step of the way.





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