

**The Seven Crucial Conversations in Healthcare™**

We encourage you to insert these questions into your existing employee engagement and employee satisfaction surveys. As a condition of use, please reference VitalSmarts when you use these questions and include the trademark symbol when you use the phrase, "The Seven Crucial Conversations in Healthcare™."

**15-Question 10-Minute, Mission Possible Crucial Conversations Survey**

**This survey is designed to help us track our progress in making crucial conversations safer, easier, and more effective. This survey is anonymous and confidential. You will not be identified, and your individual responses will not be shared with anyone.**

**1. Your Level in the Organization**

- First-level employee--no direct reports
- First-level supervisor--supervise first-level employees
- Second-level supervisor/manager--supervise first-level supervisors
- Above second-level supervisor/manager
- Other

**2. Your Profession**

- Nurse
- Physician
- Resident
- Medical Student
- Other Clinical Care Provider, including all types of Imaging Technologist and Tech Assistant
- Administration
- Other, including Secretarial, Administrative Assistant and Administrative Support

**3. This hospital is a good place to work.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

**4. I have more energy, effort, and creativity to offer than I am currently invited or allowed to give.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

**5. Compared to the best in the nation, how productive is your department or unit?**

- Not Applicable
- Below Average in Productivity
- Average in Productivity
- Above Average in Productivity
- Among the best in the nation in Productivity

**6. Compared to the best in the nation, how well does your department or unit do on quality and patient safety?**

- Not Applicable
- Below Average Quality and Safety
- Average Quality and Safety
- Above Average Quality and Safety
- Among the best in the nation in Quality and Safety

**7. If I was offered a similar position elsewhere for similar pay, I would leave this hospital.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***This next section asks about seven problems common within hospitals. We want to know how many people who work in your unit or area show signs of these problems.***

**8a. How frequently do you see someone take a shortcut that could be dangerous for patients (for example, not washing hands long enough, not changing gloves when appropriate, failing to check armbands, forgetting to perform a safety check)?**

- Never
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

**8b. Think of the most recent times you've seen this happen. Who have you spoken with about the problem.**

**Check each box that applies:**

- Have not spoken with anyone.
- Have spoken with friends and family.
- Have spoken with some of my co-workers.
- Have spoken with my manager.
- Have spoken with HR, Q/A, or another relevant department.
- Have spoken to the person but probably didn't completely express my concerns.
- Have spoken to the person and completely expressed my concerns.

**9a. How frequently do you see a situation where someone might be making a mistake when doing an assessment, doing triage, diagnosing, suggesting treatment/medication options, or performing a procedure?**

- Never
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

**9b. Think of the most recent times you've seen this happen. Who have you spoken with about the problem. Check each box that applies:**

- Have not spoken with anyone.
- Have spoken with friends and family.
- Have spoken with some of my co-workers.
- Have spoken with my manager.
- Have spoken with HR, Q/A, or another relevant department.
- Have spoken to the person but probably didn't completely express my concerns.
- Have spoken to the person and completely expressed my concerns.

**10a. How frequently do you see someone show poor initiative--not look for opportunities to help, not do their fair share of the work, or complain when they are asked to pitch in by a peer?**

- Never
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

**10b. Think of the most recent times you've seen this happen. Who have you spoken with about the problem. Check each box that applies:**

- Have not spoken with anyone.
- Have spoken with friends and family.
- Have spoken with some of my co-workers.
- Have spoken with my manager.
- Have spoken with HR, Q/A, or another relevant department.
- Have spoken to the person but probably didn't completely express my concerns.
- Have spoken to the person and completely expressed my concerns.

**11a. How frequently do you see something that makes you concerned about someone's competency. For example make you concerned they aren't up-to-date on a procedure, protocol, medication, or practice or they are lacking basic competencies?**

- Never
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Monthly

- Weekly
- Daily

**11b. Think of the most recent times you've seen this happen. Who have you spoken with about the problem. Check each box that applies:**

- Have not spoken with anyone.
- Have spoken with friends and family.
- Have spoken with some of my co-workers.
- Have spoken with my manager.
- Have spoken with HR, Q/A, or another relevant department.
- Have spoken to the person but probably didn't completely express my concerns.
- Have spoken to the person and completely expressed my concerns.

**12a. How frequently do you see someone demonstrate poor teamwork. For example, gossip, spread rumors, talk behind people's backs, use the "silent treatment," give the "cold shoulder" to teammates, make themselves look good at others' expense, or are part of a clique that divides the team?**

- Never
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

**12b. Think of the most recent times you've seen this happen. Who have you spoken with about the problem. Check each box that applies:**

- Have not spoken with anyone.
- Have spoken with friends and family.
- Have spoken with some of my co-workers.
- Have spoken with my manager.
- Have spoken with HR, Q/A, or another relevant department.
- Have spoken to the person but probably didn't completely express my concerns.
- Have spoken to the person and completely expressed my concerns.

**13a. How frequently do you see someone act disrespectful. For example, act condescending, insulting, or rude—or yell, shout, swear, or name call?**

- Never
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

**13b. Think of the most recent times you've seen this happen. Who have you spoken with about the problem. Check each box that applies:**

- Have not spoken with anyone.
- Have spoken with friends and family.
- Have spoken with some of my co-workers.
- Have spoken with my manager.
- Have spoken with HR, Q/A, or another relevant department.
- Have spoken to the person but probably didn't completely express my concerns.
- Have spoken to the person and completely expressed my concerns.

**14a. How frequently do you see someone micromanage too much or abuse their authority. For example, tell people how to do their jobs, pull rank, bully, threaten, or force their point of view on others?**

- Never
- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

**14b. Think of the most recent times you've seen this happen. Who have you spoken with about the problem. Check each box that applies:**

- Have not spoken with anyone.
- Have spoken with friends and family.
- Have spoken with some of my co-workers.
- Have spoken with my manager.
- Have spoken with HR, Q/A, or another relevant department.
- Have spoken to the person but probably didn't completely express my concerns.
- Have spoken to the person and completely expressed my concerns.

**15. Overall, how difficult is it to confront a person who is demonstrating incompetence, undercutting the team, or showing disrespect?**

- Not Applicable.** I never see people exhibit these problems.
- Extremely Difficult.** He/She might not listen to me, and there is a good chance of retaliation or damage to our working relationship.
- Very Difficult.** He/She will listen and respond in the short term, but there is a good chance of retaliation or damage to our working relationship.
- Difficult.** He/She will listen and respond in the short term, and it won't cause retaliation or hurt our working relationship. However, he/she will backslide and start exhibiting the problem again.
- Somewhat Easy.** I have to think carefully about what to say, but he/she will listen and stop exhibiting the problem and confronting him/her won't cause retaliation or damage our working relationships.
- Very Easy.** I can easily discuss the issue in a way that stops the person from exhibiting the problem (both in the short term and long term) while also building a better working relationship with him/her.

**Thank you for completing this confidential survey. Now, please place your survey in the box/ place indicated, to ensure your opinions and experience enable us to become better at holding Crucial Conversations**

# Instructions

## ***Step 1: Select Units for Survey***

When first using the Seven Crucial Conversations Survey, you may want to survey the staff on just one or two pilot units, rather than the entire organization. This will help you learn how to use the survey, interpret the results, and test changes on a small scale first to see if they result in an improvement. Select pilot units that are already testing changes to improve communication, patient safety, or engagement, and measure the Seven Crucial Conversations there over time to assess the impact of the changes.

## ***Step 2: Identify Staff to Participate in the Survey***

The Crucial Conversations in a patient care unit are affected by and experienced by everyone who works on that unit. This includes employees from various disciplines who may be frequently assigned to that unit, such as pharmacists, respiratory therapists, and dieticians. It also includes physicians who frequently care for patients on that unit, whether they are employees, members of a voluntary medical staff, or participants in teaching programs. All individuals who regularly work on or are assigned to the patient care unit should be included in the survey.

### **Here are some general guidelines for determining which staff members to include:**

Select staff members who regularly work at least 20 hours per week on that unit. Do not include staff members who work there only occasionally.

Select staff members from other departments who are assigned either primarily to that unit or who are assigned there at least three days per week.

Select physicians who treat, on average, at least three patients per week on the unit. If there are many physicians in this category, as may be the case on large units, consider including the 10 or 20 physicians who treat the most patients on the unit.

Make sure all survey participants (staff and physicians) have worked in the unit for at least six weeks.

## ***Step 3: Number and Track the Surveys***

Print one survey form for each person to be surveyed. Preserving anonymity is essential with surveys, but it is helpful to number and group the surveys in order to compare responses between disciplines. Here are some suggestions for numbering the surveys:

Develop a numbering system so you can track the results. You may want your tracking number to incorporate the month and year of the survey, which will be helpful in keeping data organized if you conduct the survey multiple times.

Don't use codes that obviously identify the units or disciplines (e.g., "RN100" or "MD310"), as people may fear being identified. 4

### **Example of numbering surveys:**

Suppose ABC Hospital is conducting the Seven Crucial Conversations Survey on one patient care unit. Using the criteria described in Step 2 above, the hospital determined that the unit required 120 surveys. The hospital is conducting the survey in October 2005, so the surveys are numbered sequentially as 1005-001 through 1005-120. The ranges of the surveys are as follows:

1005-001 through 1005-050 Nurses

1005-051 through 1005-065 Physicians

1005-066 through 1005-070 Pharmacists

1005-071 through 1005-075 Respiratory Therapists

1005-076 through 1005-080 Dieticians

1005-081 through 1005-090 Case Managers and Social Workers

1005-091 through 1005-115 Unit Clerks and Nursing Aides

1005-116 through 1005-120 Physical, Occupational, and Speech Therapists

If you use a numbering system with ranges like the ones above, don't write down anywhere which survey number corresponds with each staff member. That would eliminate anonymity and risk compromising the results. Just be sure to give each participant a survey from the range that corresponds to his or her job.

### ***Step 4: Track Response Rates***

A good response rate is essential for meaningful results. It is recommended that you have a response rate of at least 65 percent before analyzing and using the results. If you use a numbering system with ranges, you can see which disciplines have returned surveys. Explaining the survey's purpose and analysis methods before you distribute the surveys may help you achieve a high response rate.

Use the ranges from the numbering system to keep track of how many people in each job category return a survey. This will help ensure that the same numbers of people are re-surveyed in each category in the future (and will help you compensate for respondent attrition as people leave the organization). For example, if 12 physicians and three pharmacists respond to the first survey, you will want to get roughly the same number of responses from each in future surveys.

**Note:** If conducting the survey in more than one unit, the response rate must be at least 65 percent *for each individual unit*. In order to accurately assess Seven Crucial Conversations in a unit, a significant number of personnel must respond. It is not recommended that response rates be aggregated.

### ***Step 5: Calculate Results***

You can calculate three scores: **Frequency of Problems**, the **Seven Crucial Conversations**, and **Difficulty of Confronting Problems** by following these steps:

To calculate the **Frequency of Problems** assign a numeric value to the response to questions 8a, 9a, 10a, 11a, 12a, 13a, and 14a. These values should be:

- Never = 1
- Once a year = 2
- Twice a year = 3
- Monthly = 4
- Weekly = 5
- Daily = 6
- No Response = No Score

To calculate the mean for **Frequency of Problems**:

1. Add the scores from questions 8a, 9a, 10a, 11a, 12a, 13a, and 14a.
2. Divide the total by the number of questions answered. If any questions were left blank, do not count them in the denominator.
3. The result is the Overall Mean for that individual respondent and will be between 1 and 6.
4. Add the means for **Frequency of Problems** from all surveys returned and divide by the number of respondents. This provides the overall mean **Frequency of Problems** for the group, which will also be between 1 and 6.

To calculate the **Seven Crucial Conversations** assign a numeric value to the final response on questions 8b, 9b, 10b, 11b, 12b, 13b, and 14b. This final question reads, "Have spoken to the person and completely expressed my concerns." If this question is checked, assign it a 1. If it is not checked, assign it a 0.

To calculate the mean for the **Seven Crucial Conversations**:

1. Add the ones and zeros from the final response on questions 8b, 9b, 10b, 11b, 12b, 13b, and 14b.
2. Divide the total by the number of questions answered. If any questions were left entirely blank—meaning that the person failed to check any of the boxes at all, then do not count them in the denominator.
3. The result is the overall mean on the **Seven Crucial Conversations** for that individual respondent and will be between 0 and 1.
4. Add the means for the **Seven Crucial Conversations** from all surveys returned and divide by the number of respondents. This provides the overall mean for the group on the **Seven Crucial Conversations**. This score will also be between 0 and 1.

To calculate the **Difficulty of Confronting Problems** assign a numeric value to the response to question 15. These values should be:

Not Applicable = No Score  
Extremely Difficult = 1  
Very Difficult = 2  
Difficult = 3  
Somewhat Easy = 4  
Very Easy = 5  
No Response = No Score

The individual's score will be between 1 and 5.

To calculate the mean for **Difficulty of Confronting Problems**:

1. Add the score for **Difficulty of Confronting Problems** from all surveys returned and divide by the number of respondents. This provides the overall mean **Difficulty of Confronting Problems** for the group, which will also be between 1 and 5.

## ***Step 6: Monitor the Results Over Time***

The three results that should be tracked over time are the overall means for **Frequency of Problems**, the **Seven Crucial Conversations**, and **Difficulty of Confronting Problems**. The mean scores for individual questions can help you analyze the areas of your organization that need improvement. It may also be helpful to compare results across disciplines or from different units.

## ***Step 7: Conduct Repeat Surveys***

Remember that changing the climate of an organization takes time. Survey often enough to keep the issues in front of the management team, but not so often that staff members become desensitized to the process. A good plan might be to obtain a baseline measure, and then conduct follow-up surveys on a quarterly basis.