

Talking to the **most important people** about the **most important things** in our lives.

Families are complicated. Conversations may involve step-children, in-laws, or someone with drug or alcohol or other mental health issues. Deciding who to include in an Essential Conversation is important. You do not need to talk to everyone at once. It may be best to speak to the person who is most receptive first. Do what is best for your family.

This Essential Conversations process helps bring families together:

 <p><b>Focus the conversation</b></p>	 <p><b>Share information</b></p>	 <p><b>Allow people to react, respond, ask questions</b></p>	 <p><b>Create a to-do list</b></p>	 <p><b>Schedule a follow-up conversation</b></p>
<p>Have an agenda or list of topics to be covered.</p> <p>Determine what specifically needs to be accomplished.</p> <p>If other issues arise during the discussion, make a list of these and set another time to discuss them.</p>	<p>Share as much information as you can about the main topic(s).</p> <p>Start by saying why this is important to you and what you would like to achieve.</p> <p>Share the emotional reasons first, then share the facts to better convey your intentions.</p> <p>You may be asking for input from others, in order to make your decision.</p>	<p>Ask if anyone has any questions; are things clear; is any information missing; or are there any concerns about these ideas or plans, etc.</p> <p>It is important that participants feel heard and understood; people need the opportunity to voice their concerns or agreement and others need to hear those perspectives.</p>	<p>What needs to be done after this conversation?</p> <p>Make a list of everything that has been agreed upon, so far.</p> <p>Do you need to rethink any decisions; alter or create new documents? Get more information?</p> <p>Are there others that should be consulted – family or professionals?</p> <p>List any action items and who will do them.</p>	<p>This step is important, as some people need time to process what has been shared and to determine further questions before a decision is made.</p> <p>Allows time to complete any items on the to-do list.</p> <p>If this last step is skipped, decisions may not be made with collective input, or issues may not be resolved. People will sometimes sabotage decisions in which they feel they didn't have input.</p>

*Don't hesitate to seek professional assistance of a non-partisan Facilitator to help bring your family together to converse more effectively and harmoniously.*