



ToP Network CONNECTIONS

HELLO,

A lot is happening in the ToP Network these days and this issue has all of it!

Inside you'll find many ways to stay connected: the Professional Development Series, our next Quarterly Trainer Meet-up, the upcoming ToP Open House, and... our latest Coaching Corner - a space for trainers and practitioners to connect, share insights, and offer coaching guidance to one another along with other important updates from across the network.

The ToP Network Board

P.S. The Board is still looking for a Treasurer in 2027. [Visit this link](#) to express interest.



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SAVE THE DATE!



The next quarterly trainer meetup will be held on **July 17th from 1-3pm CT.**

More information will be released soon but you can register now. We hope to see you there!

Charity, Stephanie & Jeremey (TTLF)

[Register Here](#)



TOP NETWORK
Participate. Educate. Facilitate. Innovate.

TOP NETWORK OPEN HOUSE

June 24th 4:00-5:30 CDT with a 30 minute water cooler after



The ToP Network board of directors is excited to continue hosting an opportunity to connect, learn, and share with one another at the **ToP Network Open House**, hosted quarterly on Zoom.

These gatherings will be a space for facilitators and trainers to:

- Share insights, challenges, and practices from your own work
- Strengthen connections across our ToP community
- Explore timely topics such as facilitating in times of uncertainty, intergenerational facilitation, or the use of AI in facilitation.

This quarter's Open House will be hosted by Beth Stoffmacher and Christine Hall on June 24th, 4:00 - 5:30 pm CT with a 30-minute water cooler after the meeting.

[Register Here](#)



Questions?

Please reach out to Beth Stoffmacher | stoffmacherconsulting@gmail.com

STAY CONNECTED

- **ToP Open House**
June 24 | 4:00-5:30 pm CT
- **ToP BBIPOC CoP**
July 16 | 12:30-2:30 pm PT
- **ToP Trainer Meet-up**
July 17 | 1:00-3:00 p.m. CT
- **ToP Network Monthly Board Meeting**
July 20 | 5:00-7:00 pm CT
- **ToP Network Monthly Board Meeting**
August 17 | 5:00-7:00 pm CT

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (CoP)

Are you interested in gathering fellow ToP Network members to take a deep dive into a specific topic or forming an affinity group? Take a moment to tell us about the group and how we can support you in getting the group formed.

Feel free to reach out to:
[Ronda Alexander.](#)

[Tell Us More About the CoP You'd Like to Organize](#)



TOP® TRAINERS LICENSE AGREEMENT SIGNATURE AND FEES PAST DUE

REMINDER



The ToP® Trainers License Agreement for 2026 should have been emailed to you in May with your signature and payment due by May 31, 2026. If you have not received your 2026 License Agreement and/or an invoice for payment of 2026 dues from ICA, please contact one of your TTLF representatives.

If you have received the License Agreement and haven't signed it and/or paid, you have until June 30 before your access to ARLO and ability to train will end. We hope you still want to train the ToP® Methods and remind you sign your License Agreement and complete payment of dues as soon as possible.

TTLF worked diligently to bring you a License Agreement that while not perfect did respond to many of the concerns we heard from trainers. We are proud of that work and will continue to work for you to resolve lingering concerns to the best of our ability in a mutually respectful way. We are already thinking about the 2027 License Agreement which will need to be finalized in just 6 or 7 months. To that end, if you have any feedback for us on the current License Agreement, please reach out to one of your TTLF representatives.

Charity Adams - charity@facilitateco.com

Stephanie Ahles - stephanie.ahles@empoweringyou.life

Jeremy Kautza - jeremy@kautzacoachingconsulting.com

July ToP Network BBIPOC CoP: A Virtual Hangout

July 16th 12:30–2:30 pm PDT

with the 30 minutes after as water cooler/peer coaching

You're invited to a 90-minute virtual gathering dedicated to the folks who make up the TN Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Color (BBIPOC) Community of Practice (CoP). Whether you've been with the CoP since day one or are just stepping in, this space is for connection over content. We'll have light activities to spark conversation, open social time to freely discuss the joys and challenges of being a BBIPOC facilitator, and a quick look at upcoming events and the 2026 calendar. A loose agenda centered around good conversation and a welcoming space to be seen and heard.

This hangout is about building bonds that live outside our official meetings and strengthening the fabric of our community. Come as you are—from your home office, your couch, or your favorite coffee shop—and let's turn colleagues into genuine connections. All BBIPOC CoP members, new and seasoned, are welcome.

If you have any questions, or cannot attend and want to be added to our email list, please reach out to either Ian Johnson, progressianllc@gmail.com or Librada Estrada, librada@libradaestrada.com



[Register Here](#)



COACHING CORNER

Using ORID and Crucial Conversations to Guide High-Stakes Dialogue



Suzanne Esber

We are all faced with facilitating or engaging in conversations that matter. Recently, I revisited two valuable resources in my facilitation library: [The Art of Focused Conversation](#), 2nd Edition, edited by R. Brian Stanfield and Jo Nelson, and [Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High](#), 3rd Edition. Together, these two works offer complementary guidance for navigating difficult yet important conversations.

The authors of *Crucial Conversations* describe these moments as discussions between two or more people where stakes are high, perspectives differ, and emotions are present. In such situations, behavior often becomes predictable rather than irrational. People may withdraw and withhold meaning, or they may dominate the conversation, blame others, or advocate strongly without genuine inquiry. When this happens, dialogue breaks down and the ability to reach thoughtful decisions diminishes.

The Focused Conversation method provides a reliable structure for guiding dialogue productively. A well-designed conversation begins with a clear focus question and defined rational and experiential aims. The facilitator sets context, opens the conversation, and then guides participants through the ORID sequence—Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, and Decisional questions—before closing with a summary and clear next steps. The key is to trust the sequence and resist the temptation to skip steps. The ORID flow allows participants to move from data and observations to meaning-making and, ultimately, to decisions.

While ORID provides the structure, the principles of *Crucial Conversations* help facilitators steward the relational dynamics of the conversation.

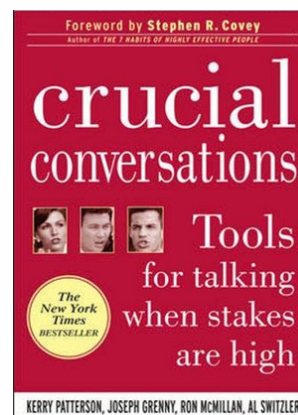
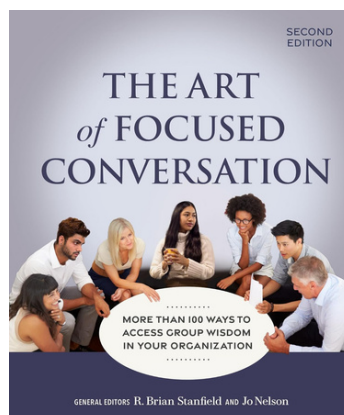
Quality decisions depend on shared meaning. People do their best thinking when meaning flows freely—and that happens only when participants feel safe enough to speak honestly and listen openly.

When safety begins to drop, it is important to pause and restore conditions for dialogue. A facilitator might say, “I’m noticing some tension in the room. Our goal here is to understand what’s happening, not to assign blame. Everyone’s perspective matters.” This simple step can reestablish psychological safety and invite people back into the conversation.

If participants move into debate or positional advocacy, facilitators can redirect attention toward underlying meaning: “I’m hearing different conclusions. Let’s explore what concerns or experiences might be shaping those perspectives.” By focusing on understanding rather than winning, the group can expand shared meaning.

The final step is decisional clarity. *Crucial Conversations* reminds us that dialogue must eventually translate into action. ORID’s decisional stage provides the opportunity to confirm commitments: “What specifically will happen next, and who will take responsibility?”

In practice, crucial conversations require both skill and structure. ORID offers the thinking framework for guiding dialogue, while *Crucial Conversations* provides principles for maintaining safety and meaning when emotions arise. Together, they enable facilitators to steward conversations that deepen participation, strengthen understanding, and lead to clear, shared action. Revisiting these two books can be an effective way to sharpen our facilitation practice and prepare us for the conversations that matter most.



ARE YOU A MEMBER?

TOP NETWORK



Now is a great time to join the network! There are so many exciting events and initiatives on the horizon and we want you join us!

CONSIDER THESE AMAZING BENEFITS:



Ready for a Recharge?

Plug into ToP Network!



Membership in a unique learning community of facilitators and trainers

Access to ToP wisdom and experience through virtual interchange with ToP Network colleagues

Opportunities to network with other ToP Network members for professional development and client engagement

Input and engagement with Top Network Task Teams and the Board

Reduced rates to the Annual Gathering, Professional Development Workshops, and events

Access to an online Resource Library where we share the collective wisdom and writings of ToP practitioners

Listing your ToP Network Membership as a professional affiliation on your resume

- ◆ Facilitator Member \$125 (ToP Practitioner)
- ◆ ToP Trainer Member \$125 (Qualified Trainer, Mentor Trainer, Apprentice)
- ◆ Student Member \$50 (High School or University Student)
- ◆ Emeritus Member \$25 (Retired ToP Practitioner or ToP Trainer)

JOIN THE NETWORK

