



Patterson, Kerry, Grenny, Joseph, McMillan, Ron, & Switzler, Al. (2012). *Crucial conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Use your library card to request *Crucial Conversations* from your local Nioga Member Library!

See: <https://tinyurl.com/NiogaCrucialConvo>

None of what I'm about to present is easy, quick, or even painless. Great way to introduce the video, eh? I do hope to give you a starting point here, so please request the book and read it for yourself. I plan on completing a couple more videos on this book, encapsulating these ideas and whetting your appetite for more. I have links here for the *Crucial Conversations* book, as well as the one for *Verbal Judo*.

Thompson, G., & Jenkins, J. (2004). *Verbal judo: The gentle art of persuasion*, rev. ed. Colorado Springs, Colo: Quill.

Use your library card to request *Verbal Judo* from your local Nioga Member Library!

See: <https://tinyurl.com/NiogaLibVerbalJudo>

The authors define *Crucial Conversations* as: A discussion between two or more people where (1) stakes are high, (2) opinions vary, (3) emotions run strong.

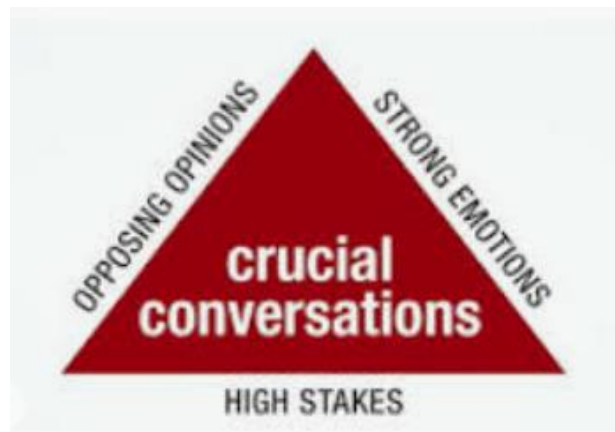


Image from: <https://asuevents.asu.edu/content/crucial-conversations-4>

Typical ways of handling these conversations: (p. 4)



Avoid



Face them and handle poorly



Face them and handle well

The authors decided to begin their research on the topic of “effective people.” They polled people at different work places (over 20,000 people in 25 years) asking, “Who’s the most influential person here?” Then, they compiled all the names in lists from those organizations, and shadowed the people who showed up most often. It didn’t matter what position the person had, they followed them.

The authors go on to name specific examples and named one person, “Kevin.” In a conversation with the CEO, Kevin addressed the matter in front of the team, playing no games. He didn’t resort to silence like his colleagues, nor did he try to force his arguments on others. Somehow he managed to achieve absolute candor, but he did so in a way that showed deep respect for [the CEO].”

After years of research it was found that people like Kevin were able to avoid the “Fool’s Choice.” As they go on to say: “Kevin’s contribution was not his insight. Almost everyone could see what was happening [was not going to be good]. They knew they were allowing [the CEO to badger them into a choice]. But everyone besides Kevin believed they had to make a choice between two bad alternatives.”

Option One	Option Two
“Speak up and turn the most powerful person in the company into their sworn enemy.”	“Suffer in silence and make a bad decision that might ruin the company.”

“When Kevin took a breath and opened his mouth, his overriding question was, ‘How can I be 100 percent honest and at the same time be 100 percent respectful?’”

Whew! This is a tall order, but it *is achievable*. I’ve spoken about this many, many times in other videos, but we are definitely human. We have our minds and our bodies. Each influences the other in drastic and profound ways. I talked about Roger Bannister using his mind to overcome the 1950’s belief of medical doctors that attempting to run a sub-4-minute mile would kill a human being. Mr. Bannister, of course, broke this barrier in 1954.

But that’s running. It’s physical!

For many everyday, routine tasks, the authors note “We’re designed wrong. Countless generations of genetic shaping drive humans to handle crucial conversations with flying fists and fleet feet, not intelligent persuasion and gentle attentiveness” (5).

Fight, flight, or freeze is *real*. Adrenaline courses through us when we're upset or angry, feeding the large muscles in our arms and legs more blood for action. In turn, since we have a finite blood supply, the *higher reasoning centers in our brains get LESS*. Less blood and oxygen to function, because when you're preparing to fight or run, your body prepares what it needs – and *that's not your brain*, not in the immediate sense.

A deep breath can help – you literally feed yourself *more oxygen*, plus you get the added benefit of *time*, even just one second. You might even produce a *mirroring effect*, where the other person takes a deep breath, too. If so, that's even better!

“The skills required to master high-stakes interactions are quite easy to spot and moderately easy to learn (p. 28).” The authors go into detail with each chapter: Start with the Heart, Learn to Look, and Make it Safe. We'll look at each of these in turn.

Good luck!

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