



Crucial Conversations: Chapter 4: Learn to Look, Part 2

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>

Frankl, Viktor. (1959). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Use your library card to request *Man's Search for Meaning* from your local Nioga Member Library!
See: <https://tinyurl.com/NiogaMansSearch>.

In chapter 4, the authors talk about “silence versus violence,” and use that phrasing because it rhymes. This is about TALKING and DIALOGUE, not physical violence. Of course you are to keep yourself and loved ones safe, and to be clear here, NO ONE should be physically violent. Get out of there!

“Safe” here is about a space to be free to talk about what is happening without fear that the other person will: go silent or, go “violent,” defined by that authors as: get overly angry about it; hold it against you; bring it up again after saying they will not; or other means of actively hurting you. You, also, return the favor by agreeing to the same ground rules.

To be honest, this reminds me of the “rules of play” for dogs. No, really, hang with me for a moment. If you want to watch the BBC One “Animals at Play” clip about dogs, I’ll wait.
<https://www.facebook.com/BBCOne/videos/play-bows-animals-at-play/2369820683303936/>

To quote from the documentary: “Dogs have evolved a set of signals to basically reduce the likelihood, almost to zero, that play fighting will escalate into real aggression.”

I believe all of us who have dogs in our lives have seen the “play bow,” with front end crouched to the ground and back end up in the air. The dog looks up with expectancy. The documentary goes on, “When two dogs play, they become so in tune with each other that they often synchronize their play bows. Mark [the researcher] believes that the play bow is underpinned by a set of rules that almost all canines adhere to. Mark says, ‘So there are four basic rules of play that dogs generally understand:

Rule 1: Ask first
When the dog is looking, play bow

Rule 2: Mind your manners

Don't be too aggressive (biting, hitting). Dogs literally "self-handicap" or restrain themselves to ensure they don't inflict injuries

What happens if a dog goes too far? Play stops immediately.

Rule 3: Admit when you're wrong – if a dog bites too hard, they back up. The offended dog will yip and back up. The offending dog backs off, play bows to ask if play can resume, and if the bow is returned, the session goes from there.

Rule 4: Be honest. Mark says in the video, "Don't ask another dog to play and then violate the rules." If dogs don't play fair, they are "marked" as a cheater and OTHER DOGS WILL NOT PLAY WITH THEM!

Conversation: "Pool of Shared Meaning"

What - Content under discussion

Why - People's reactions to the discussion

I think the parallels are fairly obvious and dovetail into everything else we've been talking about.

Going back to chapter 4 and the authors' definitions of silence and violence:

| Silence | Violence |
|--|---|
| Withholding meaning (and dialogue) from the pool of shared meaning | Forcing their own meaning into the pool |

"Silence consists of any act to purposefully withhold information from the pool of meaning. It's almost always done as a means of avoiding potential problems. People may *mask, avoid, or withdraw*. (p. 58).

"Violence consists of any verbal strategy that attempts to convince, control, or compel others to [a] point of view. Methods range from name-calling and monologuing to making threats. The three most common forms are controlling, labeling, and attacking" (p. 60).

We must become vigilant self-monitors, because we can only control our own reactions to a conversation. Remember, Victor Frankl talks extensively about this in his book, "*Man's Search for Meaning*," and the authors give greater detail about *dual processing* in the previous chapter (three). They go on to present self-tests we can take in the book and learn more about our own "style under stress," and so, once we are aware, we can better cope with our own behaviors and contribute to a safe place to talk and contribute to the shared pool of meaning. More on making things safe in Chapter 5!

Good luck!

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