



Chapter 3: Start with the Heart.

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.

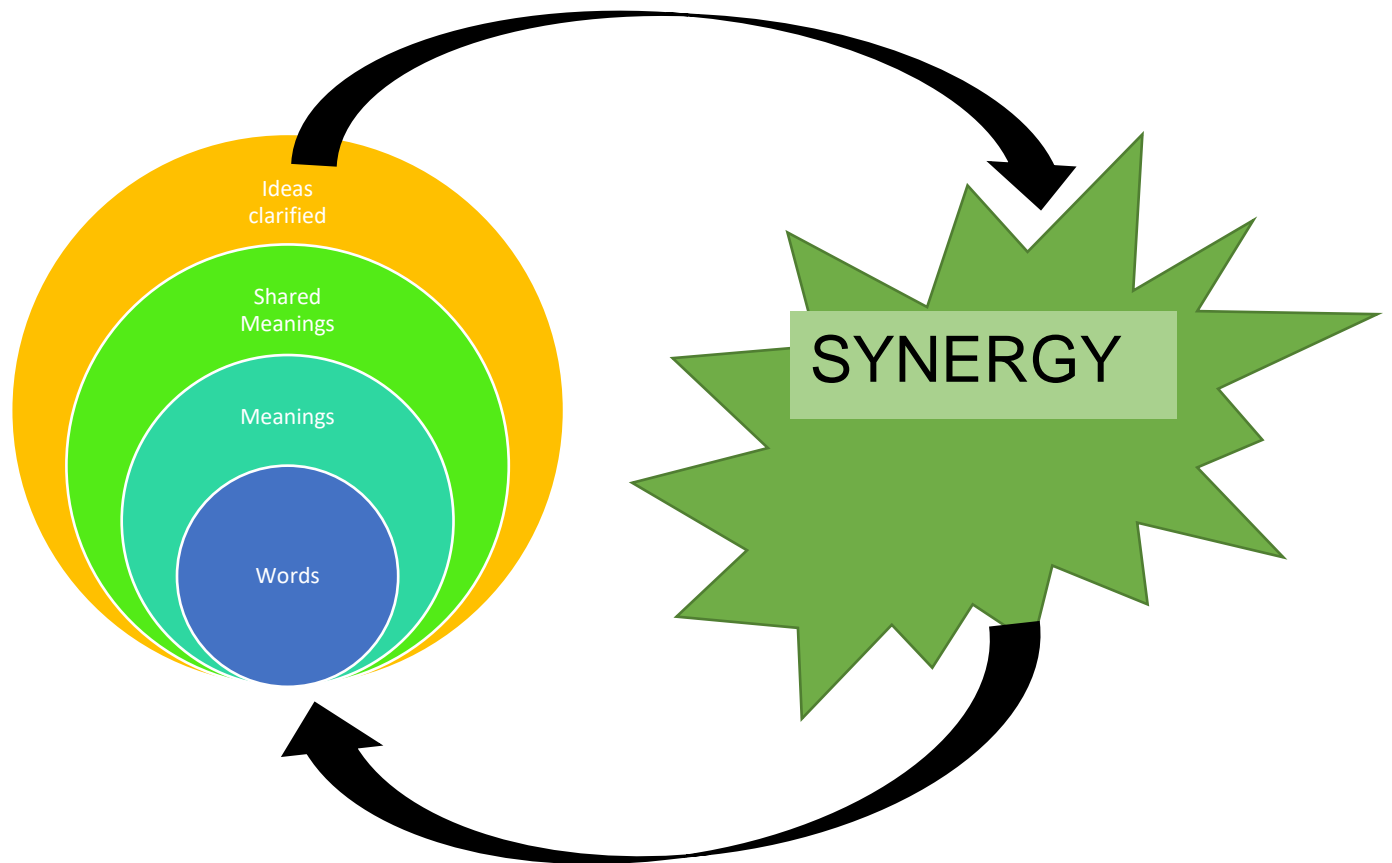
Use your library card to request *Man's Search for Meaning* from your local Nioga Member Library!
See: <https://tinyurl.com/NiogaMansSearch>.

“Speak when you
are angry

and you will make
the best speech

you will ever
regret.” Ambrose
Bierce

This quote starts the chapter, and I have to say, it's true. We need to get to the “how” of dialog, remembering that we are the only ones in control of ourselves. We need to create a common pool of *shared meaning*, fill that pool with the help of all those stakeholders, and keep conversation fluid. “The pool of shared meaning is the birthplace of synergy” (p. 25). Remember, synergy happens when the sum is greater than the parts.



“Start with Heart – that is, your *own* heart. If you can’t get yourself right, you’ll have a hard time getting dialogue right” (33). “The first step to achieving the results we *really* want is to fix the problem of believing that others are the source of all that ails us. It’s our dogmatic conviction that ‘if we could just fix those losers, all would go better’ that keeps us from taking action that could lead to dialogue and progress” (35).

Halting here for a moment, I really like that the authors say *could lead to dialogue*. We can only do so much, but if we start with ourselves, we have a better chance at getting the logjam unstuck! Please remember, these are extremely fluid and fast-paced conversations. I, personally, have never had a crucial conversation that I’ve actually handled well without some practice or “rehearsal” time. These are the, “We need to talk,” times that I’ve initiated with loved ones.

If things have happened in my computer classes or with work mates, a lot of times it doesn’t go very smoothly. It’s taken me years of mistakes and apologies to get to the point where I recognize a crucial conversation, and even with experience, I mess up. I do apologize faster, though. I figure, “I have to look at myself in the mirror, I gotta live with myself. I can apologize for the mistakes I see that I made” and then I move on from there. It’s all I can do!

The authors go on to say that those who are good at crucial conversations “maintain this focus in two ways. First, they’re steely eyed smart when it comes to knowing what they want. ...They stick with their goals. Second, skilled people don’t make Fool’s Choices (either/or choices). Unlike others who justify their unhealthy behavior by explaining that they had no choice but to fight or take flight, the dialogue-smart believe that dialogue, no matter the circumstances, is always an option” (36).

An absolute, laser-focus on what the goal is will assist you in any conversation. We cannot control the adrenaline dump we experience when upset, angry, or attacked. We can control our reaction to it, though. Viktor Frankl explores this idea in his amazing book, "Man's Search for Meaning." I highly recommend it! Of course, our local libraries have it!

Good luck!

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