

Summary of Book: *Crucial Conversations*, by Joseph Grenny

1-Sentence-Summary: *Crucial Conversations* will help you learn to avoid conflict and come to positive solutions in high-stakes conversations so you can be effective in your personal and professional life.

Behavioral Rules

1. Stick to your goals during the discussion so you don't get overly emotional.

When emotions run high in a conversation and we no longer feel safe, there are two ways it can go: silence or violence. Neither of these options provides a solution. In a crucial conversation, we need a solution or we will be stuck. How do we avoid this? We remember our goal.

We've all been in a position where we need to settle something important with someone. Things get heated, and someone says something offensive. We may be tempted to turn to silence or violence, but if we really need a solution, neither of these help.

This is when we need to remember our goals. To prevent yourself from getting angry, ask yourself, "What is my purpose in this conversation" and "What information do I want to get across clearly to this person?"

The thing is, once we realize what we do want, we'll realize what we don't want. Just stopping to think about the goal, which should be to not walk away without a solution, can be a great way to keep yourself from getting angry.

If you need to tell someone something that might upset them, ask yourself things like "What do I want to avoid?" or "what do I really want here?" The more you can keep both parties calm, the better the conversation will turn out.

2. Listen to the other person's opinions to help them feel safe in the conversation.

Have you ever noticed that even the most seemingly harmless of conversations sometimes get heated? The authors explain that this usually stems from the fact that someone feels unsafe.

Biologically, our bodies respond to a threat by either a drive for [fight or flight](#). This response can happen in a tense conversation. Once people start feeling mistreated, they will shut themselves off.

The key to helping people feel safe is to listen to what they have to say. This will make them feel that their opinions are valued, and they are respected. Don't just listen, make it genuine.

There are four steps you can take to really listen to someone, summarized in the acronym AMPP: Ask, mirror, paraphrase, and prime.

1. **Ask** (to get the ball rolling) Start by saying things like “I would love to hear your opinion about...”
2. **Mirror** (to confirm feelings) This is saying things like “You look unsure...” Explain to them what you sense from the situation, in a calm and understanding tone.
3. **Paraphrase** (to acknowledge their story) This will be “So if I understand you correctly...” Use this to understand how they feel.
4. **Prime** (if you are getting nowhere) If someone clams up, we might need to encourage them to speak by suggesting what we think they might be feeling. “I guess you must think I'm being unfair...”

Much like in Stephen Covey's [7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#), we must “seek first to understand, then be understood.” This will make your conversational partner feel safe enough to open up in the conversation. Then you can move forward.

3. Use the STATE acronym to resolve a conflict.

Crucial conversations are highly charged on both ends. But they don't have to end in [silence or violence](#). If you want to resolve conflict before it escalates, you can use the STATE method.

1. **Share the facts.** When you begin the conversation, make sure you give the facts, and not your story.
2. **Tell your story.** Next, you can tell your story and share the assumptions you made.
3. **Ask for the other's paths.** Let them tell their story.
4. **Talk tentatively.** Remind yourself that your assumptions are not facts.

5. **Encourage testing.** Encourage the other person to tell their viewpoint, even if it is opposite from yours.

After you calm the conflict, work toward a solution. This can happen in a variety of ways, like setting boundaries, having a vote, letting one person make a decision, brainstorming a solution together, or ending the relationship entirely if best for both parties.

The important thing is if you want to be effective in the crucial conversations of life, you need to work to a real solution, whatever it may be.