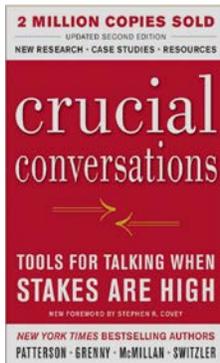


FWPMI Book Review by: Nancy Johnson
“Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High” (2nd Edition)
By Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

Publisher:	McGraw-Hill
Date of Publication:	August 19, 2011
Number of Pages:	230
Book Club Rating:	4.6

Plot Summary:



Crucial Conversations helps you learn how to participate in and lead high-stakes conversations. In the summary of the first chapter, the authors state, “When stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong, casual conversations transform into crucial ones. Ironically, the more crucial the conversation, the less likely we are to handle it well. The consequences of either avoiding or fouling up crucial conversations can be severe. When we fail a crucial conversation, every aspect of our lives can be affected—from our careers, to our communities to our relationships, to our personal health.”

You can learn skills for creating alignment and agreement by fostering open dialogue around high-stakes, emotional, or risky topics—at all levels of your organization. By learning how to speak and be heard (and encouraging others to do the same), you’ll begin to surface the best ideas, make the highest-quality decisions, and then act on your decisions with unity and commitment.

Crucial Conversations draws our attention to those defining moments that literally shape our lives, our relationships, and our world. The quality of your life comes out of the quality of your dialogues and conversations. *Crucial Conversations* show you how quickly uplift your crucial conversations.

Crucial Conversations helps you learn how to do the following and more:

- Recognize when a conversation turns from casual to crucial
- Understand why you might not be at your best during a crucial conversation
- Prepare for crucial conversations
- Transform anger and hurt feelings into powerful dialogue
- Identify when others are feeling unsafe
- Make it safe to talk about almost anything
- Be persuasive, not abrasive
- Keep listening

Book Club Meeting Discussion:

The members present at the FWPMI South Book Club meeting were generally enthusiastic about the techniques in *Crucial Conversations*. The information was helpful but also a bit overwhelming. The example stories and website were helpful.

Concern was expressed that too much information was presented all at once. There was too much to absorb. Although, re-reading the book helped clarify some of the points, many thought the information was also well-suited to training classes. Practicing the techniques in a group setting would be more helpful than just reading the book.

Our consensus was that book is essentially about building trust which is true, but how do you do that when personalities clash and the other “Yeah, But” issues from Chapter 10 arise? And what about practicing *Crucial Conversations* techniques in virtual work groups when you have no visual clues? How do you handle cultural differences? What about tweets, instant messaging, and serial emails?

So we didn't think that *Crucial Conversations* is the last word on how to participate in crucial conversations. We did think that the techniques could be used as a start in crucial conversation whether in person, virtual, or written. With practice, the techniques are useful in both business and personal environments.

Personal Comments:

I wasn't sure that I wanted to read *Crucial Conversations*. I was looking for a Kindle edition of the book when I noticed a “Crucial Conversations Summary” by Wainwright Publishing (November 10, 2011). As far as I know, it's available only for the Kindle. After I read the summary, I decided to read the book. I'm glad I did.

I realize now that learning how to handle crucial conversations starts with me. And trying not to get into too much psycho-babble, I must say that is true of most things. All we can really control is ourselves.

It's not in our nature to be at our best during crucial conversations because of the fact that they are indeed “crucial” and stressful. Our brains devolve into fight or flight mode leaving behind the higher functioning parts of our selves behind.

I learned that it is important to understand what I really want to happen as a result of a conversation. It's important to not let destructive emotions get in the way of reaching a helpful outcome.

Finally, reading about the techniques in *Crucial Conversations* is not the end of the process. Mastery will take recognition and practice, practice, and more practice.