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## Nobody Will Play With Me: How To Use Compassionate Curiosity to Find Confidence in Conflict

by Kwame Christian

Free Kindle instant preview: <http://a.co/8rsGyxi>

### 26 Highlights

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 75

Our greatest weaknesses often lie in the shadows of our greatest strengths.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 77

All this changed when my mentor told me something I'll never forget. He said, "Kwame, there's a difference between being liked and being respected. If you want to have personal and professional success, you need to be willing to engage with conflict."

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 84

I wasn't born this way; I was built this way.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 101

People avoid or struggle in difficult conversations because they feel fear and anxiety. People don't know what to say in the midst of difficult conversations.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 164

Lastly, we've created a free workbook that can be downloaded at [www.americannegotiationinstitute.com/workbook](http://www.americannegotiationinstitute.com/workbook) in order to maximize the impact of these valuable lessons.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 238

Have you ever said something in the heat of the moment that you immediately knew was a mistake? This is called an amygdala hijack and it takes you from rational to irrational in the blink of an eye. These quick, emotional responses are rooted in fear. We have three responses to fear: fight, flight, and the often-overlooked freeze, which is also known as the deer-in-headlights response.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 247

Unsurprisingly, none of these automatic fear responses lead to favorable outcomes in our difficult conversations. There are predictable ramifications for these responses: Fighting leads you to destroy relationships. Fleeing leads you to run from opportunities to improve relationships. Freezing leads you to exist in a false relationship.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 268

The prefrontal cortex is the most important part of the brain when it comes to your performance in difficult conversations. The beauty of Compassionate Curiosity is that it allows you to engage your prefrontal cortex more consistently when the heat is on. It has the added benefit of allowing you to structure and approach difficult conversations in a way that also engages the prefrontal cortex of the other party.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 299

Children struggle to control their active amygdalae until their prefrontal cortex develops and the executive functions can take hold. The prefrontal cortex doesn't fully develop until the early to mid-20s.<sup>9</sup> The active amygdala is still there in adulthood, but it's better controlled.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 348

Managing your emotions isn't about turning yourself into an unfeeling automaton, it's about recognizing these thoughts as what they are, thoughts. They're not truths; they are thoughts. We need to accept them as such.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 400

The simple solution is to replace the emotional need to be right with a genuine desire to learn.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 456

My solution to imposter syndrome is to shift my focus from the fear of failure to the fear of regret. It's okay to be afraid; just make sure you're afraid of the right thing. Fear can be a great motivator. In my mind, when I'm presented with these opportunities I'm afraid of failure the entire time and I want to quit. However, at the same time, when I'm about to quit I take a deathbed perspective. I ask myself, "Will I regret it if I don't take this opportunity?" If the answer is yes, then I take action.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 529

The amygdala cannot distinguish between reality and fiction. Because of that, when we worry and go through these terrible scenarios in our minds, we will respond with the same fight, flight, or freeze response we would have if it actually happened.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 557

A great way to reduce the fear and anxiety you feel in these conversations is to visualize the following scenarios: What will your life look like if you don't have this conversation? What will your life look like if you have this conversation and it goes poorly? Would you be able to recover? What will your life look like if you have this conversation and it goes okay? What will your life look like if you have this conversation and it goes really well?

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 595

As a Caribbean American, I have an affinity to the ocean. I can spend hours enjoying its splendor. One thing I learned at an early age is that you can't fight the waves because they will easily overpower you. Your only option is to let the wave flow over you and wait for it to pass. Emotions are like waves. Don't fight them; feel them. Our body will naturally move toward homeostasis. The emotions typically come on strong and then slowly start to dissipate.<sup>26</sup> If you actively fight against the wave, you will lose and you will have a bad time losing.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 617

My particular stress response to speaking in public included an elevated heartrate, heavy perspiration, and vocal constriction. I would then interpret that sensation as fear. However, if I won an award, saw an attractive person, or watched my favorite team win a championship, I would have a similar physical response. I would then interpret that same sensation as excitement. Cognitive appraisal is your interpretation of a situation. Cognitive reappraisal is changing your interpretation of that situation. I decided to see the opportunity in these situations instead of the threat. I decided that whenever I started to perspire, my heart started to race, and I felt vocal constriction, it was a sign that I was excited, not scared. That made all the difference.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 669

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now." -Chinese Proverb

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 676

An important part of embracing this new mindset is changing the way we talk about ourselves. People often say things like "I'm a horrible negotiator," "I'm a people-pleaser," "I'm a doormat," and "I don't know what I'm doing." When they say these things, they make the critical mistake of labeling themselves in fixed, concrete terms. However, the reality is these are transient states. It's like a white belt in karate looking at the black belt and saying, "I'll never be able to do that; I'm just a white belt." Then why are you here? It's not fair to criticize yourself for being at the beginning of a journey. It doesn't make any sense. It's like getting in your car for a road trip and, as you start the car, saying, "I'm never going to make it there. I'm still in my driveway." The beginning stages of a journey are just a part of the journey. If you simply haven't started your journey yet, that's okay. Let this book be the start for you. This is the first step in your journey to mastery.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 708

Thus, when it comes to making the decision as to whether or not I act, I take a longer-term perspective and ask myself the following questions: Will you regret failing to have this conversation next week? Will you regret failing to have this conversation next month? Will you regret failing to have this conversation next year?

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 745

In our education system, we are taught that there is always a right answer. The thing that makes negotiation so difficult is that there is no such thing as a right answer. Your confidence in negotiation will rise significantly when you come to terms with the fact that there will always be an element of uncertainty no matter how much you prepare. It's like driving. You can be a perfect driver and still get in an accident, but that shouldn't stop you from driving. It should, however, make you want to be as good of a driver as you possibly can be, with the goal of increasing the likelihood of a successful, safe trip. That is what we are trying to do here. We want to build skills to increase our likelihood of a successful outcome, while understanding that it is not entirely in our control.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 838

My goal in every conversation is to adhere to the 70/30 Rule of Negotiation. This rule holds that you should try to listen 70% of the time and speak only 30% of the time. I do this for four reasons: Knowledge is power. This approach creates an information asymmetry in my favor, which gives me more power relative to them during the conversation. Control. Asking questions puts you in control of the direction of the conversation. Comfort. They feel safe and comfortable when they are talking and know that I am listening. This allows them to trust me faster and makes them feel comfortable sharing more. It leads to the free flow of information and a strong working relationship.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 892

Everyone blinks: I want you to envision the person who intimidates you. They may have a higher status, they may be physically bigger, and they may have more resources. Additionally, they may be intentionally posturing and acting aggressively to emphasize their advantage over you. I want you to look into their imaginary eyes and don't break eye contact until you see them blink. This big, scary person just slid two small, delicate pieces of skin to moisten their tiny, little eyes. When I see them do this, I think it's kind of cute and makes me say to myself, "Awww, you're a human just like me!" When I do this in the real conversation it has a number of benefits: I'm less intimidated because I think they just did something cute. It makes me more willing to listen and find more humanity inside of them. It has the natural effect of keeping my eyes and head up, which signals confidence and helps me to avoid the submissive body language of lowering my gaze and bringing my chin closer to my chest. It helps me to maintain eye contact.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 902

Everyone was a baby: As the father of a two-year-old, I'm too familiar with tantrums. Tantrums often occur for two reasons: A baby has a want or need but, due to physical limitations, is unable to satisfy those wants or needs themselves, which leads to frustration. A baby has a want or need but, due to cognitive limitations, is unable to

express those wants or needs, which leads to frustration. Adults aren't much different. When someone is misbehaving, I try to envision them as a baby. I wonder what kind of difficult circumstances this person had to go through as a child that created the cacophony of undesirable personality traits I'm dealing with right now. Imagine that child struggling. When it comes down to it, we are all people trying to be happy and looking for love and acceptance. Sometimes, because of our upbringing, we go about it the wrong way. Imagine a difficult upbringing. As you see that young child struggling, it will cause you to empathize with the person. I assume that they are probably doing the best they can given their upbringing and beliefs. This helps me to look at them with empathy.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1009

Imagine you're working at a gym and you've been tasked with moving all of the free-weights, ranging from five pounds to one hundred twenty pounds, all the way to the other side of the building. How would you do it? You wouldn't try to move all of that weight at the same time, you would recognize that your only path to success was to make several trips. This metaphor will help you to recognize that sometimes the best thing to do is to break a particularly difficult negotiation into a series of micro-negotiations. This is especially helpful if you are presented with surprising information in the middle of the conversation. Micro-negotiations help to lessen the persuasive weight by dispersing the burden of persuasion across multiple conversations.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1116

We've heard the saying, "never mistake kindness for weakness," but we often fail to recognize that the opposite is also true. We should never mistake weakness for kindness.<sup>42</sup> When we avoid conflict, we often convince ourselves that we're doing it out of kindness and our regard for others. The reality is that we often avoid these difficult conversations out of personal weakness and fear. It's counterintuitive, but if you care about yourself, the other person, and the relationship, the best thing to do is engage in honest conflict once you receive the signal that something is wrong.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1141

Discussing intent has the necessary effect of redirecting the focus of the conversation to the past, which is unproductive because we're not trying to change the past. We're having this conversation to collaboratively create a desirable future.

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