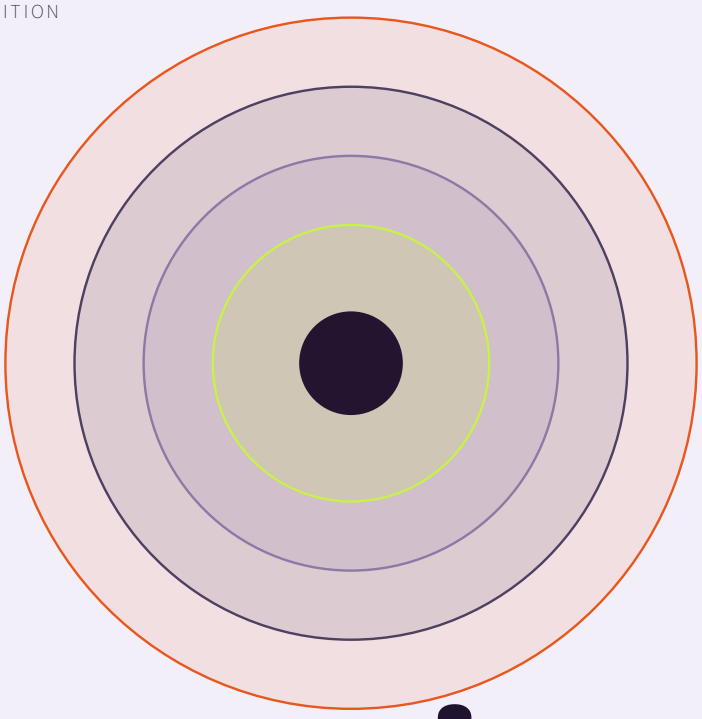


Conversation: How to Connect with Anyone & Make Every Interaction Count

A reading of the book by Vanessa Van Edwards (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Conversation: How to Connect with Anyone & Make Every Interaction Count, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Vanessa Van Edwards, the behaviour researcher behind Science of People, follows Captivate and Cues with a practical guide to talking with people: breaking the ice, keeping a conversation going, asking better questions, changing the subject and leaving well. Its spine is a set of nine power questions across three levels, from the facts of someone's life, to what they want and worry about, to the story they tell about who they are. It also covers personality patterns, being assertive without losing yourself, and scripts for moments like asking for a raise or setting a boundary.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Ask for a story, not a fact.

Autopilot questions like what someone does for work tend to get a one-line answer and a dead end. Asking about the best part of their day, their plans or what they are excited about invites a story, and a story gives you something to follow.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Go one level deeper at a time.

The book sorts questions into three levels: the facts of someone's life, what they want and worry about, and the story they tell about who they are. Each step down is earned at the one above. Jumping straight to the deepest question feels like an interview.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Be interested before you try to be interesting.

A good test after any conversation: could you name one thing the other person cares about? If you could not, you probably did most of the talking.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

When someone shares a goal, help them build it.

The second level is goals, learning and worries. The book calls the encouraging response dream building. Ask more about the goal before you point out the risks or offer advice.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The story people tell about their life shapes how they act.

The third level is self-narrative. Someone who tells a comeback story behaves differently from someone who feels life keeps happening to them. Listening for which story you are hearing tells you how to respond.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A sideways question can open people up more than a direct one.

Asked to describe themselves, many people freeze. Asked which character in a book or film they are most like, they get a playful way in, and you still learn how they see themselves.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Match the energy you are given.

Mirroring someone's tone, warmth and enthusiasm tells them you are on the same page. Start where they are, then move the conversation where you want it to go.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A conversation is a game of catch.

Take a turn, then hand it back. A long story, even a good one, leaves the other person standing with nothing to do.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Leaving well is part of the skill.

End on a plan, a sincere compliment or a clear next step, in a voice that signals you are wrapping up. People remember the end of a conversation, so make it warm rather than awkward.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Retire one autopilot question
- [ ] Rewrite your answer to the question you get most
- [ ] Write three follow-ups for your next event
- [ ] Choose your exit line before you arrive
- [ ] List three people you only know at level one

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Turn one fact into a story each day
- ◯ Check what you learned on the way out
- ◯ Ask two questions before you give advice

30 days · Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Retire one autopilot question

Pick the question you ask most out of habit, such as what someone does or how their weekend was.

Write down the story-inviting question you will ask instead, and use it at your next event.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Rewrite your answer to the question you get most

Write a two-sentence answer to what you do, or whatever people ask you most, that includes a small story or something surprising instead of a job title alone.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Write three follow-ups for your next event

Look at the next gathering on your calendar.

Write one facts question, one values question and one meaning question for it, and keep them in your phone's notes.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Choose your exit line before you arrive

Pick one sentence that ends a conversation warmly, such as naming a next step or something you enjoyed hearing about.

Having it ready makes it easier to move on without drifting.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

List three people you only know at level one

Write down three people you see often but only know the facts about: a colleague, a neighbour, another parent.

Next time you see each one, ask one question from the second level.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Turn one fact into a story each day

When someone tells you a fact, like a new job or a dog's name, ask how it happened or why they chose it.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Check what you learned on the way out

After each conversation, name one thing the other person cares about.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Ask two questions before you give advice

When someone mentions a goal or a plan, ask two more questions about it before you say what you would do.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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December 2026

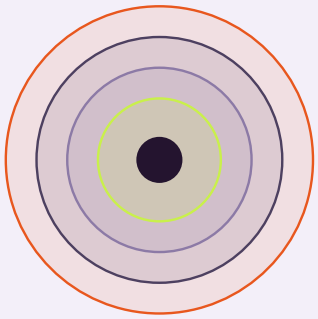
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Ask for the story, then go one level deeper.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER VANESSA VAN EDWARDS