

The Art of Conversation:

Enhance Your **Charisma** for Success



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface..... page 4

Part 1- Before Speaking a Word

Crash and Burn, then Take Time to Learn..... page 12

Believe you are THE Most Interesting Person to Talk to..... page 21

Conquer Your Social Anxiety..... Page 29

First Impressions Should Impress the First Time.....page 38

Look me in the Eye and Tell Me That..... page 47

Get Your Body to Speak Confidently..... page 55

Part 2- The Basics of Conversation

Ladies and Gentlemen, Start your Conversations..... page 66

Wow...YOU TOO?! Find Commonalities in Conversations..... page 78

Structuring a Good Conversation..... page 93

How to Ask Great Questions, Answered..... page 103

Creating a Top Ten List of Topics to Talk About..... page 112

Part 3-Enhancing Your Charisma

The Art of Captivating Storytelling.....page 117

Change a Debbie Downer to a Positive Pete..... page 128

The Art of Listening: The Yin to the Yang.....page 133

Sometimes Silence is Good.....page 138

Going Wide and Deep with Rapport.....page 142

Appreciation and the Art of Complimenting..... page 146

For Your Sanity, Please Exit this Way.....page 152

Turn a Negative Criticism into a Positive Statement.....page 158
The Importance of Touching.....page 165
Add a Dash of Flirting..... page 176
Crowd Control, How to Start Conversations with Groups of People..... page186

Part 4-Conversation Blunders

The Put Down: The Unintentional Conversation Killer..... page 195
13 Deadly Sins of Conversation..... page 201
Start Now! page 210
About the Author page 212

Preface: The Myth of the Naturally Talented Conversationalist

"Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There's plenty of movement, but you never know if it's going to be forward, backward or sideways." -H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

A friend has invited you to a party, and you're thinking to yourself, "Oh this will be a good chance to meet new people." As you step into the room, there's a sudden rush of nervous energy that goes through your stomach and then through your throat - as if a big lump of coal is stuck there but you can't seem to swallow it.

You take a look around the room and you get the impression that everybody else seems to know each other. You start to sweat. You hear people laughing in the background having such a wonderful time. You see another group of people having an animated conversation and you're standing there wondering to yourself, "What do I do next?"

Whether you're in line at the grocery market, at a corporate function or at a private party, talking to strangers can be scary. After all, we want to appear charming in front of all people.

If you were anything like me growing up, you probably weren't taught the necessary skills to be a social butterfly when the situation warranted. You might have even been taught some lessons that seemed counterintuitive. Have you heard of this one "A good conversationalist will do most of the listening?" Well if one person does all the listening, then how do you get to mutually know each other to develop a connection? You don't.

But let's start at the beginning. How did I ever come to the decision to write this book? I'll dive into some background about myself before I answer that question.

When I was going through adolescence, I was the type of person who was afraid to talk to girls my age. I was afraid to be who I wanted to be. I was afraid to

Speak confidently for the fear that people would laugh at me. I wanted to know how I could be the guy that people wanted to talk to but I never quite found out how. No one around me at the time knew how to do that.

Even to this day, I remember how excruciating certain moments in high school were when I asked out ten different girls and nine of them said no. And the one girl that said yes brought two friends along with her on our “date.” We never ended up going on a second date.

I even tried writing poetry and giving flowers when asking these girls out. My record in dating at the time was technically zero success rate.

University was no different. I was socially awkward especially around girls. I was doing things that other people were telling me to do that would help me meet girls. I joined clubs, tried to get to know more people to make friends, but it was going nowhere. As a matter of fact, I was part of a fraternity and though I worked hard in trying to improve my social skills, I doubt that any of my fraternity brothers would have considered me the charismatic type.

During those years I was conversationally challenged. And even when sorority girls were coming by the fraternity house on a regular basis, I didn’t know what the appropriate social behaviour or topics would be to engage and fascinate them.

My social circle didn’t expand much either. I hung out with my high school friends after I graduated without meeting too many new people, mostly out of comfort. I was afraid of taking the risks of meeting new people and putting in the effort and responsibility. I depended more on luck that I would meet people instead of creating my own luck.

Unfortunately most of my family wasn’t much help either - with the exception of my brother who seemed to be quite social. But neither my mother, nor my father offered much advice on how to be more social and how to develop long term

friendships that were mutual and growing. It took me years to realize that my parents weren't going to be able to teach me the necessary social skills I needed to be a top communicator in society.

I wish I could tell you that my professional life was much better, that I was avidly networking at events hosted by corporations or my faculty, but I wasn't. I was busy trying to build my social life that I completely neglected my networking skills until after I graduated from university.

Networking became a bit of a chore during my early twenties because I didn't know what I was supposed to do. I felt like it was something I had to do, not because I wanted to do. The idea was that if I wanted to be successful I had to network, there was no choice. But the burning question still remained in my head when I went out and networked, "How do I connect with these people I see for only a few minutes?"

As time went on and with new beliefs and a learning model, I believed that I could improve my social skills tremendously. By using step by step guidelines that I followed in this book, I was able to improve my communication and connection skills exponentially. I don't believe that people are just born with a magic gift for conversation. I think that this magic can be developed and learned.

That's what I decided to do. I wanted to be a conversational artist that evoked fun, laughter, happiness and joy, creating a word mosaic with each person I talked to, adding to their wonderful tapestry of life. And so began my journey of chatting away with strangers at a variety of places: networking events, seminars, workshops, speed dating events, social mixers, bookstores, cafés, trade shows and even on the streets.

I wanted to be better in my romantic, social and professional relationships. I wanted connect with people, understand them emotionally, have wonderful and enchanting conversations, and I wanted to impact other people, and also have people impact me.

That's why I decided to write this book. I noticed that there were many people that were going through what I was going through. They were feeling the frustration, struggle and pain in their life. And they just wanted some help on how to get better at connecting with others. They were exhausted from experiencing poor romantic relationships and they were hungering for answers the way I was. These were people I was teaching in my classes. They were people who retired and recently gotten back into the work force. They were teenagers straight out of high school who needed professional conversation skills. And they were entrepreneurs that had great technical knowledge that lacked relationship building skills. And they were lonely single men and women who just wanted to find that special someone in their life.

Sadly as we move towards the future, it seems that talking to people is becoming, not a lost art, but THE lost art. Our text messages now outnumber cell phone calls! We barely talk to our neighbours as if it's socially taboo. We e-mail people instead of picking up the phone even though we know the phone is faster and will save us more time than typing. We don't talk to our local baristas. Instead, we always wait for them to start conversations. And social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter are now mainstream forms of communication, which leaves out the skill of listening to tones and reading body language.

I have seen firsthand the power of small talk to deep conversations that bring people more joy, happiness and most of all, community. And I want people to be able to be comfortable being social again by providing them with the skills to approach any social situation with confidence.

Here are the three fundamentals to being a great conversationalist.

1. Be courageous and be willing to try new things. Take note at what works in certain social situations and what doesn't.

2. Believe that any skill can be learned and that natural talent is just a lot of practice and awareness. Don't be discouraged if you don't get concepts the first time.
3. Believe sincerely that you can have a connection with anyone you meet. This is not always possible, but you have to believe.

The beauty of all conversations is that they're like Christmas gifts. Conversations are surprising and unexpected, sometimes they make you jump for joy, and other times you may feel disappointed. And that's just reality. There's such variety of people in the world that to be able to develop rapport and connection with all of them is not possible. But believe that you can talk to any person and believe that each conversation will be a meaningful one, and realize each conversation will be unique.

Think about this: talking to someone who has just come back from a war, is very different than talking to someone who just finished attending a rock and roll concert. There are social skills that are required in each specific situation.

But the point is that if you want, you can learn to be a great conversationalist with many people in the world and in the situations mentioned above. And as you put into practice and do the exercises that are suggested in this book at the end of each section, and review the chapters carefully you will find some things that work for you and some things that don't.

However I don't want you to discard any advice until you try that particular advice five or six times. Trying out some of the conversation techniques in this book is like cooking a new recipe. Just because you've cooked a recipe and it didn't turn out great the first time doesn't mean that the recipe is horrible. It might mean that you just needed to tweak some things. And by the time you make the dish the fifth time you've become a great master at it.

It takes repetition and a sense of willingness to keep trying to have captivating conversations. It's like the old timeless principle: PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE! And when you're tired, you practice just a little bit more!

If you find yourself frustrated, be patient. It's a learning process, and relearning how you speak to people can take a short time or it can take a long time depending on how fast you adapt and how much time you want to put in.

This book was designed to focus on conversations when meeting people for the first time, or meeting people relatively new for professional, social and romantic purposes. The principles in this book have helped people develop stronger friendships, entrepreneurs find more prospects, sales professionals close more sales, created tighter bonds with family members, working professionals become more noticed at work, and have helped people looking for love find love. Communication skills is one the essential skills to your personal success that will always be needed in life.

The book is broken down into four different sections that will help increase your confidence when it comes to talking with others in a variety of social settings.

The first section focuses on the "silent communication" that you are giving out to the world and the internal dialogue that you have with yourself on a daily basis. Silent communication includes areas such as your internal beliefs, your social anxiety, body language, eye contact and the way that you dress. This is often the forgotten part of conversation that is so important that it can make or break any talk.

The second section focuses on the basics of conversation. The basics include how to start conversations, finding commonalities with other people, continuing conversations after the introductions, and how to ask questions. This will help initiate emotional rapport building with others and will give you most of the skills to have conversations with confidence.

The third section is about enhancing your charisma with a variety of communication tools in diverse situations. These tools include a captivating way to tell stories, how to change negative moods into positive ones, learning when to pause and listen appropriately, learning to compliment others, how to exit conversations gracefully, how to deal with criticism, how to talk to groups of people and lastly how to flirt with class for those wishing to be more romantic. The tools will help you become successful at developing rapport quickly with others and help you gain the trust of others in minutes.

The fourth section will focus on common conversation disasters that people make that end up killing conversations on the spot. Knowing these mistakes will help you prevent yourself from making them.

At the end of most sections you will see that there are exercises to be completed. These exercises were designed to help you put into practice what you will learn in this book to accelerate your progress and learning. There is no purpose in learning a new skill if you don't put it into practice.

As you read the book, some of the concepts may seem strange at first, and may seem counterintuitive, but have faith and try them out. As you start to practice the exercises in the book also consider rereading the material after practice.

Many of the concepts will become clearer as you practice them the second and third time. Take the chance to read over the book quickly every month and you will see that the fundamentals taught in this book will have a positive impact on your life and hopefully it will change your life the way it has changed hundreds of people.

I hope this book will help your journey in mastering the art of conversation in all areas of your life. I have also changed the names of former clients mentioned in this book to ensure their privacy.

Wishing You the Best , Vincent Ng

Part 1: Before Speaking A Word



Crash and Burn, then Take Time to Learn

"Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

The 10,000 Hour Rule

According to Malcolm Gladwell's book, *Outliers*, it states that it takes approximately ten thousand hours of practice in order to become a master in any activity. This means that if you want to be a NBA superstar, you can, if you're willing to put in the time. Now you might go, "YOU'RE NUTS, VINCENT! I don't have that kind of time to master the art of conversation." You're absolutely right, you probably don't, but what that also means is that any skill can be mastered given time whether you have the so called "natural talent" or not.

If you've done the math, this means you would need to practice about 417 days straight, 24 hours a day, for 7 days a week.

Now I don't want you to go out and try to talk to people for 417 days straight without getting any sleep and eating. That would be absolutely ridiculous of me to ask you that. But what that also means is that practice can lead to conversation mastery and your practice has to start somewhere. I'm hoping it's going to start today.

People who are considered naturally talented are people who have had an earlier head start and put in their practice time at a young age. Let's look at one of, if not, the greatest basketball player of all time, Michael Jordan. After Michael was cut from his varsity team he was motivated to be on the team next year so he practiced every morning before school started. He started young and consistently put in the effort and time to master basketball, even after he made it to the NBA.

Personally, I wish I could go back to when I was thirteen years old and teach myself the stuff I know now, but all I can do is look towards the future.

Now you might be going, “Well I don’t want to put in ten thousand hours to being a master conversationalist. I just want to be good.” Well the good news for you is that you don’t have to put in that much time. That’s only if you want to become a world class expert in the art of conversation.

Dr. K Anders Ericsson of Florida State University also mentions the ten thousand hour rule in his studies of expert musicians who reached the age of twenty. He found that the best experts in music played and practiced for ten thousand hours or more. The ones that were considered the least accomplished experts (somewhat of an oxymoron) played for at least five thousand hours, and the serious amateur pianists played two thousand hours. (These were people that were considered good enough to teach music classes.) Why am I telling you this? Depending on how good you want to be in your conversations, you know how much time you approximately need to put in.

That is what needs to happen if you want to have good conversations. You have to put in the time. When I first started attending networking events, I was always one of the first people to be there, and was also one of the last to leave. And that’s after working 8 hours a day. I would talk for up to three hours in a row. Don’t be mistaken, it was very daunting at times, and there were times when I would go home with sore vocal cords and feel drained. But if you want to become better then there needs to be sacrifice.

As you start practicing more and more you will find that some conversational topics that you talk about with others will be absolutely boring to them. That’s okay. It’s part of the learning experience. Allow yourself to try out different subjects and questions to ask. And if they don’t work out consistently then just throw out those questions from your conversation repertoire.

Man Meets Woman was an attraction coaching company that I worked for. One of the clients they had sent over was Aaron. Aaron wanted to improve his romantic life.

Aaron was the type of person who stayed at home playing World of Warcraft on most of his days off. He wore a large blue jacket, with brown khaki's with hiking shoes, and wore black thick framed glasses when we first met. He often slouched. His understanding of the social world needed some tweaking and he came to us to help him become socially better with women.

I remember it was late in the evening on a weekend and the sun had set, we were both at the Vancouver Art Gallery. There were these two young Asian women sitting on one of the cement blocks. They had this wonderful energy that suggested they were enjoying the freedom of the weekend.

I told Aaron to approach them both. And he did. He went to talk to them with very little hesitation. He was doing everything right. He chatted with them and even made a joke that made both of them laugh. As I was looking and observing, I noticed the women gave each other weird stares and leaned away from my client. I later asked him what he exactly said, and as a joke he had called them gold diggers. I looked at him with big eyes and was a little dazed. He had misconstrued a humour technique that when used incorrectly comes off insulting.

“You can't call women gold diggers. Many women would find that quite offensive. That's not teasing. If you are going to tease them and you need to make it light then tell them this 'Oh, so you're the type looking for the sugar daddy, well I'm also looking for a women that can wine and dine me,' and just continue on the conversation.”

Aaron looked at me, smiled and he told me, “Okay now I understand.”

However if Aaron didn't take a chance and say what was on his mind, he would have never learned. And now that he has, he's never going to call someone a gold digger again. At least I really hope not.

The art of conversation has always gone that way. Without permission to let ourselves fail, it's pretty much saying that we're not giving ourselves permission to learn. However, there's more to it than just practice, there's deliberate improvement.

Deliberate Practice

The second aspect that's needed to be successful in your conversations is what Dr. Ericsson has labelled "deliberate practice." It means practicing with the purpose of improvement. And if you ever just talk for the sake of talking then you won't reach the level of charisma you probably desire. (Haven't you ever noticed that? Some people are good at doing a lot of talking but they wouldn't be classified as charming?)

What's important is that you document what's working and what's not working when you're having your conversations. Going back and keeping a journal or notes on topics that have worked will help you tremendously on becoming masterful at conversations with strangers and with people at work. Instead of letting yourself have a passive attitude towards learning, you need to consciously put in the effort to become better. This way your brain is going to start noticing the patterns of what is good conversation much faster. And before you know it, all the conscious hard work will sink right into your subconscious mind and you'll find that conversations are a breeze.

Some of the most eloquent conversational speakers I know followed this process and documented their learning journeys. I truly believe that the ones that became incredibly gifted with gab always made it a point to write down their thoughts and reflections in a journal. Even to this day, I still write down on how I could have improved my conversations with people.

Here's a journal entry on one of my conversations with total strangers on Granville Street in Vancouver downtown. I usually do my entries the same night I've finished my conversations. I remember reading in a Cornell University study that people retain 200% more of what they've learned when the lessons learned are written down the same night before going to sleep, as opposed to writing a day later.

My Journal Entry

I just got home from coaching four men that wanted to learn more about how to talk to approach strangers with more confidence. This is my journal entry.

As the four men stood there watching, I needed to establish my own skills. One of the best ways to develop credibility is to be able to demonstrate skills.

The group of us were located in a line up at a night club. I looked around, and to my left there were two blond women and a man waiting in the same line up that we were in. After a short breath and without thinking too much I approached the group of three and started to have a conversation with them about dating which seemed to be a great topic to get things started.

The good thing was that I talked to the guy first and asked him about his opinion about dating. After that I asked the woman that was standing next to him about what she thought about the dating scene in Vancouver, who happened to be his girlfriend. I looked at them both and stuck to the eye contact.

I was able to read that they were both a couple based on their body language and proximity to each other. I asked them if they were dating, I assumed it by saying "You guys must be a couple," which they did confirm. Great job on recognizing the body signals Vince.

I eventually asked the second blond about her perspective. However she was a little louder and was harder to talk too. I left all three with my business cards and left the conversation shortly after about 4 minutes.

So there were a few things that went well.

1) I talked to the male first out of all three. This is very vital as this shows him that I respect his presence and that I'm trying to befriend him, and not just only the women. By having him engaged in the conversation he feels less left out.

2) I pulled off an opinion opener about dating, which is always a fun topic to talk about and was able to get everybody in the group initially interested. This is good that I had them on to a hot topic.

3) I was able to get some playful touching in as well with the second blond by giving her a side hug with my right arm. This is vital as the touch will help induce a sense of connection that would take longer if words were used.

4) I was able to get all three people engaged during the conversation, no one was left out.

What could I do to make massive improvement in this particular situation?

1) Do a transition and fit in a compliment. The first blond had a boyfriend and talked about how she was from back East. I should have taken the opportunity to talk more about where she's from and try to go into more emotional topics from there.

2) The second blond was loud and was in a party mood. I should have been slightly louder than her and to match her energy to see how that would have worked. This is important because energy matching allows for people to feel closer to each other. Without matched energy then this can be a lot more work to connect with someone. Next time if you aren't with clients try to stay longer in the set. - End Report

Beyond the Journal Entry

You might think it's weird at first to write journal entries about conversations you've had with strangers, but that's what job performances are like. People review how you are at your job currently, what skills you could improve upon for future development, and what your strengths are. Each and every conversation you have should be under review for your own accelerated learning purposes.

Notice in the report I try to write down in specific detail what I could have done better and why it's important I do those tasks. It's in the small details that people lose out in becoming great conversationalist, but it's in the small details that allow for true engagement to occur. Notice that in one of my reflective thoughts I mention how I potentially could have steered the conversation into a whole new topic from dating to living life out East. You have to notice these types of opportunities to improve.

Now there are some gifted gabbers that would record down every detail about what they talked about, some even in more detail than I. They noticed what words, the tone and the timing that made people laugh, what made people cry, noticed which topics would build emotional trust faster and which ones would gain excitement in a person.

At the same time, they would record what didn't work, what caused people to cringe, and what offended people. These were people that would literally write down an actual conversation to analyze word patterns, and structure to see if it would make a difference. The more detailed you can be when you're starting off, the better.

Being able to learn great communication skills means taking risks. Taking risks sometimes means that it's important to break conversation rules to see if they work or not and even getting into a little trouble at times. After all, the only person that's going to know if a rule applies to you is you.

At the same time you don't want to start being rude and start saying things that would damage your personal and professional reputation dramatically, so take what is being said with a grain of a salt. For example, asking someone how many times they've committed a crime is not the best way to engage someone. But if someone is reading a book on Islamic traditions, feel free to ask him about the book.

Give yourself permission to learn. Don't try to put pressure on yourself to have perfect conversations with every person you meet. After all no conversation is truly perfect, they're just enjoyable or not. When you're starting off, practice dialogue, and then reflect on your thoughts about the conversation when you have a moment to yourself and how it could have been better.

I can't remember how many terrible conversations I've had with people before I even started being decent with my conversation skills. I was afraid to approach groups of strangers at networking events and when I did, I would feel like a deer in headlights because I didn't know what to do and didn't feel like I belonged in the conversation. Sometimes I would stand there talking and know how bored people were and it made me even more self conscious and anxious. When I approached women I was attracted to, many of them wouldn't even start a conversation with me that lasted more than 10 seconds. Trust me, if people could look at me back in high school and in my early twenties, they would know I'm a very different person now. But when I first started, I gave myself permission to have terrible conversations, I gave myself permission to learn, and I gave myself permission to just grow.

Everybody has to start somewhere and your journey needs to start today, so have fun and get started on your ten thousand hours by having one conversation at a time and writing down one journal entry each time.

Key Points To Remember:

- ✓ Ensure that you put in the time to practice your conversations with the intent of improving them with the tools that are presented in this book. Set small goals on what specific areas of conversation you wish to improve upon.
- ✓ Always write down your conversations in a journal to help keep track of your progress.
- ✓ Give yourself permission to learn, test new boundaries and try out different and new conversational topics. Keep the topics that work and the throw out the topics that don't.

Conversation Exercise 1: Getting Started

Go out and purchase a journal or notebook to help you keep track of your progress while you're practicing to be a better conversationalist.

Within the next week, have three conversations with people. This could be with a family member, a co-worker, a stranger or a client. The people you choose are up to you. Pay close attention to how your conversations with these people went. Notice how you started the conversation, how you felt, what you talked about, and how the conversation ended. The more details, no matter how subtle, the better.

After you've had each conversation, within the same day the conversations took place, write down all your thoughts in your journal about that particular conversation.

Believe You are The Most Interesting Person to Talk To

"Success begins with belief and ends with doubt."

-Larina Kasse

I remember reading through Jack Canfield's book *The Success Principles* and he was writing about being a reverse paranoid. In that particular section he mentions how he has a belief that the world he's living in, is out to give him everything he absolutely wants and desires. He believes that people are giving him job opportunities. He believes that people want to do business with him. Instead of the world out to do him bad, he thinks that all the world wants to do is give him everything he's ever craved.

There are times when I think to myself, "Wow, the world is out to get me and make me miserable." Then I think, "Why can't I believe that the world is out to make me a better conversationalist? What if I do believe that everybody finds me absolutely interesting and a pleasure to chat with? How different would my own inner world be?"

Then I started adapting the belief of the reverse paranoid. When I started talking to people, I truly believed that I was the MOST interesting person in the room. I believed that everything I said added value to the conversation. I believed that people stayed behind and chatted with me because they found me charismatic.

As a matter of fact, for about five months I wrote down (with a dry erase marker) on my bathroom mirror the following affirmation.

"People love me and respect me. It is a privilege to talk to me. People find me interesting and charming and always want to get to know me better!"

I used to say it while I was brushing my teeth, and I visualized in my head having perfect conversations with total strangers I had just met.

I would say the affirmation after I brushed my teeth. And I would continue to say it until I felt completely great about myself. I would repeat it until I felt that I convinced myself that I truly was the most intriguing person in the world. Some days it would take me only thirty seconds to have the belief that I was an excellent conversationalist. Other times I would spend five minutes, saying the same line over and over again with varying degrees of enthusiasm, until I said it with complete enthusiasm. There were days when I just wouldn't feel like saying it, because it would feel like a lie to me. But that's the trouble, like the quote states at the beginning of the chapter, "Success ends when there's doubt." And that's why I continued until I no longer had doubt in my mind.

Then strange things happened, I noticed that people did find me more interesting, I gained more confidence in talking with professionals, and I started to be comfortable talking to women whom I was afraid to talk to in the past. The number of dates I was going on, at least doubled. I was more assertive at work. I was able to control politics and gossip at work to minimal levels. I became a much better manager, and developed better customer relations to the point that sales were up by 20% percent compared to the year before, on my best month sales were up by 39%, and this was a year when a recession was happening. Of course it wasn't the only factor, but it did help a lot to reprogram my brain to believe, and beliefs are very powerful. The more small victories I saw, the more I believed.

Now I'm not promising that you'll achieve miracles with an affirmation, but I promise you that writing down an affirmation and communicating it with yourself will not hinder your progress. After all how much does it cost you to have this belief? Absolutely NOTHING. That's the best part. Believing you're a great conversationalist is not going to cost you any more than it does to believe you're a terrible one. But I guarantee you if you continue to believe that you're a terrible conversationalist, it is going to cost you in many ways. It's going to cost you financial opportunities, promotions, chances at friendships, chances at love,

leading a more fun and exciting lifestyle, and being a better leader in your community.

Four Questions that Can Change Your Life

Byron Katie is the author of *Loving What Is*, she has a wonderful process of asking four questions and a turnaround to help people sort through their beliefs that do not serve a positive purpose. I would highly recommend you read her book, but let's look at her four questions and how they may apply to you as a conversationalist.

Question 1: Is it true?

Question 2: Can you absolutely know that it's true?

Question 3: How do you react when you think that thought?

Question 4: Who would you be without this thought?

Turn the statement around.

Let's look at a typical thought that entrepreneurs may have when meeting others.

"I just can't seem to be meeting the successful professional connections that help grow my business."

Is it true that you just can't seem to be meeting successful connections?

"Yes it's true, I keep meeting people who are not willing to help me grow my business I feel as if I'm stuck in a dead end with the people I'm surrounded with. They don't refer business to me but I do refer them business."

Can you absolutely know if that's true that you're not meeting successful professional connections (100% certain all the time)?

“Well, no...I can't be absolutely sure. I mean it just seems that no one wants to help me out is all. “

How do you react when you think that you can't meet successful connections?

“I just feel helpless and feel as if I'm not very successful at my own job. I create a lot of doubt about whether I'm in the right business or not and it's just very frustrating.”

Who would you be without this thought?

“I'd be a lot happier. I would probably be focussed more on serving others and looking for proactive ways to meet more successful people. I would be less frustrated and more inclined to ask others for their network as well. I wouldn't be as upset at myself.”

Turn that that thought around into an absolute positive.

“I am looking forward to meeting successful people who are willing to help me grow and succeed in my business.”

Creating Your Own Affirmation

First, choose an affirmation or statement that's relatively short, easy to remember, and makes you excited when you say it. If your affirmation is "I'm a great conversationalist." There are no fireworks to it. Notice in my affirmation I give my statement life. Ensure you give your affirmation a life of its own that has power.

Second, write down your affirmation where you know you're going to see it every day. This could be on your bathroom mirror, a note inside your wallet, on a sticky note in your car, or on the screen saver at work or home. Whatever your affirmation may be, place in somewhere visible. Put it in BIG WORDS on a poster by your entrance door, so that way when you leave your home you'll be

forced to see it when you leave. According to brain researcher and author of *Brain Rules*, John Medina, up to 50% of our brain is dedicated to visual sensing. That's why it's important to see what you believe in writing.

Third, repeat your affirmation to yourself with a sense of purpose and excitement. This way your brain processes the belief much easier. We always learn more in a fun environment than in an environment that harbours boredom. Don't create a boring environment in your mind. Create fun, excitement and spirit. Say it with passion. When you get a chance, say it several times throughout the day. During your morning, your coffee break, when you're driving home and just before you go to sleep.

Fourth, visualize what it would be like to have great conversations with people that you admire. No matter how brief it is, just visualize. I didn't expect to have a small conversation with one of my idols Brian Tracy, but yet three years after I started reading his books, which changed my life and management style, I had a brief conversation with him. We ended up discussing his trip as a teenager in Africa and how he traveled into countries without the proper visas. So imagine having those positive conversations with the people you admire and you want to meet.

Whatever you do, you have to have the belief that you are a great conversationalist. And you have to be able to tell yourself that every single day until you start to see the results in your life.

A Story about Stephanie

Stephanie was a tall and thin woman who wore petite glasses, had white and silver hair and had grown up in a generation where etiquette was highly valued and woman were expected to be reserved. She made the decision to get back into the workforce after retiring for a couple of years and started to be an assistant at a law firm. As one of my workshop attendees in my *Art of Conversation* class, she brought up the comment, "I'm always worried that I'm

boring people." I started to probe more about her life, and as I dived deeper and started asking her the right questions she and I decided that she was one of the least boring people ever.

She grew up in the Bahamas where she practiced body boarding growing up on the tropical waves. She used to "borrow" the boards from hotels and then sneak them back in when she could.

Stephanie mentioned that she had a near death experience on a small plane one time after attending a family reunion. Stephanie was gripping on to her seat saying prayers underneath her breath because her and her family happened be going through a thunderstorm at the time.

And that's just one part of her life I discovered under five minutes. She had such a rich tapestry that she was shy about sharing because she thought she was boring. But everything I discovered about Stephanie was the complete opposite.

Each and every one of us has a best selling non-fiction story to share with the world, it's just whether we believe it's a best seller or not. So don't ever believe you're a boring person, you've lived a life, had some challenges, and therefore you are the most interesting person to talk to. And that makes you a New York Times Best Seller!

Remember, before you go into any conversation, tell yourself that the other person you're about to talk to believes that you're the best person to chat with ever, believe that everybody that you chat with throughout the day wants to know more about you. And when you start to believe it, before you know it, it happens. And people will want to know more about you.

Key Points to Remember

- ✓ Believe you are the most interesting person to. Never believe that you are boring.
- ✓ Ensure that you have an affirmation written down where you can visibly see it every day.
- ✓ Visualize yourself as being a master conversationalist. Imagine the details, what your body language would be like, your feelings and how other people are responding.

Conversation Exercise 2: Change Your Beliefs Now

In your journal write down an affirmation that makes you feel empowered and motivated to be the best at the art of conversation. This affirmation needs to be stated in the positive such as, "I'm an exciting, passionate and charismatic conversationalist. The world loves me and appreciates me for who I am." A negative statement would be, "I don't want people to find me shy or weird." Negative statements will not help you get better at being charismatic.

If you want you can write down more than one affirmation. It's okay to have more than one, but you should have one that has a kick to it. Spend at least seven minutes out of your day saying them over and over again.

Ensure that you place the affirmation somewhere visible where you can see it every single day. This can be on the bathroom mirror (use a dry erase felt marker), typed on your computer screen saver, or even placed in a picture frame.

Every day, for at least 30 days, you repeat that affirmation with an enthusiastic emotion until you truly feel like the charming person you want to be. Repeat this statement in the morning when you wake up, in the afternoon, and just before you go to bed. It is important that you say your affirmation again and again, until

you truly feel like an extraordinary conversationalist. If you don't believe you're an extraordinary conversationalist, then no one else will believe you either.

Conquer Your Social Anxiety:

"Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom."

-Soren Keirkegaard

Mark was a friend of mine that had social anxiety when talking to random strangers. He was suffering from so much fear that he would have trouble maintaining conversations with staff at restaurants. As time went on, I became very annoyed with his antics. We would go out to night clubs and cafes and I would sit back and listen to him talk about how beautiful "that" girl was, and how she totally wanted him and so forth. (He was bragging at this point, a big conversation mistake.) This didn't happen once. It happened almost every time that we went out. Then one night I couldn't take his hypocrisy anymore. I was in the front seat of the car. I turned over my left shoulder and with a booming voice I yelled at him for being all talk and no action out of sheer frustration. To say the least, he was quiet for the rest of the night.

About a week later after giving him a lecture, I decided to take a step back and try to understand what it was that he was feeling. I wanted to empathize with what he was going through. Mark was no doubt going through tremendous social anxiety and social anxiety comes down to fear. Fear that the people we talk to will not like us, or that we won't feel a sense of validation when we do converse with others. And in the end we create stories in our head why we won't talk to certain people. Or we believe we don't need to. And most of us hate the feeling of being rejected.

This simple fear has held many people in the modern Western world from building a community around them. Sometimes we're afraid to talk to the woman we find absolutely attractive. Or we're afraid to talk to the man who has that dashing smile. Or we're afraid to talk to someone we admire at a conference because we might not know what to say and in the end might look like a fool in front of others. And by allowing that fear to dominate, we can miss out in some of

the best opportunities and most enlightening moments and memories of our lives.

Then there's social conditioning and the beliefs that we grow up with. Have you ever heard of this one? "Don't talk to strangers!" And when the media bombards us with stories about random acts of violence or bad news, we start to believe that strangers are bad.

There are different levels of anxiety that people face in social situations. There are some people who have agoraphobia, a fear of unfamiliar places. Their fear is so great, that they may even have trouble taking a few steps outside of their home. Then there are people who have social anxiety in networking settings where they sweat, adrenaline is high and they can't seem to think clearly.

In this particular book we won't be addressing the severe cases such as agoraphobia. However this book will give you tips that will help you manage your social anxiety in social and professional settings. I believe there's always going to be a fear of talking to strangers, it's a defence mechanism, but fear doesn't need to control us. We can manage our fear so that we can continue to live an enriching life.

What to do about Your Fear of Approaching Strangers

If you happen to be one of the people who freeze up and worry about approaching people to start a conversation then there are a several methods that might help you control your anxiety. Try them all out, and as time goes on choose the one that works best for you, or a combination.

1. **Be Aware.** What's your frame of mind when you go in and chat with a person or group?

Imagine having the following thoughts going through your head:

"I don't know anybody here. I hope I'm going to do okay."

“Wow, she’s really beautiful, she probably has lots of guys talking to her, and I don’t want to bother her.”

“It seems like they’re having a really great discussion, I don’t want to interrupt those people.”

“Wow they look so professional, I feel intimidated.”

“He’s my hero. I don’t know what I would say.”

These thoughts are in no way productive to helping you achieve success in conversing and connecting with others. If you have such thoughts before you approach a group, know that they don’t help you serve any positive purpose nor will they help you enhance your charisma more.

Instead you should reframe those negative thoughts into more positive ones.

“People love me and respect me. They find me attractive, and charming. I can talk to anyone with ease and fun.”

“I can talk to men and women as easy as eating an apple pie. I’m funny, witty, and a great story teller.”

Instead of imagining all the worst possible case scenarios that can happen during the conversation, imagine the very best that could happen. Sit down and take time to visualize that your conversations with strangers are going to be fun before you approach the situation. Paint a picture of you being best of friends, or imagine what it would be like to be holding hands with a woman that you’re attracted to, or being able to close a sale with a really big client. Just imagine the great rewards that you’ll receive simply by going up and talking to someone new.

If you concentrate hard enough to paint a picture of an experience in your mind, your brain won’t be able to tell if the experience is real or not. This is why many dreams that people are aware of seem too real when they’re still dreaming.

People can feel the emotions and physical feelings in their body. And I know I've had experiences in my mind where I can't remember if they were from the real world or from my dreams.

Does this mean it's always going to turn out to be the best? No. But does that mean it's going to happen some of the time? You bet.

2. Start walking...every journey starts with one foot at a time.

One of the ways to help you out with your social nervousness is to clear your mind when you're approaching. You would take a deep breath and exhale slowly and relax your muscles and start moving those feet of yours.

If you're in a situation that you see someone you want to talk to, the best thing to do is not to even give it a second thought but to go up and talk to that person.

Chances are if you start moving towards the person you want to chat with then you're probably not going to stop. You may have something witty to say, or maybe you have something very basic such as "My name's Vincent." It can be hard to find something that works in every situation. However the only way to find out is to try. Real education comes from action and experience.

This book can teach you tactics on how to have better conversations and give you principles on becoming a better speaker. However it's up to you and your feet to do the actual moving.

Here's the trouble. The longer you wait the more anxiety you will have. The more anxiety you have the more you will create false stories of hopelessness in your head that haven't even happened yet.

Remember that every big goal starts with a small goal. If you find that you're overwhelmed with talking to strangers, then go to the places you are most familiar with and start talking to those particular people. Maybe you go to a certain coffee shop all the time and you've seen a barista who works there

regularly. Start talking to her. Maybe you see a co-worker at work and you've never had the chance to have a conversation beyond the "hi" and "bye." Try making it a goal to talk to him for 30 seconds. Whatever small steps you think are appropriate to take, start taking them today!

3. Distract yourself with another more powerful and positive emotion.

You've done the things above and it still doesn't seem to be working, and so what is it that you can possibly do to ease the tension? Laughter. I find that if I'm under extremely stressful situations, I'll remember a time when someone said something wacky, or something that made me roll on the floor laughing. And when I'm focused on that, it helps my body ease up just a little bit more. It makes me feel more relaxed and then after that I go and I approach the person I want to talk to. This allows me to be in a more positive mood and positive energy.

Think of something funny from work, a story that your friend told you or even a joke that you remember from a TV show. Focus on what made it particularly funny, and try to relive that moment until you have a smile on your face.

The best stories are the ones that are personal to you. They may not be funny to other people but most importantly that it's funny to you.

I remember there was one time when I was sitting down and having a burger with two of my friends. As we sat down they were speaking in Mandarin but both were more familiar with Cantonese. They said something that was loosely translated in Mandarin as "I like my country." Looking at my first friend, I tried to translate it into Cantonese, and I said to him "You like juice?" The words sounded like that in Cantonese. He started laughing. My second friend was about to burst coffee through his mouth and nose. Then my first friend looked at me all serious "Did you say you like Jews?" I looked at him, I said, "No, I like juice. Isn't that what you said in Mandarin?" It ended up being a translational mess from Chinese to English. But I still like to laugh about it.

4. Smile for no reason.

I learned this particular technique from sales trainer Howard Olsen of [High Output Training Systems](#). If I feel that I'm unhappy or there's a situation that makes me feel uncomfortable, like talking to new people, I will make the biggest grin on my face in a washroom by myself or quiet place where no one can see me. I grin as big as I can, until I can start to feel relaxed in my chest and around my shoulders. And many times because I feel so silly for having this fake grin on my face, I will laugh at myself and develop a real smile.

And when that genuine smile kicks in, it calms me down, and decreases my nervousness a lot. Go ahead try it right now. Smile as big as you can for the next 2 minutes and see what happens.

5. Go out and compliment somebody else.

Now if you're finding that you are still having social anxiety, and you're still imagining the worst case scenarios in your head, then one of the best exercises I've been recommended is to take the time to compliment people you know or who you are acquaintances with. If you're bold then you can compliment strangers.

Victor was a young fashion entrepreneur in his twenties, he was Asian and wore a grey hoody and had a quiet, calm and confident demeanour. He was out with me receiving some coaching on how to talk to women while they were walking on the street. He didn't have much experience talking to strangers before other than for his business.

I started him off with a simple task of complimenting a woman. He stopped two young women in the street, made a genuine compliment to one of them on how beautiful she was. She smiled, and said to him, "That's very nice of you to say. Thank you." She seemed a little startled from the compliment at first. What was

wonderful about this particular experience is that Victor made her day and in return he felt great for being able to compliment with grace.

Taking the time out of your day to compliment three people you know can add positive reinforcement that it's easy to be charming and that people are open to compliments when you tell them.

These compliments can be as simple as your colleague's work ethic, thanking your mother for the meal she cooked the other day, or letting a friend how you appreciate how great of a listener she is.

Whatever it is, this is a good way to start overcoming social anxiety for the long term. Once you've done the complimenting, notice how the other person feels and how you feel.

Before attending any event, this is a good way to help warm yourself up to a crowd you don't know. Compliment people you know, call them up and just tell them something fantastic about them. They might think it's strange, but that's not what matters. What you will see happen is that you'll make them smile. Then head into the event by making other people feel great about themselves.

For more in depth look on how to compliment, you can always look at the chapter on the Appreciation and the Art of Complimenting.

6. Reduce objects to the absurd

If you're having trouble clearing your mind, and you're about to walk but somehow you feel that your feet is crazy glued to the ground, you can always reduce objects you see to the absolute absurd. This means looking at an object and just thinking to yourself random thoughts related to the object that you're looking at or the process it would have taken to make such an object.

Let's say I'm looking at an oak table, I might go, "Wow, that's an oak table. That means someone had to get up in the morning, go to a forest, look for an oak

tree, somewhere not in the city. Cut it down with a chainsaw, and then have it dragged. And then it was sent to a processing mill, where I'm sure it got cut up even further into the appropriate size..."

What this does is that it takes away your focus from the nervousness and helps calm the nerves down. Once you've reduced things to the absurd, then go and move your feet!

There are so many different ways that you can reduce your anxiety levels when talking with strangers. The methods discussed are just a few to help you relax. I believe it's best to start off with using one of the methods discussed, and then move onto another method. See which ones you find most effective for yourself and even feel free to combine several methods together to see what results you may get.

Key Points to Remember:

You can manage your social anxiety by:

- ✓ Being aware of your thoughts in a social situation. Are they negative and putting you down, or are they bright and supportive?
- ✓ Immediately start to walk to the person you want to talk to. Movement gets us out of our head.
- ✓ Thinking of something really funny, or silly that you can laugh about.
- ✓ Smiling with a big smile until it makes you feel like sunshine.
- ✓ Complimenting Others
- ✓ Reducing objects to their absurd, to the point of nonsense.

Conversation Exercise 3: Anxiety Management

Part A: For the next three days, compliment three people per day. These compliments do not need to be massively moving. Compliment people and then write your results in your journal and notice your anxiety levels before and after delivering a compliment.

Part B: One of the best ways to relax in any situation is to use humour. Think of two funny stories that you have been involved with personally. Write them down in your journal so that you can always refer back to them when you need to. Once you've written the stories down, read over them at least three times. Next time you go out and get nervous, take the time to recall those stories and have a quick laugh.

STOP AND READ: If you've come this far and have done all the exercises and have written in your journal entries, don't forget to recognize and reward yourself for your hard work. Positive reinforcement is important in continuing your journey into world of conversation.

First Impressions Should Impress the First Time

“Our appearance is a powerful communication tool, sending messages to every sighted person. Everyone is highly influenced by the visual impression of a person they are meeting for the first time.”

-Catherine Bell

I used to work as a manager at an espresso bar for the largest hotel in Vancouver. A position as a barista opened up and someone applied for the job. I looked at the résumé and decided to bring the person in for an interview. I was hoping that he would be articulate and have the social skills to be a good fit for the job.

When the interviewee walked in, he was wearing white running shoes that were slightly scuffed, a black puffy winter jacket, and ripped jeans. I looked at him, down then up, and was in complete disbelief. I could even feel my own pupil dilate from the shock. Without him saying even one word I decided that within that half a second that he was not going to be part of our team.

I was beyond disappointment to say the least. I don't know anyone who would show up for any kind of interview with that kind of wardrobe. And yet how many people are there that are doing this at networking events and on their dates? One too many!

I know growing up that many of us have heard the phrase: “Looks don't matter; it's who you are on the inside that counts.” Down deep inside, I would like to believe that looks and appearances don't matter, but my nagging voice says in practice it does.

I live in Vancouver, and at the moment in the downtown core. I would walk by homeless people every day and watch how they were treated by other strangers. Some people were very polite, others would be down right rude and blunt. Most people tended to ignore them. They wouldn't make any eye contact, and

wouldn't even listen to these people for half a second. Stereotypes play a role. But imagine that same person brushed his teeth, shaved his beard, and was dressed up in a business suit and decided to ask for a quarter because he was short to take the train or bus. I'm sure people would react differently. Chances are, people probably wouldn't yell at him for being well dressed.

You don't have a second chance to make a first impression. And if your first impression is a great one, it will leave a lasting mark that people remember you by. Think about the last time you had a wonderful customer experience at a restaurant. I can imagine that you were expecting the same level of service when you went back. However, if you had a poor first experience, then chances are that restaurant would have to work hard to win you back.

What do first impressions entail?

For me first impressions are about your body language, how you dress, how you smile, and how your conversations are initiated. When I made it a focus to just work on my first impressions, I noticed people would smile more at me, were friendlier, listened more, were more receptive to feedback, and even seemed to laugh more at my jokes. The greatest change of all was that I felt more confident when I dressed in a style that was comfortable yet respectable. This could have just been my perception, but I also noticed that a lot of my friends and clients I've worked with went through the same experience. The ones that dressed better and had more fashion sense seemed to be getting better social and professional responses than those that were dressed down.

There is no doubt about it that the very first thing people will notice about you is your appearance. And your appearance is an extension of who you are on the inside.

Nadia Iadisernia, an Image and Style Consultant with Ultra U, had a 25 year old male client come to her for help. John had recently re-located to Vancouver from a small town and worked in management for an IT company.

He had issues with his image since he looked a lot younger than his actual age and felt he was not being taken seriously at work. Plus, he had a difficult time meeting “city” women. Nadia could see why. When she first met John he wore baggy jeans, a hoody and sneakers. This was his normal daily attire - not very grown up. She was able to kick up his style a notch by ensuring his clothes were a little more tailored to his body shape. She included a sport jacket, straight leg jeans, trousers and casual shoes to his wardrobe. Plus, she added splashes of color – which women love – such as a scarf, a colourful shirt and an argyle sweater. At the same time, she advised him to get a proper haircut – a more grown up look.

The turnaround was amazing, as the outside change finally matched his inside. John suddenly felt more confident with the person he really is. He mentioned that within a week there was a change in the way his staff acted towards him. They started seeing him as their leader/manager since the clothes he was now wearing was representing that role. They were finally taking him seriously. His social life also took an upturn; suddenly he had no problem approaching women since his confidence level was now up. Women noticed his style along with his personality.

The best part of this story is that Nadia was at a department store one day and saw a well-dressed good looking guy from the corner of eye. As it turned out, it was John. They had a good laugh about it.

Don't mistaken that dressing well will make you a better conversationalist. What it will do is that when you do have better social skills that it will make it much easier for you to start conversations with a variety of people, ranging from children to executives.

When attending networking events you want to always dress to impress. As first impressions take only 3-30 seconds to form you want treat these professional encounters as a job interview - no matter what product or business you are

representing. From a mechanic to a consultant, when networking, you always want to put your best self forward. However, be mindful of not overdoing it. Keep your style basic and clean. Here are a few tips from Ultra U of *what not to wear* when networking:

- Sleeveless top
- T-shirt
- Athletic shoes
- Sandals
- Scuffed shoes
- Jeans
- Shirt with words or pictures
- Wrinkled clothing
- Hats of any kind
- Clothes that are too revealing
- Baggy clothing
- Skirts that are too short
- Spandex pants for working out
- Sweat Pants
- Sandals

If you take the time to dress yourself appropriately for the occasion, you won't need a sign on your forehead that says "I'm competent" or "I'm the person you've been looking for."

If you're going to be at a formal business networking event, it would make sense to wear a dress shirt, or a tie or a suit. I have been to professional events where someone would be wearing a baseball cap and a dress shirt tucked into the jeans. The impression I got was that he wasn't a professional and that I noticed that people didn't approach to talk to him.

If you're a woman, I would suggest dressing up in a business suit, or a nice top that goes well with business pants. It's better to stay on the conservative side and not wear anything that would be considered too revealing or too sexy.

But most importantly for men and women, dress comfortably or else your agitation with your clothes will show up in your body language and give a bad first impression.

Dressing For the Single Life

If you happen to be single and are attending a first date or going to a place to meet other singles then the following are some guidelines that will help you create a fantastic impression.

1) Dress in a way that conveys you are there for a date. Do not dress as if you are doing your laundry, going for a run, or you're out to hunt for the abdominal snowman. Dress for the date.

2) Dress appropriately for where the date is taking place. If you're going out for a dinner then dressing up in a more classy and sexy way is okay for both men and women. But if you're both heading to the beach that day then wear beachwear.

3) Dress comfortably. There's no point in wearing nice stylish clothes if you don't feel comfortable in them. This will take away from enjoying the magic of your date. It will be guaranteed that dressing uncomfortably will take away some of your confidence when you are trying to meet someone special.

4) A safe bet for men is to ensure they groom themselves, have a great dress shirt that is clean and pressed, a sports jacket and a great pair of khakis or jeans that don't clash with the shirt or jacket. It's important not to wear ripped clothing and to ensure that if you wear dress shoes that they are clean and shining. Neutral colours are always a good way to go. A well groomed man is the most important aspect of a first impression to a woman.

5) Women should wear clothes that are used to attract men, and should try not to dress for other women if possible. This means wearing clothes that look good on you and don't scream out high maintenance. Often, when women overdress it can be very intimidating to a man, especially if she dons on a lot of name brands. Don't wear clothes that are too revealing, too short or heels that are just too high as this could send the wrong message. Accessories are okay but ensure you don't overdo it, you don't want to look like a voodoo doll. And like men, neutral colours are always good.

6) Wear clothes that fit for your body type. Wearing clothes that are too big make you look small and clumsy, and at times can make you look older as well. If you wear clothes that are too tight you could look silly and can be incredibly uncomfortable for your breathing. Ensure that you can move your torso freely and that your clothes are snug so that they fit the frame of whatever body part it was designed for but at the same time you can take a breath easily when you want to.

Dress to Impress = Perceived Confidence by Others

What you wear speaks volumes of who you are. It can say a lot about your personality and what values you have. Your first non-verbal impression can either scream out CONFIDENCE or it can squeak out LOW SELF-ESTEEM. And if you want to be able to be a great conversationalist, you need to be able to scream out confidence with your non-verbal communication before even saying a word. This is partially about being charming. Do people perceive you as confident before you even say a word? Again, compare the person with a business suit with a homeless person in rags. When you think of the two, and put any political correctness aside, which one do you think of as lazy and the other as hard working?

As harsh as it may seem, we live in a society that is surrounded by perceptions. We are surrounded by people who will make snap judgements. We're in a

society where we don't want to judge. But we have to. If we assess each and every single person to see who he really is, our brains would go into overload. Just imagine a work day where you had to process every little action you did in your brain. ``I have to take my first step out of bed, and then I have to go and put toothpaste on my toothbrush, and then put it near my teeth, and then...`` It's very daunting. We have to make quick judgments as part of our survival.

Sadly there aren't a lot of us that have the sense of spirituality that Mother Theresa or the Dalai Lama has. And so we are going to judge, and people are going to judge us. I don't think that will change any time soon.

People are going to look at you, and like a homeless person, quickly assess the type of person you are. They'll have preconceived notions before you even say a word. Just like me with my interviewee Dan. It only took two seconds.

Do the Small Things Right

Imagine the small steps you took that could ruin your health. One day you get one hour of less sleep, then you miss your breakfast, and then you stop eating vegetables for a week. You no longer take your 20 minute walks that you used to. And eventually this leads to terrible health. However it works in the reverse direction too. Dressing well, having a whiter smile, getting your hair styled, always saying "hi" to coworkers can lead you to be a more welcoming person to talk to.

If you ever wonder what kind of impression you're making, one of the exercises I do with my clients is to walk around to strangers and ask them what they think of my clients. Many of them had no idea that simple things such as a goatee, wearing hiking boots, or having a cell phone hanging from their belt were hindering them from making great connections with people. If you're not ready to ask strangers, then I would suggest that you ask your friends (the ones that can be honest) to give you their feedback of what their first impressions are.

Now if you're not too sure how to dress to give the best impression, then I would suggest you find an image consultant (someone that is part of the Association of Image Consultants International) who will help you pick out a wardrobe and suggest styles that work for you. There are image consultants that can help women and men dress their best for any occasion.

Try it out. I'm always surprised to see when people dress better, and find clothing that fits them comfortably that other people are more open to talking to them. And then I just watch how their confidence changes for the better. So get up, get dressed, and go impress!

Here is just a small warning, though it's important to be able to dress in a way that impresses, and even though I do believe that looks and grooming matter, it's important to never become obsessed with your appearances so that when one small thing seems to be wrong that you're going to correct it. It can be easy to be trapped in a world of vanity. Remember that looks are only a part of being charismatic and feeling confident, it is never the whole picture.

Key Points to Remember:

- ✓ Try to keep your wardrobe up to date for different occasions, and donate or throw away used clothing that you haven't worn in the last six months to a year.
- ✓ Dress professionally when going to networking events and avoid casual looks at these events.
- ✓ When dressing for a date, dress for the date in clothes that are comfortable and make you feel confident, and neutral colours.
- ✓ Wear clothes that fit your body type. Don't wear clothes that are too loose and large or too itty bitty.
- ✓ Aim to make a great first impression in your personal and social life.

Conversational Exercise 4: Dress to Impress

Take a look at your wardrobe. Ask yourself and a friend “If I were to wear this, what kind of first impression would I be giving off?” Be brutally honest with yourself. Dump out all the clothes that you no longer wear, and clothes that offer a terrible first impression. (Donate the clothes to a charity.)

Start purchasing clothes that make people go “Wow.” If you feel that you need assistance, you can always find an image consultant to help you. If finances are a concern, take time each month to replace one or two articles. By the end of six months you will have a selection of great clothes that will offer a “wow” factor.

Look Me in the Eye and Tell me That

“It is better to trust the eyes rather than the ears.”

-German Proverb

A new lounge had opened up in Vancouver, and one of the largest young professional networking groups was hosting one of their monthly meetings at the lounge. I ran into an old acquaintance that I had not seen in months. I'll call him Steve. Steve was resting at the bar and waved me down to come join him. As I approached and exchanged our greetings he introduced me to his female companion that was to his right. I shook her hand and introduced myself. As I started talking about our favourite charities with Steve's friend, I noticed that Steve kept looking elsewhere. I tried to involve him into the conversation by asking him directly some questions. But he gave short one or two word answers and then looked away and turned his head left and right as if he was looking for another person to talk to. I couldn't figure out what he was trying to look at. Personally I thought it was poor etiquette, and quite frankly, I was quite baffled about why he had invited me over in the first place.

What made it strange other than the short answers was the lack of eye contact being made. Eye contact is absolutely essential when you're trying to make a connection with any person. Whether you are trying to have a conversation with a cashier, the person sitting next to you in a seminar or someone you're romantically interested in, having eye contact says a lot about your confidence and willingness to be friendly. If your eyes tend to wander or you don't look at people when you're talking to them, even if you are listening, people will perceive you as rude, too shy, being cold and with certain body language this can be displayed as creepy.

If you have trouble making eye contact, then you're going to find that many people will have trouble trusting you. There's a North American cultural belief that when we need to tell someone the truth we ask him to look us in the eye and

tell us the statement again. If the person doesn't blink, then there's a deduction that he's probably telling the truth. But imagine if he decides to constantly look down, and he shifts his eyes and fidgets, then chances are we would probably jump to the conclusion that the person just is not worth trusting.

This is vitally important in making any particular business contact. Taking the time to look at someone while she shakes your hand can build up trust much faster.

I am aware also that there are some cultures where making eye contact could be considered poor etiquette. It's important to find out the guidelines of another person before assuming how eye contact should be made.

Think back to the time that someone didn't make eye contact with you. How did that make you feel? Did you feel like you were being listened to? Did you feel more anxious than usual when he didn't look at you? Did you feel like this was someone you could trust based on their first impression?

Making eye contact can be hard and intimidating at first, especially with strangers or people you are meeting for the first time. I remember when I started to consciously make eye contact with new customers at the coffee shop I managed and strangers on the street. I felt like my stomach was twisted into a rope.

I would go out of my comfort zone, and look people in the eye when I saw them from across the street for as long as possible. I would look at people even if they didn't look at me, and when they turned and faced me, I didn't turn away.

For me the first 3 months of the exercise made me nauseated, but after that, I felt much more confident and noticed how much more people responded. The most interesting thing was I actually started to know who was looking back.

I remember one day as I was closing my coffee shop, I looked up and made eye contact with a cute Latina. I was expecting her to just look at me and then look away but she ended up looking back and flashing this gorgeous smile at me. And it brought a smile to my own face. And it's one of several memories I have of a woman flashing her pearly whites at me.

Men Making Eye Contact with Other Men: Stare Down or Friendly Gesture?

Robert was a person whom I originally met at a networking event. When we first met, he was rather soft spoken and made very soft eye contact but I could tell that he was a little shy. After attending a personal development workshop, his confidence skyrocketed. The only trouble now was that he was making eye contact with other men with wide opened glued eyes. Unfortunately he went from being shy to being overly dominant with his eye contact. When he attended my workshop he received feedback that his eye contact was too intimidating and that he needed to tone it down to make others feel relaxed, comfortable and connected to him.

If you're a man talking to another man, it's best that you maintain eye contact some of the times as opposed to looking at him with "glued eyes." Ensure that when you are talking and if you're looking away, you're not looking at another object, or trying to look for someone else to talk to. I usually look slightly down on the floor as if to indicate that I'm giving thought to what he's saying and nod lightly after I agree with a statement. Sometimes if you look at another man too long, it can be perceived as hostile, so you want to be careful how long you keep your eye contact for.

But when you're having a conversation and you want someone to believe that you are listening to him, and then you need to commit your eyes on him. Feel free to move your eyes every 3-4 seconds (or about 30% of your conversation at least), and look away for two or three seconds and then turn back. If you happen to have a drink with you, you can always look away while sipping your drink.

Unless there's something else of real importance then stay focused on the other person. It's important you look away once in a while or else you can be perceived as creepy and scare people. If you end up gluing your eyes too strongly to another person, they may become self conscious and wonder what it is you're exactly staring at and at times it will generate hostile feelings. However if you use eye contact in moderation, the person will feel that you are truly paying attention to him, and most people appreciate and respect that you are paying attention.

Group Eye Contact

If you are in a group environment, make sure you make eye contact with all the people in the group whether they look back or not. If you notice that another person is speaking, give him or her most of your attention. But on occasion, take the time to look at the rest of the group and see how they react. And then go back and maintain eye contact with the person talking again. It's important to look at other people in the group because this will allow you to see how other people are reacting to what the main speaker is saying.

I've also found that if you take time to look at other people you will notice that some people are looking to jump into the conversation. Some of these people look like they're just about to speak, or they raise their arm slightly but subside because they're waiting for other person to finish. If you've found that someone has hogged up the conversation a little too long, feel free to jump in and go "Looks like John here wanted to say something." This gives people the perception that you're very attentive and aware of others. And this is the reason you want to quickly glance over at others during a group conversation.

Blinking Too Much

An aspect of eye contact that doesn't get mentioned much but does occur in some circumstances is blinking too much. I remember going on a TV interview for a morning television show on behalf of the dating company I worked for, Man

Meets Woman, and I noticed that during the first two minutes of the interview I blinked a lot. There was no doubt in my mind that I was nervous. It was my first time being interviewed for a local television station. Now looking back, I also noticed that some people blink noticeably more than others. Blinking too much can be a distraction and is the same as fidgeting. When I think of people fidgeting I believe that person is nervous and it triggers the thought, "I don't know, there's something off about this person. Why does he always fidget?" Most people generally don't have this problem. But notice to see if you blink a lot when you are nervous. And if you're not sure, ask a friend when you guys are having a casual conversation. Ask him or her to be honest.

Remember sometimes you have to let your eyes do the talking, even if they never say a word.

Let the Eyes do the Attraction and Seducing

Leil Lowdnes, author of *How to Make Anyone Fall In Love with You*, has a great section on making eye contact for romantic purposes.

There's something very primal about looking at someone in the eye and feeling an attraction to him or her. And if you're wondering if the length and the way you look at a person play a role in attraction, it plays a big role.

If you want to create the feeling of affection and intimacy with someone you're attracted to, you won't be able to treat it like a regular conversation. On average with most conversations, most people maintain between 30-60 percent eye contact throughout their conversations. In Leil's book she suggests that in order to create that level of close intimacy with a person you need to look at the person you're attracted to for at least 75 percent of the time of conversation in order for it to work.

This is vitally important when you're going out on a date. I've always found that a deeper connection can be formed when you decide to gaze into a woman's eyes

especially when attraction is slowly being built. And by gazing at her, this can create some tension, and increase her pulse rate and breathing. If you gaze at her and don't say a word, it will keep her guessing what you are thinking. She might be thinking "Is he going to kiss me? Why is he looking at me? Or, wow I feel so attracted to him." Learning to gaze at a woman who is attracted to you during a romantic date is magnetically powerful in creating attraction between two people. This works in reverse as well, men like to have that close connection through eye contact.

There's the saying that the eyes are the windows to the souls, but how you look through those windows is vital. Let's say that you go up and approach a woman at a book store who you are attracted to. You're interested in chatting with her, so the first thing you want to do is ensure that you make eye contact with her. But what is the best way to make eye contact? The best way is to look at her directly with "soft eyes" and have her look back at you before you say anything. This shows that she recognizes you are addressing her.

What are soft eyes? Soft eyes are when your facial muscles around your eyes and forehead are relaxed. The opposite of soft eyes is to create glued eyes feel like they are bulging out and ready to pop. Relax your facial muscles by having a sincere smile on your face while you are making eye contact.

Traditionally men and women have been attracted to people with large pupils as opposed to small ones. This has been shown across all cultures. This fact is interesting because you can use it in two ways.

First, if someone throughout your conversation starts to have enlarged pupils this indicates that this person is excited to be around you. When people are excited and attracted to you their pupils will grow in size and in many cases they will almost have a hypnotic or glassy look. (Step inside a casino and watch people play slots. This is the hypnotic glassy eyed look.)

Second, by being excited by thinking exciting thoughts you can also enlarge your pupils which will make you naturally more attractive. The best way to be excited in a sincere way is to look at the person in front of you and choose one of their attractive features that you find irresistible, this could be the way he smiles, the way their hair is styled, and even their eyes.

Eye contact is essential in developing any dating or long term romantic relationship and shouldn't be taken lightly on how powerful a sub communicator it is. If you want to stimulate romance and create butterflies in a person's stomach, you have to be able to look directly into a person's eye. A picture may be a thousand words, but great romantic eye contact can bring up a thousand different feelings.

I make it a point to always look my girlfriend in the eye and hold our gaze for 5 or 6 seconds without saying anything. And then a smile will come across her face, I feel myself feeling loved and she'll lean in and get a kiss from me. Let eye contact show you the way to romance as well.

Key Points to Remember

- ✓ Eye contact with a person signals that you are paying attention to him.
- ✓ Eye contact is used to build trust and rapport in a way that words are not able to do.
- ✓ When meeting professionals or people for platonic reason maintain eye contact at least one-third of the time.
- ✓ In a group ensure that you make eye contact with everyone. This acknowledges that you recognize everyone in the group and not just one or two people.
- ✓ When creating romance, look at the opposite gender with soft eyes and look at them approximately three-quarters of the time to burst up feelings of attraction.

Conversation Exercise 5: Eye Contact

Go practice eye contact in the following three situations:

- a) At the next social function that involves family or friends. Look at them while they are talking to you.
- b) When you are talking to your colleagues at work, especially if they are giving you instructions or information that is vital to a task. If you find that you are comfortable doing that then...
- c) Start making eye contact with strangers on the street, in the supermarket, the bookstore, or where people gather. You first look at people regardless of whether they look back at you. Then if they do look back, look at them for half a second and then glance away afterwards. Continue to push yourself to make eye contact with strangers until you feel comfortable looking at strangers for 3 seconds in a row.

A good way to start with strangers is to look at people who are crossing the street in the opposite direction that you are walking in. Keep looking at them so that your head turns slightly with them as they move, without turning your head fully. This way you're not obligated to end up being in a staring contest

Write down how this makes you feel in your journal entries, and what did you notice about you conversations when you consciously decided to make more eye contact with others.

P.S. Don't forget to give yourself a pat on the back for all your hard work up to this point. Tell yourself you're doing an excellent job so far.

Get Your Body to Speak Confidently

"I speak two languages, body and English."

-Mae West

One of my idols was coming to town to do a presentation. When I found out I was ecstatic and jumped at the chance to purchase tickets as soon as I could, and told my boss excitedly that I was taking the day off. That person was Tony Robbins. Tony is a man that teaches people to live their dreams passionately and to pursue their own happiness. And when I attended the seminar I paid extra close attention.

Tony is a towering man and full of energy and vibrancy that it puts most teenagers to shame. I remember watching him go on the stage. There was this energy that radiated from him that made him hard to ignore for even half a second. I was in awe of how this man occupied the stage around him. One aspect of what makes him such a great speaker is his posture which creates a strong presence on stage throughout the whole time he's there on stage. The way he stood up straight, and his chest slightly out and his shoulders were back, you could tell that this man commanded the stage without even a hint of whisper.

Whether you're talking to one person or you're talking to a group of people, your posture is important. It's the one of the first things people will notice unconsciously or consciously about you. Your body language can tell people if you're shy, you're confident, you're tired, or you're happy. The brain is processing thousands of small subtleties on the subconscious level, and this is before you've even had a chance to say one word.

Gerald's Body Language

Gerald was one of my Art of Conversation workshop attendants that came to help improve his social skills in attracting women and his interpersonal skills at the office. He was working as a manager for a mid size accounting firm and was

in his forties. When he came to my course his body posture was good, but it didn't bellow out confidence nor was his posture attractive. I walked up to him and straightened his back and slightly put his chest out and shoulders out. I asked the other attendees what the difference was when his posture was corrected and they all agreed that he was much more confident, he was more noticeable, and that the energy exuberated was much more far reaching. According to one participant it was "a world of difference than before."

The Number One Mistake Men Make With Their Body Language

Let's have a bit of a drum roll. Are you ready for the biggest body language error that men make that takes away their credibility and attractiveness? It's slouching. Now I'm sure most of us are not like the Hunchback of Notre Dame, but I've watched many men approach strangers, and they're slouching without even realizing it. The difference between the Hunchback and most men is that Hunchback was born slouching, and most men without even knowing it, are choosing to slouch. Slouching is the equivalent of dragging your feet on the ground. It's sloppy and can signify to others that you're tired and have low self esteem. And while most men may think that a slight slouch is not a big deal that slight slouch can be accentuated by one hundred times when they are in a room full of confident men that are like Tony Robbins. By slouching, people present a weak presence in the room. I would never imagine seeing a great motivational speaker on stage slouching while they talk.

Slouching also prevents improper breathing since it compresses the lungs. And if your breathing is affected, then the tone of your voice will change too. This is very important because only 7% of communication comes from the actual words that are being said. The other 93% comes from body language, eye contact, tempo of the voice and the tone.

To see how detrimental slouching can be to both appearances and to the way that you speak, go in front of mirror and exaggerate your slouch and then try to

talk. Now, slowly rise up and see the differences in breathing and the way you feel. Now, stand up completely straight and breathe. As you straighten out your back completely, visualize that the spine from the bottom of the back all the way to the top of the neck is lined up completely straight. During the time that you're changing positions I want you to rate your presence on a scale of 1 to 10. The number 10 being that you feel great and absolute confident, 1 being you feel absolutely terrible.

One way to ease into straightening your posture is to lie down on your back for five minutes a day. If you find that you're quite uncomfortable lying straight down on your back then you need to do some stretching first as your back is too stiff. Ease into lying on your back and imagine that you're being heavily set in. Do this daily until you feel completely comfortable on your back. And then start practicing standing up straight on your spine. Of course if you have back pain of any sort, or if you have a history of back pain, get permission from your doctor before doing any strenuous exercise or if you have back problems to begin with.

The issue for most people is that they lack back strength to maintain an upright posture and therefore, they go back to slouching. The best way to deal with it is to consciously be aware of the slouching and correct yourself when you notice it. Eventually your muscles get the idea, and like walking, if you do enough of it, will strengthen those muscles. However, like most things in life it's not that simple. Ensure that you stay healthy by exercising regularly, eating a healthy diet, getting sleep, and try not to use your back muscles for stiff standing and lifting for long periods of time.

The Number One Mistake Women Make With Their Body Language

I was attending a seminar on how to hold workshops that was presented by a wonderful company called Leader to Luminary, which is run by Callan Rush and Justin Livingston. Callan has been a veteran speaker and has trained others how to be better seminar presenters, specifically for women. One of most frequent

issues that female presenters have is their inability to create a presence on stage. It's a presence that displays a body language that squeaks "I'm shy and fragile."

Some of the body language signals that she pointed out that speakers had that gave the impression that they were too shy were when they stood with their legs and feet close together, almost to the point that the big toes were touching each other and their hands tended to be very close to the abs and stiff so that it formed a V. It's a position that generally most women feel "small." And generally there's a slight tilt in their head that faces downward so that it makes it hard for them to make eye contact with people.

What's interesting is that even though Callan was discussing public speaking, in my experience this is an exact mirroring of social interactions whether it is a one on one chat or when talking to large groups.

The women that I pay attention to the most are ones that always stand up straight, chin slightly up and walk with confidence (as if they are walking with a purpose) and a smile. You need to be careful of not raising your chin too high or walking with a cold expression on your face. This can come off as intimidating or arrogant and can scare away both men and women that may want to chat with you. It may not be your intention to intimidate others but how others perceive you can be different from how you see yourself.

Women of confidence that stand tall (your height doesn't matter) have a presence about them. These women stand and look at me with soft but assertive eyes. They have their feet slightly apart as opposed to having them close together. (Keeping your feet shoulder width apart is a good general rule to follow.) And their hands are more relaxed when they are talking to people where it doesn't form a stiff V or as one business coach called it the "fig leaf position." The important thing is to remember to keep a balance. If you're finding that

you're putting too much strain in such a position then relax it slightly, but ensure that you don't have the sensation of being small.

Common Body Language Mistakes

Let's identify some poor body language postures and what you should be doing.

- Don't slouch- Do stand up straight. Keep your legs at about shoulder width apart, and one leg slightly forward. (If you keep your legs side by side, you would like you're in the military.)
- Don't keep your hands in your pocket all the time- Do keep your hands open where people can see them. Try not to be stiff and hold them straight along the sides, as this makes you look like a different version of Frankenstein. Keep your hands in a comfortable and loose U shape in front of you if necessary. I've noticed that only nervous people will place their hands in their pockets while talking to someone the whole night. People that are engaged in a great conversation rarely do that. They use their hands to accentuate points and animate the conversation. Keeping your hands open to other people subconsciously tells others that you are open and have nothing to hide.
- Don't cross your arms when talking to people- Do what was mentioned above. Even when it's cold, try not to cross your hands because people may perceive you as being guarded, and therefore, to connect with another person may take more effort.
- Don't keep your hands tightly gripped and arms stiff- Do relax your hands, arms and shoulders. (Look at the section about social anxiety for ways to relieve social anxiety.) If you find that your hands are producing a lot of sweat, then keep a napkin or tissue paper in your pocket. Grab it when you find your palms are sweaty. Women should carry some in their purse and dry their hands before they go and talk to another person.
- Do smile (when appropriate.)- Don't carry a bland and serious expression on your face when meeting people at a networking event, seminar or a social gathering. Also don't give half smiles to people. I've seen men and women

talk to me and give this polite but not very enthusiastic smile, and it drives me nuts. Give full smiles, but make sure they aren't smiles that hurt your cheek I've noticed that nothing gets another person smiling more than having her see you carry a great smile. I can't tell you the countless times my customers come in with a frown and then change to a smile once they see me with my pearly whites.

Remember to go out there and be like Mae West, and speak the language of body. But your body needs a vital flow of energy that can only come from breathing.

Breathe for Great Posture

Debra was a woman in her late twenties with long hair and would wear casual business every time she came to class. She was one of my students at one of the courses I had taught for an adult education class. She was an office administrator for a law office and when she first stepped in the class it was quite obvious she was shy. She had come to my class hoping to learn to be more assertive and to be able to express her opinions more confidently. The first thing I coached Debra on was her own posture and how it affected her breathing.

“Debra I’m going to show you how you look like and how you sound.”

She was almost in complete shock, and for the first time she realized the impression she gave, and the fact that she did not realize she was so quiet and looked tired.

“I had no idea Vincent that that’s what was going on. Wow.”

“Debra if you start to sit up straight, and start breathing deeper you’ll find that there will be more assertiveness in the tone of your voice and that you’ll also find that people will listen to you more carefully. However by keeping your chin down you restrict your breathing, causing you to be quiet and shy tone and will cause

you to slouch. But if you make it a point to breathe deeply it can be hard not to keep a confident and assertive body posture.”

Most people underestimate the importance of breathing that many of us have taken for granted. There are better ways to breathe that support body posture and social anxiety, and like Debra you may not be fully aware of how they affect your daily conversations.

When you are talking for long periods of time it can be hard to maintain your body posture and this usually due to a lack of energy entering your body. The easiest way is to ensure that you keep supplying the body with constant flow oxygen. Oxygen is good energy for the body.

Slouching and tightening yourself into a little standing ball can restrict muscle movement and breathing. When this happens, poor posture inevitably follows and when poor posture happens so does poor breathing. Both are reliant on each other.

Now, in order to get the most out your breaths you need to stand up tall and keep your chin slightly up so as not to compress the airways to your lungs. Your lungs and all supporting muscles and organs need the freedom to bring in air. By restricting your body you have unintentionally put them in a tightened jail cell. Try pushing your chin slowly towards your collar bone and you'll see how much harder it can be to breathe and relax. Your breathing is your freedom.

If you are having a conversation at a dinner table and do not have the freedom to stand as if you were in a cocktail party, ensure that your back still stays straight and that it is not curving. Do not sit on your tail bone as this will cause lung and diaphragm compression.

There are generally two ways to breathe, there is shallow breathing and there's deep breathing. Shallow breathing just uses the power of your lungs while deep breathing uses the power of the diaphragm.

In order to get full deep breaths, you have to breathe through your diaphragm. It's one of the ways that you're going to be able to carry on long conversations where food and even water may not be available at the time. If you're not too sure if you are doing this properly, put your hand over your belly button and notice if it rises while you breathe. If it does, then you are breathing with your diaphragm. If not, then imagine yourself pushing your belly slightly forward and this should help get the process started.

If you find that when you breathe that your chest and shoulder are the only parts that are rising then you're taking shallow breaths. If your stomach rises slightly as well as your chest then you are taking deep full breaths that are going to help you relax and stay calm during tense and nervous conversations. This is an especially important tip if you are going to places where there may be a lot of physical activity such as charity walks, weddings that require dancing or sports.

All the professional singers don't sing from their lungs, they sing from their diaphragm. If you plan to have long conversations, it's important that you start getting your breathing from down deep inside of the belly as opposed to using just the lungs. There is more air power in the diaphragms than in the lungs.

Though breathing itself is natural, learning to breathe deeply needs to be practiced until it's a natural habit. Start breathing from there on a regular basis, and you'll probably notice you have a lot more energy throughout all your social engagements.

Another helpful activity that can be done is to take yoga classes as they help with muscle strength and flexibility. I didn't give much thought to Yoga until I started to practice it, and it's been one of the best things for my posture and breathing.

This is an absolute essential and often overlooked part in being a great conversationalist. I would strongly suggest that you do these exercises and to start practicing deep breathing on a regular basis. Great breathing leads to more

oxygen flow which leads to more energy and quick thought and therefore will allow you to be able to talk to more people and have quicker responses to their questions.

However, before beginning any strenuous breathing, or activity that would require rhythm, consult with your physician first.

Key Points To Remember

- ✓ Your body language will communicate the majority of your message whether you are saying anything or not.
- ✓ Number one problem men have with their posture is slouching. Stand up tall and straight to appear confident.
- ✓ Number one problem women have is keeping their chin down and arms crossed in a V, and legs tightly glued together that compress them into a small ball.
- ✓ Always remember to breathe deeply from your diaphragm and lungs to create voice projection, correct posture and more energy to last you through long conversations.

Conversation Exercise 6: Body Language speaks Volumes

Go in front of a mirror and take a look at the way that you stand. Look to see what kind of impression you give to yourself when you stand the way you usually do. Would you perceive yourself as confident? Shy? Outgoing? Nervous? Now take the time to find a standing pose that says “CONFIDENT” by keeping your back straight and your hands out in the open.

In the next week, take the time to stop every hour and check in with your body language. Just quickly pause and go “What does my body language at this moment say about me?” At the end of each day write a journal entry about the experience.

Once you've started to adjust your body language so that you personally feel more confident, maintain that type of body language with the people you talk to and notice if any aspects of the conversation change.

You have to learn to adjust body language accordingly, because some poses can also say "I'm extremely dominant."

Part 2: The Basics of Conversation



Ladies and Gentlemen, Start your Conversations

"Conversation should be pleasant without scrutiny, witty without affectation, free without indecency, learned without conceitedness, novel without falsehood."

-William Shakespeare

"What! I have to approach someone and say something? Should I ask about the weather? What if I just say 'hi,' will that be enough? What if they don't like me? I just want to start a conversation...how do I go about and start a conversation with someone I don't even know?"

The great science fiction writer Douglas Adams stated in his book *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, "DON'T PANIC." There are many different ways that you can open up a conversation with someone.

I'm usually brought on as the conversation specialist for Man Meets Woman the attraction coaching company to help men with their conversational skills, and Karl happened to be in one of the classes. Karl was ambitious, curious and was always ready to try out new ways of communicating with people. I had taught him how to start a conversation with women that he was attracted to at a book store.

"One of the best ways to start a conversation with someone that you are interested in at a book store is to simply go, 'You look like you're an intelligent person that's into books, is there anything you would recommend because I'm always looking for good reads?'"

Karl decided to try out this opener at one of Vancouver's largest bookstores and with a few other tips from this book he was able to engage an attractive woman into a 3 hour conversation as well as get her number to set up a date. He had sent me a personal e-mail the next day telling me how excited he was on how the conversation skills I taught were incredibly helpful in that situation.

What exactly is the point of opening up a conversation? It's quite simple. The point of opening a conversation, no matter how it begins, is to get the conversation started. It's that simple. If you get a one word response back from the other person, then you've started a conversation. However, what you choose to open a conversation with and how it is delivered could help carry the first few minutes of the conversation with more ease.

What I've found talking to clients, friends and to that little voice in my head, is that it's not so much the starting of a chat that people have trouble with, it's more that they have trouble changing from one topic to another. The other issue is that people lack the courage and confidence to go and talk to someone they don't know. Both of these issues are addressed in this book. And it is usually both of these areas that prevent people from starting conversations.

What are some of the best ways to start a conversation with one single person, or a group at any type of event? Here are six types of conversational starters that you can use:

- 1) The Universal Opener
- 2) The Compliment Opener
- 3) The Opinion/Advice Opener
- 4) The Joke Opener
- 5) The Situational/Observational Opener
- 6) The Statement/ Rhetorical Question Opener

Opener 1: The Universal Opener

The universal opener. Why not go up to someone and just introduce yourself? Smile. "Hi, my name's Vince. I wanted to come over and introduce myself to you." I have used this universal opener at bars, clubs, networking events and even on the street. There are people that are still surprised about being approached in this old fashion manner. As a matter of fact I remember one time

two women thought I was actually a sales person when I approached them in a bar.

Opener 2: The Compliment Opener

The compliment opener comes in various forms. You might see someone with a beautiful smile and go up to him, and say, “You know what I couldn’t help but notice you have a friendly smile. I wanted to come over and talk to you.” Other forms of compliments are noticing what a woman is wearing, her hair, or the liveliness that she carries with her.

Chances are since you don’t know the person’s personality you’ll need to stick to the physical compliments first. The more specific you can make the physical compliment to that individual the better your chances are that you will get her attention. If you meet someone with a particular style of glasses that capture your attention, then compliment on the style. What was the small detail or details that captured your attention? Was it the small pattern on the side, or even the way the glasses round out like a cat’s eyes?

The compliment opener when delivered with confidence and sincerity will usually bring a smile to people’s faces. The success in using a compliment opener is that you can’t delay it for a long time. If you stand around for half a minute thinking about how to start your compliment, then the nervous energy in your body takes over and the genuine energy you had dies down a little more. Compliment as soon as you feel it. That way you don’t have time to get nervous. I don’t know one person who doesn’t like a sincere compliment.

I remember going to a network event for entrepreneurs at a place called the Network Hub that’s run by Minna Van. I was talking to two young professional men. One was an engineer and the other a good friend of mine Kevin Eftekhari, Kevin works with people on creating new beliefs through the use of Neuro Linguistic Programming. As the three of us were chatting to an investment advisor, with a nice dark suit and short red hair who I had never met before

came by and introduced himself with a universal opener. The second line that he said was, “I really like your shirt. It’s very stylish.” I was wearing a black dress shirt where both the left and right had red wings stitched on to them. When I heard the compliment it made me feel good, caught my attention, and I was even a little stunned, but his compliment did the trick to help smooth his way into our group of three.

Opener 3: The Opinion/Advice Opener

Opinion Opener/ Advice Opener, this was made quite famous by the book *The Game* written by Neil Strauss. I would highly recommend people to read the book. It’s a fantastic read.

If you are having trouble breaking into a conversation, ask the person you wish to talk to, or the group of people you want to talk to about their opinion on a particular topic. State the reason why you’re asking for that particular opinion. People tend to relax more to strangers when they know there is a reason behind what they are doing or asking.

Most people want to talk about themselves beyond their job. They want to share what they feel and the wisdom they have inside of them. They want to feel valued and appreciated. By starting a conversation in this particular manner, it’s engaging, it encourages people to participate and it can be used to move beyond the small talk of the weather or very plain topics.

Here’s an example. “Excuse me. I hate to interrupt your conversations, I just need two minutes of your time, but I need your honest input on something. Do you believe that it’s more important to be able to follow your dreams or be in a secure job that pays much more? I’m asking because I’m trying to re-evaluate where to take the next step of my career. ”

What’s interesting about this particular opinion opener is that it’s an emotionally engaging topic. People generally like to talk about topics that bring a little

controversy where it can be hard to give a definite answer. But what this does is that it gets people hooked into the conversation from the very start. I find that it's best to ask for people's opinion on something that you are interested in. This could be as simple as "My friend and I are really hungry. We want to look for a place to eat that's outside of the downtown core. What good restaurants do you really enjoy and recommend?"

Or for me, I like to ask people "What do you guys think makes a good date? I'm writing a book and just seeing what comes up from people's minds."

What's important about the opinion opener is that it needs to remain somewhat light where other people are not going to be offended but involved. I wouldn't suggest asking people about what they think about political issues, environmental issues or sex until deep rapport has been developed.

Opener 4: The Joke Opener

This is when you open up the crowd with a joke. Every joke has one thing in common and that is that it's really about the unexpected happening. It can be unexpectedly cheesy, or extremely witty. Start to notice the types of jokes that make you laugh and the types of jokes that make other people laugh. Notice what it is that makes it funny, and chances are it's because it was something unexpected in the punch line.

For example, one of the joke openers that you can use is which was provided by a dating coach with a nickname of Thundercat: "Good Looking Opener."

This opener works well if you're not a "conventionally" good looking person and the woman is quite good looking.

This is also best to use in public areas such as the park, waiting in line at the grocery or choosing a book at the library.

Basically, you walk up to the woman you're interested in, and say the following.

(You would shake your head and give out a deep sigh) “Hey, let me tell you something about good looking people (pause for dramatic effect) we’re not well liked.”

You may have a delayed reaction from this particular joke, but once the person understands the joke, you'll see either a smile or a good laugh. This is a joke that requires some wit and thinking.

And the fact that the woman understood the joke will make her feel like she is on your level of intelligence, which will help validate her and open her up for further conversation.

What’s interesting about this particular style of joke opener is that you can use it at parties or any place fun. If you’re in a fun business seminar where people are learning to become rich, you might go “Hey let me tell you something about billionaires like us...we’re not well liked.” And it might take a while for them to get the joke, but it’s a good way to start off a conversation.

The Polar Bear Opener

Kelly was a long haired brunette who I met at a Halloween speed dating event who dressed up as a race car driver. As we started chatting she found out that I taught people how to create engaging conversations. She gave me this joke opener which I thought was quite cheesy, but the truth is that it was so cheesy that I couldn’t help but at least have a smile. She would go up to men in night clubs, or lounges and have a huge smile on her face. She would then ask in this serious tone and had this serious look on her face:

“Excuse me, do you how much a polar bear weighs?”

People would look at her and give a bit of a confused look.

She would then break out the smile and in a friendly light hearted tone she would say “Just enough to break the ice.” Then she would introduce herself afterward.

Opener 5: The Situational/Observational Opener

These are ways to open a conversation based on what you observe about a particular situation or person. Situational openers depend upon the environment you're in with the other person. This may be in a supermarket, a coin laundry, at a fashion show or computer engineering conference.

This can be an easy opener to use especially for places where people have similar career backgrounds or hobbies. However in places where people may gather more randomly such as the supermarket, it requires some effort to look for a way to break into the conversation using the supermarket, or what is in the supermarket to start the conversation. In a supermarket you may notice the person pick up organic food, so you might start the situational opener with "Is organic food better tasting than food just grown on regular farms?"

If the person you run into on the street has just recently purchased a book or is presently reading one, then you can ask him how he finds the book he's reading so far is. To make him feel more comfortable justify why you are asking by letting him know that you are also looking for a good book to read.

Common situational starters:

- How was your weekend? (If the weekend has just passed.)
- The weather is fantastic, don't you think? (not so engaging, but it does get things started.)
- A magazine the person might be reading (comment on that, or be curious about what they are reading.)
- A drink or food that someone is eating. This could be at a restaurant and you're curious for recommendations.
- Art work, if you happen to be both near a piece of art.
- About his glasses or a piece of jewellery that she happens to be wearing.
- Places to shop for clothes, electronics, books, second hand goods, antiques and so forth.

- What drink a person would recommend at a café.
- Asking for a person's opinion at a clothing store.
- Asking for directions

What leads to developing a great situational opener is the ability to be observant of all your environments that you go to. Some places you'll find are easier to come up with openers such as seminars with "What brings you to this seminar?" While other environments will require to you be keen and to purposely make an effort to think about what you would like to say. A great way to develop your situational openers is to think of all the places you go in your everyday life, and think of one way you could start a conversation. It doesn't have to be fancy, but think of how you would start a conversation at a restaurant, a café, in a bookstore, in clothing store and so forth.

The key is to be observant. As you start observing and start practicing, your brain will start to focus on ways to start conversations in all types of environments. You'll then become an improvisational expert on situational and observational openers.

Opener 6: The Statement/ Rhetorical Question Opener.

The statement opener is a subset of the situational opener. The key thing about a statement opener is in its delivery to the other person. While the situational opener may be posed in a form of a question the statement/rhetorical question opener is said in a form of a fact or a strong perspective.

An example might be this. You see another person using a particular cell phone and you may go up to her and go "Those cell phones have made my life so much easier. It has been the best thing to come out since sliced bread."

The rhetorical opener works in the same way in which the previous statement would be made, "Those cell phones are nothing but the best huh?"

You may be waiting in a coffee shop line and notice that someone is carrying a textbook on micro economics, a statement opener might be “You’re studying microeconomics. It’s probably one of the most challenging subjects to study.”

The compliment opener is a statement opener in disguise. You observe the person and then you state a strong perspective that is attempting to flatter the other person.

Keep in mind that the point of an opener in a conversation is to get the conversation started. It is to get someone engaged and have them interested. Learning to continue on a conversation is what some people may find tricky. We’ll discuss how to move from opening a conversation to being more social.

Extra Tips when Starting a Conversation

Tip 1: Give a Reason for Starting a Conversation

Most people are quite startled when you start a conversation with them. This is mostly because they’re not sure what your intention is when you talk to them. They don’t know if you are out to ask them on a date, make a friend or even potentially become a stalker. And if they don’t know what’s going on, they’re going to get scared.

However, if you let people know a reason why you are talking to them, they will feel much more comfortable. Let’s look at this scenario, if a person comes up to you and ask you “Do you have a quarter?” Chances are you’re probably going to wonder why they need the quarter in the first place. But however if someone asks you, “Sorry do you have a quarter, because I’m just a little short for my ride on the bus?” Then chances are if you understand why he’s asking you for a quarter then you’re more likely to give it.

If you are asking a question to a person or a group of people to start a conversation also justify why you are starting the conversation that way. Once

people understand they relax and are willing to let you join in on the conversation.

Let's look at this in more detail to help boost your sales, get more clients and increase your romantic life. Ellen Langer from Harvard did a study, she sent random people at random times to try to queue jump in front of a photocopier. The question she made participants ask was this "Excuse me, may I use the Xerox machine, because I'm late to class?" The question was in a form of a request and then a reason. Participants were able to jump ahead 94% of the time.

When there was no particular reason given and was stated in the form "Excuse me, may I use the Xerox machine?" Only 60% of people let the participants jump ahead of the line.

Now the interesting part of the study was one particular trigger word. This statement was then used, "Excuse me, may I use the Xerox machine, **because** I have to make some copies?" Now looking at the structure, though the statement is true, it seems silly when you read it. Of course the person needs to make copies but that doesn't explain why they need to be the first in line. However the response to this answer was a 93% success rate.

Ellen Langer supported the argument that it wasn't so much that the actual reason was the most vital but the fact that a reason was given at all with the word "because." The truth is that most of us are very selective in our hearing. If we tried to process every little detail all the time our brains would completely fry, so the brain takes shortcuts.

I have tested this theory out and have gone up to strangers and said, "I wanted to join you for a conversation because you have a great energy in this group." What does that statement even mean? But yet it has worked out successfully in joining groups at parties and fun events.

Tip 2: False Time Constraint

If you feel that you are in place where you may be competing for someone's attention and want to make them feel more at ease with you, then there's a conversation tool that I learned from author and dating coach Neil Strauss that will help. This conversation tool is known as a false time constraint.

Do you remember the story of Karl and the woman that he was chatting with? One of the tools that were taught to Karl was the false time constraint. He went to approach the woman at the bookstore and told her that he needed two minutes of her time.

For many strangers the first thing they are wondering is, "What does this person want and why?" and second "How long is this person going to talk to me for?" The first objection I've taught you, the second question is easily addressed.

Let's say that you're talking to someone at a café. You see that she's reading a book, and you ask her, "Do you mind if I take up two minutes of your time? It looks like you're the type of person who really enjoys reading. I'm looking for good books to read because it's my favourite hobby, any books you would recommend?"

Now by adding the "two minutes" the second concern is now addressed. The other person will subconsciously relax a bit more and the conversation will go more smoothly. And if the conversation goes well the person will continue to talk to you, and if it doesn't you have a perfect reason to exit.

Tip 3: Make Eye Contact First Whenever Possible.

I don't know about you, but I don't meet a lot of people that appreciate being snuck up behind and scared. Well that's one of the biggest mistakes I see people make when having conversations. Don't sneak up from behind someone and start a conversation.

Ensure that you make eye contact with someone first, or at the very least let them be seen in their peripheral before you start a conversation. Notice the order, eye contact THEN start talking. Once you have startled someone, it can take a few minutes for their fear to subside and in that time they may not be even hearing a single word that you are saying.

Ronald Lee of Man Meets Woman refers to this as making face. You want to make sure you're face to face with people.

Key Points to Remember:

- ✓ The point of conversational openers is just to start conversations.
- ✓ The six different types of conversation openers are: universal, opinion, compliment, joke, situational and statement.
- ✓ Three tips to help you make it easier when starting conversations are: give a reason why you are starting conversations, put a false time constraint into your introduction and ensure you make eye contact with the person you're talking to first before opening a conversation.

Conversation Exercise 7: Let's Start Talking

This week, when starting a conversation with someone, use at least four different openers from this chapter, if possible use all six. After testing them out, write down a journal entry on how well the six openers worked for you.

Just because an opener didn't successfully work the first time, don't discard it. Try to use it at least five times before passing judgement. Even mankind didn't successfully go to the moon on their first try.

Wow...YOU TOO! Find Commonalities in Conversations and Transition

“The longer we listen to one another - with real attention - the more commonality we will find in all our lives. That is, if we are careful to exchange with one another life stories and not simply opinions.”

-Barbara Deming

You're standing in the middle of the room. You've initiated a conversation with a stranger who happens to be standing by himself and drinking a glass of wine. Maybe it's a Merlot, or it's a Pinot Noir. You go in and introduce yourself and shake his hand. There's some small chat that seems to last for about thirty seconds about wine, and then you're stuck in your head not knowing exactly how to continue the conversation. You start to feel the little beads of sweat coming down your head as the anxiety in your body rises. Then the terrifying thought comes to you, "How do I continue the conversation beyond the introduction and how do I find out if I have anything in common with the person I'm talking to?"

You went beyond the introduction and now you're looking to develop more rapport with this person so that you can talk about a wide variety of topics. You're hoping to talk about more personal and interesting matters to move the conversation in a more lively direction. And you know one of the quickest ways to develop rapport is to determine whether you have something in common with the other person you're chatting with. There are times when this is quite easy. The conversation has a flow, you feel lost in the moment, and you find out that you have something in common almost from the get go. Or, the other scenario, the dreadful one, you find that you're still digging away for information and you've felt like you've dug into the other side of the earth. An uneasy feeling comes through your stomach, and you become worried about producing word vomit. All you want to do is just exit the conversation as soon as possible.

Finding commonalities doesn't have to be a gut wrenching experience, In this particular section, we're going to look at ways to keep the conversation lively,

entertaining and engaging through discovering commonalities. By discovering what we have in common with another person, this allows us to transition from one topic to the next. You'll learn the variety of ways that allow us to connect with other people based on similar interests, feelings, activities or opinions.

The Three Commonalities People Always Have

When you're able to find what you have in common with another person, then rapport just blossoms magically. You and the other person are more comfortable and feel friendlier towards each other. The great news is that commonalities can be broken down into three generic groups:

1. Share similar experiences and activities.
2. Share common thoughts and philosophies.
3. Share emotions.

Sharing Experiences

Let's clarify point number one. Common experiences and activities would cover topics such as going to the same university, studying the same courses, traveling to the same country or the fact that you both just love and watch the same TV show every single week. The majority of the population uses this particular category of commonality to develop bonds faster when first meeting others. They fish for common activities during their conversations.

My friend Andrew is a doctor, he travels around Canada and in his spare time loves to travel and discover new cultures. We were talking about travelling and he was describing his recent journey into Mexico. Out of curiosity I asked him if he went to Guanajuato, a small but vibrant Mexican town. His eyes opened up and he said he did.

Our conversation took on a whole new life of its own. I loved the town very much and had never met up to that point another person who travelled to the city. We

talked about the food and culture for a good ten minutes. He was telling me about the festivals, and I was telling him how the architecture was just hypnotic with colour.

Our commonality was the experience of visiting the same city.

How do you exactly find common experiences with another person in the first place?

The first method of discovering common experiences is through fishing. My dad used to take me and my brother out to go fishing once in a while on a small boat when we were kids. We would sit quietly on the sea and using our fishing rods, throw out some bait and hope that a fish would bite. After a given time, my dad suggested that we reel back in the line, and then try throwing the fishing line to another location and hope that the fish take the bait.

Fishing in conversations is no different. You throw your line in with your bait, and you hope that the other person bites onto the topic you've mentioned. This has been the main method that most people use. There are two different ways to fish. You fish specifically for one topic during your talk, as if you were to use one fishing rod to try to capture one fish at one time, or you fish with a broad net, so that you're trying to capture as many fish as possible, or in this case have the other person tell you a variety of facts about himself in the same amount of time.

Let's look at the technique of fishing for one specific topic. When you fish specifically for one topic, you cut to the chase and ask the person whether they have done a specific activity or a specific experience. An example of a specific fishing question would be, "Have you ever travelled to France before?"

However, if you make it too specific it could slow down the conversation flow. A fishing question that is too specific is, "Oh, did you ever go to this night club in Paris? It's the one where they have a pink night every Friday?" As interesting as the question may be, it's the type of information that is worth mentioning later on

in the conversation. Never ask anything TOO specific in the early stages of a conversation, because if the person cannot relate to you then this may cause both of you to lose the rapport that you are both creating.

The other method of fishing questions is to ask a question that's broad and potentially has several answers. These questions should be open ended so that they can lead to several potential answers. This also means that the conversation can be steered into many different directions. Instead of catching one fish, you can potentially catch many, and here are some examples.

"What kind of hobbies do you have?"

"What are some of the travelling destinations you've been to?"

"What are the movies that you recommend seeing?"

As you can tell these questions are designed so that there can be a broad range of answers. This allows for several specific topics to potentially be hooked on instead of just one. This is the advantage of using broad fishing questions. **Faster connection in a shorter time, based on a greater chance of finding something in common.** Now all the math geek talk aside, this is the brilliance of these types of questions. You may end finding out that you both enjoy listening to jazz as a hobby (after she mentions that she likes live jazz, enjoys costume designing, and loves comic books). You may have discovered that you both went to London on a business trip (after he mentions he's been to Bangkok, Tokyo and went to London to help promote a new fashion line). Or maybe you both found out how much you enjoyed *Slumdog Millionaire* (after you found out that her favourite movies were *Sense and Sensibility*, *Titanic* and then you found out she adored *Slumdog Millionaire*). And the joy of conversation unravels when you do find that first common element!

Sharing Common Thoughts and Philosophies

The second type of commonality we can connect with each other is our common opinion on a topic. These are chats about ideas, beliefs, perspectives, philosophies and opinions. This could be about how tragic it is when children are starving in Africa, or it might be how social websites have hindered our need to talk face to face with people or the sharing of potential change when a new president is elected.

This method can be used as the same technique as above in terms of how to fish. However you need to be careful as this has the highest risk of turning the conversation sour out of all three commonality methods discussed. You can still connect with someone on their beliefs if you're very sure that you have that in common with the person, depending on the situation. For example, asking someone about their opinion on Barack Obama if you know she's a supporter is a rapport building topic to discuss if you also happen to be a supporter for the president. However, if you ask someone at a Republican convention, then you're going to have a tough time finding a commonality with that topic regarding the Democratic president.

Rapport in that situation can break down pretty quickly even though you two may have a world of commonalities outside of politics, but with the initial friction that was established within the first topic it can be hard to keep the conversation going. After all we like being around people who are like us.

My general rule of thumb is this: try not to talk about opinions and philosophies that are high risk as a way of developing rapport (more covered in the section on 13 Deadly Sins). You can discuss high risk topics that involve your opinions. I'm not suggesting you avoid it. But wait until you've gotten to know the other person better or you feel the other person knows you as well. This is why people say stay away from religion, politics and sex. This has to do more with beliefs and values, and usually these topics are very personal to people.

Sharing Emotions

Now here comes the tricky part. Let's say you've been trying to connect with someone on the level about the activities that she does, YET you can't seem to find one single thing in common with that person. She does ballet, you do hockey. She watches reality TV shows, and you just like to watch foreign shows from Germany. He likes real world politics and she likes to talk about the latest celebrity gossip. The best thing you can do is connect with the other person on an emotional level, since we all have emotions in common. I'm going to repeat that again, WE ALL HAVE EMOTIONS IN COMMON. For example, even though we may not be scared in the same way, we've all had experiences of fear.

I was at a pub one time with some clients. There were two women sitting on the side, and I decided to approach them. I sat next to them with a friend of mine and after our conversation had died, I turned to both of them and said, "Our conversation has died down, I'm wondering if I could join you guys because it's always fun to talk to strangers?" (Noticed how I justified why I started the conversation.) As we talked I found out one of them was studying to be a flight attendant.

I could have connected with her by asking her several questions about being a flight attendant, but instead I connected with her on the emotion of wanting to have a sense of adventure and excitement in her life which was the main reason why she wanted to be a flight attendant. I talked about how we all should be like her. We should find ways to make our life more exciting and adventurous.

I shared with her my goal of not travelling but having a fiery passion to be a New York Times bestselling author on how to teach women to be better in their dating and relationships and be able to speak around the world. To me that was adventure. Even though we had different dreams we were connecting on the emotion of the desire to have adventure in our lives.

We were connecting on the emotion of passion and adventure. Passion to pursue our dreams we've always wanted. To live our life in a way that fits our own definition of adventure.

Now that we developed some rapport I transitioned to another emotional topic. "So have you done anything crazy that went beyond your comfort?" And then I would have connected with her on the emotion of getting out of my own comfort zone such as bungee jumping.

In that case, what made the conversation a success was that I wanted to understand the feelings that are behind the activity that she was doing and what she was saying. Even though I may not fully understand what a flight attendant does, I don't get caught up in the details, I get caught up in what it feels like to be a flight attendant. It is high level empathy.

You need to imagine what it must have been like for the person to want to be a flight attendant. She felt excited and passionate to want to do this type of activity. And while she's going to be a flight attendant, chances are she's going to enjoy the wonderful voyage she's going to be going on. And though I may not know what it's like to travel to different cultures, I do know the feeling of following my dream and the feeling of discovering a whole new career path.

You have to be able to recall an experience where you've had a similar feeling to the other person. And by understanding that emotion you are able to connect with that person.

If you can find the emotions that lay behind each and every statement, then you can continue the conversation based on how you felt on a series of events. Here's an exercise for you to practice.

Here is a list of common emotions that people feel every day. I want you to be able to think of an experience where you felt that same emotion, so when

someone mentions an activity that stimulated that emotion in him/her, you can relate to them on the emotional level.

1. Scared
2. Happy
3. Used and taken advantaged
4. Succeeded
5. Underdog
6. Angry
7. Passionate
8. Disappointed
9. Awe
10. Inspired
11. Optimistic
12. Pessimistic
13. Remorse
14. Pride
15. Nervousness
16. Delighted
17. Glad
18. Euphoric

If you look on the list above, you'll see it's emotions that most people have felt their life. And this is what we all have in common, whether we are living in Kenya, Japan, United States or in Canada, we all know what it can be like to have the above emotions.

It's important that you get this exercise done as this is one of the top ways to be connecting with other people, and having them feel that they are understood.

Let's look more closely at an actual conversation.

“What kind of sports do you play?”

“I play basketball, and soccer.”

“Really? I play basketball myself, what position do you prefer playing?”

“I really enjoy playing guard.”

“That’s really great. I’m a tall guy so I usually play centre.”

Now this part of the conversation really talks about common activities. As you can see a conversation can die pretty quickly if we’re not careful, or it gets boring. There’s no energy, no pzazz, and no real sense of emotional connection in the conversation. This is because you’re basically exchanging information.

This is how I move the conversation into more emotional connection as opposed to activity commonality.

“When you were playing basketball, what was the highlight of your career?”

“Oh, the highlight. I remember there was five seconds left to the game. It was a game that we needed in order to make the playoffs. So I had the ball and we were down by two points. I’m at the three point line and then I’m off my feet, I let the ball go, and I’m so anxious but then I hear the ball swish into the net, and I’m just screaming. That was such a great highlight.”

“Wow that sounds so amazing. I can’t imagine what it was like to be on the basketball court. But I remember there was a time that I was really anxious. I was preparing for this big seminar, and it was my first one in front of 300 people. I had this pressure on me to really perform. Because, like you, I had only one chance to make it work or not. So all this pressure was on me to be the best. A lot of people were depending on me, kind of like your team mates. But once it was over, people applauded me for my effort, I was relieved and at the same time feeling a sense of accomplishment by doing it.”

In this particular case I mention that the basketball player felt pressured to perform well. This is because even though the basketball player doesn't directly mention it, I'm very sure he felt a lot of pressure. Now when I have a conversation, I just assume that I know what the other person is feeling. What I've also found is that if I assume the wrong emotion, then the other person will correct me, and then I continue on the conversation.

Notice very carefully during that short time, I continue to speak about his particular basketball experience to help bridge the gap between my experience and his. I don't just talk about my experience alone, but I talk about his and the emotions attached to it. I am purposely showing him the connection that we have and by doing this I also can lead where the conversation is going. This is one of the best ways to have people feel that you truly understand them.

What if You Guess the Wrong Emotion?

Here's how a conversation goes when I get the wrong emotion associated with the activity that someone has mentioned.

"It must have been a really scary experience going down that roller coaster?"

"Actually, no it wasn't, it felt really good. This adrenaline made me feel as if I was exploding with excitement."

If the conversation has a natural flow, then the person you are talking with will correct your emotional assumption, but won't make big fuss out of it, just like the example above. The incorrect assumption becomes a part of the conversation, and the person responding will generally give you the correct emotion she was feeling.

Unless you were making a completely unreasonable assumption about what the individual was feeling, there won't be a backlash. A dreary example would be assuming a person feels happy after her dog was euthanized. Most people are

not going to be happy at all after their long time companion has died. They're probably devastated.

Take the chance and try to understand people's emotional attachments to situations. The more practice you get from identifying people's emotions the better you will get at it.

The side benefit of being able to understand other people's emotions is that it will raise your empathy levels, increase your emotional intelligence in the workplace and in your social relationships. The other benefit is that as you become better at identifying other people's emotions and verbalizing the, you will also become excellent at verbalizing how you feel to other people. This will help them understand who you are and your own emotional core.

Wrapping up Commonalities

If you look deeply, there is nothing else people have in common with each other, other than these three themes: activities, philosophies and emotions. It's easy to relate to people and the things they do. But as I have said before, the conversation can run dry unless all conversationalists enjoy what is being discussed. If you don't enjoy it, and the other party doesn't, then there's no emotional investment to elevate the conversation. However, by putting emotion into the conversation you will feel there's more liveliness to the conversation. Even just mentioning emotional words such as happy, disappointed, or sad in your sentences can make such a difference to the vibrancy of the chat. And by transitioning based on the emotional commonality, you don't get the jolt of a sudden topic transition.

Here's another exercise for you to try. I'm going to list a series of scenarios. I want you to imagine the emotions that a person may go through and see if you can find, not a similar experience, but a different activity that shares the same emotion so that you can develop that emotional connection.

Here's a full example: You find out that your new co-worker has just bought their first home.

Feelings the person is potentially having: pride, happiness, accomplishment, and optimism for the future.

Similar experiences I may have had with similar feelings are: first time I bought my own car (pride), how I was happy to get my university degree (accomplishment), being able to spend time with your family (being happy), talking about how you want to achieve your career goal in a time of bad economy (optimism.)

Just below are some real life situations I've encountered in conversations with others. Using the above example as the guide, first give some of the feelings the person may be going through, and second, give two experiences in the past that are emotionally connected to those situations.

1. You find out that someone just came back from going hiking in Japan.
2. Your friend had a new born baby, but you've never had children.
3. A friend just went to audition for a play
4. A person you're talking with finished reading a best seller he really liked.

Potential Answers for emotions she's feeling:

1. Adventure, a sense of accomplishment, the feeling of trying something new, excitement, a sense of hard work
2. Excitement, enthusiasm, happiness, a feeling of responsibility
3. Nervousness, anxiety, excitement
4. Enjoyment, intrigue, and a sense of feeling you have to get something done from start to finish.

Now that you've learned all three ways that you can find commonalities with people, keep in mind that you can use all three methods combined together.

Usually this is how conversations generally flow when people have deep rapport. They might find out they have an activity in common, they share a common emotional experience, and then they might share an opinion they both agree upon and then switch back and forth between the three ways of developing commonalities. Don't get stuck in your head trying to use one or the other, they all have their time and place. If you're having trouble with one of them (usually I find based on the clients and students I've worked with it's usually the third, common emotions) then take the time to focus and practice that particular style. Remember to write down notes to see where your strengths and areas of improvement are.

Transitioning from One Topic to the Next through Riffing

Another concept that I took from Dating Coach Ronald Lee, is the concept of riffing. Riffing is a way of keeping a discussion going based on choosing an element from the previous statement as the new topic to talk about for the conversation. And while the previous section was talking more about how to ask questions and find commonalities, this is about making statements about you based on a previous element in the conversation.

Here's an example of riffing that may help clarify the concept.

A: "What kind of hobbies do you enjoy?"

B: "Oh, I enjoy going to personal development seminars, **playing hockey**, and blogging."

A: "Sounds good. What kind of position do you **play in hockey**?"

B: "**Goalie** actually. I really enjoy the thrill. I ended up playing with my team from work."

A: "Sounds like work is really supportive of athletics. I used to play **centre** myself back for the **university** I attended. I wanted to play in the big leagues but I just wasn't good enough."

B: "Which **university** did you go to?"

A: "I went to **University of ABCD**, and I ended up studying **sociology**."

B: "I ended up taking **sociology** as a matter of fact, too. But my major was criminology."

I highlighted the words where the conversations were connected based on the common activity. You can then see in the next statement where the conversation transitioned to a new topic based on that piece of information.

When person B answered the first question, there were several potential topics other than hockey to riff on. Person A could have riffed on personal development seminars, or blogging.

Now this is a very simple example, but if you look carefully, many people do start off their conversations like this. They look for something from the previous statement and connect with that to continue on the conversation.

As you have more conversations, start to notice what the other person mentions that you can riff on, and when you become good, you will riff on all commonalities that were mentioned in the previous section. When riffing is done correctly it can help bond with others quickly.

Key Points to Remember

- ✓ We have three types of commonalities that we can use to connect with others, and they are activities, philosophies and emotions.
- ✓ The one element that all people across the world have in common is the commonality of emotion. This will allow you to connect with any person.
- ✓ Choose an element from a previous statement to help further a conversation. It's always best to choose a different topic from the previous one to keep the conversation fresh. This is known as riffing.

Conversation Exercise 8: Get Connected

This week's exercise will require you to connect with people on

- 1) A common experience or activity
- 2) A common philosophy or intellectual thought
- 3) A common emotion that you share with that person that is a different experience than theirs

Talk to at least three different people using the methods above, with the goal of connecting with them to develop rapport. Try to keep one of the conversations going longer beyond your comfort zone. Even when you feel it is appropriate to exit, stay in there as long as possible.

Then write all the different conversations that you had in a journal entry. Did you find that you had trouble connecting on one particular style? Keep practicing the one that you have the most difficulty with until you feel reasonably comfortable.

Structuring a Good Conversation

“Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.”

-Alan Lakein

I have read some great conversation books out there. But one of the things that I have read that's often suggested is to act completely interested in a person and to keep on asking questions about the person's life and what they do, and what their interests are. However, if we're not too careful on how to do this, it can easily come off as if we're a stalker. Especially if we're not asking the right type of questions that interest the person to begin with.

Then there's the other side of the coin. If you talk too much then you might end up dominating the conversation and bore the person to death from too much talking. A friend of mine had a habit of talking non stop. After he completed one story, he would then pause, become extremely uncomfortable and would fill in the silence with another story. It drove me nuts. I remember there was a group of four of us one time. My friend went on for his fifth minute of continuous talking. Many of us at the table were bored out of our minds but we listened because we were polite. But after a while politeness wears thin and resentment starts to kick in, "When is he going to STOP TALKING!"

I'm sure many of you have experienced truly remarkable conversations where it was going amazing because it was a two way street. No particular person would dominate the conversation, and instead the both of you just seemed to click and were both engaged.

On dates with a previous girlfriend, I remember how absolutely fantastic our conversations were. What made our conversations great was our ability to try to equally invest in knowing more about each other. We would take turns talking, and at the same time would have a balanced conversation where we both talked and listened to each other attentively.

When I went to my first dating boot camp, my instructor Dan, from The Charming Geek, taught me that it's important to keep a conversation on the same emotional investment level as the other person when first starting off. What he suggested was that I should do two things when first talking to people to start getting rapport and bringing a more positive connection between two people.

First, provide a little bit more emotional investment by using a slightly more positive tone than the person you are talking with.

The second, is the length of the response should be slightly longer compared to the other person's, especially during the beginning of the conversation.

I'll use an example to illustrate how point one works with emotional investment. Let's pretend that you're being introduced to a new co-worker. He's been invited to have drinks with a few others, and as you begin to talk with him you realize that he talks in a relaxed and calm manner.

What I would do is talk slightly in a more upbeat tone than my new co-worker and start off with a small smile. However, if I'm too energetic and positive, and I have this big grin on my face, and have this tone that suggest it's the best day ever in my life, then this can create a huge shock factor with my co-worker.

We relate and connect with people who are like us. When we meet people, and perceive them to be too different than us then we don't feel that rapport can be built with this person. Have you ever been to a place where someone came up to you and was being too friendly by being boisterous and loud that it actually had the opposite effect? You ended up being frightened and the conversation never got off the right foot? You want to keep the tone of your voice and your body language similar to the other person to help make him feel comfortable around you first. Once a person is comfortable then you can gradually shift to your normal confident tone and body language and this way the other person doesn't go into shock.

The second part is the length of the response given, and that means that if the people you're talking to are giving you short answers, don't respond back right away with long four minute answers. Keep the answers short, yet reveal some details. If I give too much of myself to the conversation, this creates an imbalance. This is why conversations can become too creepy or personal for people, these people have given too much personal information about themselves without the other party properly feeling that they've earned such privileged information. This is especially true when people go on dates. One date will talk too much about him or herself, and unfortunately never get the second date. This is because she knew too much too soon. People must slowly extract information out so that they get the feeling that they have earned that information.

Let's look at a metaphor in business for this. When people are discussing negotiations, most businesses don't go: "Well here's what I'm going to offer you. Here's the whole nine yards, and I'm going to tell you that I'll take this, and that, and here's the price I'm going to offer, but really the price we're willing to give is actually much higher." Seems strange doesn't it? Negotiations have always been about a little give and take. One company starts a compromise. "If you give me this, I'll give that." And if the company needs it bad enough they'll give a little more to get what's needed, but they don't ever reveal everything they are willing to offer from the start. And your conversations are the same, don't reveal too much too quickly. The talks need to be balanced out and fair.

I was having a conversation with a friend of mine, Shawn, over some dinner. We were talking about how he met someone who he was initially interested in romantically and he wanted to get to know her better and asked her out for coffee. What he found was that she seemed to talk about her ex boyfriend quite a bit. Shawn understood what she was going through, but at the same time wasn't comfortable having someone he barely knew telling him about how she emotionally felt about her previous relationship. This was making him feel uncomfortable. Shawn later told me that he didn't mind two or three minutes of a

quick chat about it, but soon she revealed too much, and talked about it longer and longer, and he lost total interest in her romantically. Since he didn't feel a sense of deep rapport with her, he felt awkward as to why she was pouring her feelings towards him. After all, she didn't know much about him beyond Shawn's job and hobbies. Because she told him too much all at once, the conversation lost the emotional balance it needed to have rapport. He knew too much too fast, and she knew too little about him, he felt. It was no longer an equal exchange, she was hogging up the conversation.

Both conversationalists may start off by investing very little in the conversation, and talk about fairly safe and superficial topics such as work, hobbies, and so forth. But eventually the level has to rise or else the conversation will remain stagnant and stale. To push it to the next level people must have a familiarity of who you are, and you have to have familiarity with who they are. And to move towards that familiarity we need to move away from the superficial and start discussing more personal topics.

To keep the conversation moving to a higher connection level we need to continuously equally invest the same amount of emotion into the conversation. The emotion doesn't necessarily have to be good or bad, as long as the contributions being made are on similar levels.

Here's an example of an emotionally balanced conversation.

A: "I couldn't help but notice that you're reading *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. How is it so far?"

B: "It's quite good. I quite enjoy it."

A: "That's good. It's one of my favourite series to read. I actually gave one to my mom last Christmas. Do you have a story that stands out for you?"

B: "Oh, I don't know. There seems to be a lot of them I really enjoy. It can be hard for me to pick one out."

A: "I understand. It's always tough trying to pick out one of them. For me there was this one story I was reading this one story about a son that had never seen her biological mom before. And then one day the son starts to look for her, and well it turns out that she was right in front of his eyes. She was his butcher for almost 16 years. They've had a great relationship since. Crazy isn't it?"

B: "Wow that's so amazing. I can't imagine what it must be like to finally see your mom after 16 years. It must have been really touching."

A: "I can imagine it was. Interesting we're talking about moms, because my mom used to always cheer me up. I was always considered the uglier brother in my family, and people would always compliment my brother first. And so my mom, trying to be helpful, would tell me that I was handsome as well. Mind you it was nice, but didn't make me feel better. How about your mom, what do you like about her the most."

B: "My mom's great. She's always constantly worrying about me ever since I've moved out and launched my career. I think for us, it's just being able to spend time together that makes it nice. I'm actually taking her out for dinner this weekend."

A: "Wo, look at you, you're such a great daughter taking her out. It's always nice to spend time with people you care about. My friends and I usually try to meet up once a month. We're so busy with our schedules that it can get frustrating. There's so much to do, and especially nowadays it seems like we're all trying to lead this balanced life. Don't you think it can be hard to make time for ourselves and everything else in the world?"

B: "For sure, I think it can be tough. Like you're saying, there's so much going on. And we're all under tremendous pressure to be more, and to have more

money, and to do this and do that. It's almost like we're all trying to be perfect that we can't slip. It's a little overwhelming at times, but I like the hustle and bustle myself."

A: "Yeah I do too. I really enjoy the rush sometimes, knowing that there's so much out there to do. I would take adventure any day instead of sitting at home. I used to be like that, staying at home and thinking the world didn't offer much, and then I decided to travel to Mexico and that changed my world completely."

As you can tell from the example, the conversation starts off rather mild. It's not a lot of information given, and the statements are kept short. But as time goes on the statements get longer, energy is invested by both parties, and by the end of the conversation example both parties are revealing more and more information to each other. And that's the way a conversation should go eventually.

Truthfully the first three minutes are considered the roughest in my opinion, and if you hang in there after that, conversations generally get exponentially much better. If you're having trouble getting past the first three minutes, then consider taking the course offered by Conversation Arts as it will help you with transitioning and pushing the conversations forward.

What's the best way to create that equal energy balance when you're having conversation with people? Here's a structure that I learned. I find that this structure works very well when you're dealing with shy people who are having a tough time revealing themselves at first. Keep in mind that this is intended as a guideline for starting conversations and maintaining them. It doesn't have to be followed all the time. A conversation should have some spontaneity to it after all.

Structure:

1. Ask the person a question that you are interested about, but would be perceived as non - threatening. (Examples of this would be work, what they did on the weekend, good restaurants they would recommend.)

2. If the person can not, or does not answer the question then answer the question that you just asked her. Keep it short, simple, and the energy investment low at first.
3. Then ask another question, and again if she answers, great, if not, answer you own question you just asked.

Question I ask: "What are some of your favorite movies?" Question answered, but no real response: "I'm not too sure, I watch a lot of movies, and I can't think of my favorite ones right now."

I then answer my own question I asked, and ask another question: "Well, if you ever get chance, you should watch (name of your favorite movie.) It's so much fun to watch, it made me laugh so hard. How about the last comedy you went go see?"

The other person gives you the answer: "The last comedy I went to see was Forrest Gump."

Then I ask another question: "That's really good. I'm actually just reading the book right now. The last movie that I thought was really funny that I went to go see was a children's movie. A cartoon, but I can't remember. I thought it wasn't going to be that great. But then it turned out really good...You ever have that experience. You expect something bad but it's actually really good?"

Repeat the structure as necessary. Again, keep using this structure until you feel like you've broken through to the other person. This doesn't mean you're going to get instant connection, but if you keep gently pushing the conversation, it will get easier.

Many people don't feel comfortable sharing their lives with us when they first meet us. They want to know us first and so we need to share something about ourselves in order for them to feel comfortable. However, if you've noticed that

even after sharing information about yourself, and the person still doesn't really share too much about him or herself, then the chances are that it's going to be an unequal conversation, and therefore, won't make the best one. Does that mean you should give up? By all means no, but do realize that it's probably going to feel a little uneasy.

Now that we've looked at structure and an introduction to energy balanced talks, let's look at the different levels of commitment made during conversations.

Level One: Low energy and superficial investment.

At this stage, you share superficial topics that have no real emotional attachment. This could be about weather, comments about the economy, work, or like the case above, talking about movies at first. These are generally safe topics that most people don't mind answering and don't find offensive. The least amount of connection is made during this type of conversation. They are conversations you would have with a cashier you've met for the first time.

Level two: Medium energy that moves onto personal topics.

Now at some point the person may up the ante of the conversation and discuss topics with you that are more emotionally invested such as family, their relationships, dreams, and hopes. It's important that when someone tells you about their personal life that you also start to reciprocate the amount of emotional investment he puts into the conversation.

For example, the person you're talking to might go: "My fiancée and I are planning to get married in June. She wants a grand wedding, as stressful as it might be. I think it's going to be worth it in the end."

"That's fantastic. I'm not engaged yet, but my girlfriend and I are planning to go to South Korea in the summer time. I'm probably going to meet her parents, so

I'm a little nervous about that, since it's a pretty conservative society. What was it like when you met her parents for the first time?"

When a person has told you something personal about their life, you need to reward them by offering personal information about yourself. By offering personal information you are letting them know that you are connecting with them.

Now if the conversation seems like it's going nowhere, take the risk and reveal something personal about yourself. Do this two or three times in a longer conversation (10-20 minute conversation) and take the time to see what the person's reactions are. Is this person relaxing and sharing something about herself? Is he asking follow up questions? Whatever it is, take the time to see if they are making the investment to either a) get to know you better or b) is sharing something about themselves.

If you find that it's becoming a real struggle to talk to someone after 10 minutes, then it's best to move to someone who you can have a great conversation with. It's impossible to have a great conversation with EVERYBODY, but we can attempt to have great conversations with as many people as possible.

But don't be afraid to talk to the person again. There are some people who are shy at first but really blossom into talkers when you become familiar to her.

Level three: High emotional and energy conversations.

These are conversations that move into personal topics of a deeper nature. They can be topics of tremendous joy. You both may have gone through the same spiritual experience and found it tremendously enlightening. You may also find out that you share some of the same passions to help end AIDS in the world. Or it can be talks of a heavier nature such as talking about depression or traumatic memories. These conversations generally do not happen the first time around

and are usually reserved when people have known each other for a while or have gone through some medium energy conversations.

I was watching the TV show *Millionaire Matchmaker*. Two of the bachelors chose the same woman to go on a ten minute date. When she got to her first date she talked about how she struggled with an eating disorder earlier on in her life. On her second mini date she talked about how her mother died. Both bachelors were turned off from so much personal information given to them within ten minutes. One of the bachelors sympathized but said it was too early to know that much about her.

Just a reminder, what I've wrote about in this section is just a guideline and a structure of conversation that offers a way of chatting that avoids the "interview style of talking" as well as the "you're always listening style." As mentioned before, a good conversation should allow both parties to know each other throughout the conversation.

Key Points to Remember:

- ✓ To develop rapport, ensure that you keep your emotional investment in a conversation just above the other person by keeping a slightly more upbeat tone and by giving answers that are a bit longer than the other person.
- ✓ When you are stuck in getting a conversation going, follow this basic structure: ask a question, wait for an answer, and answer your own question.
- ✓ There are three levels of conversation when it comes to energy investment: low energy and superficial, medium energy and personal, and high energy and emotional.

Conversation Exercise 9: Structure Your Conversations

Within the next week, if you find yourself in a situation where you're having trouble moving the conversation forward, use the structure of conversation in this chapter to assist you. The situation may be meeting a shy co-worker for the first time, going to a new networking event, or it could be meeting a man that you're attracted to a party.

Write your conversation(s) in your journal and notice how the conversation went. Did you find the conversations smoother? How was the tension? Did you find that the person opened up more, as you began to open up as well?

Your second assignment also within the next week is to purposely do your best with the tips provided in this chapter to make a deeper connection in at least two conversations with strangers. Keep pushing your conversations past the superficial until you feel you have gotten to know the persons on a deeper level.

How to Ask Great Questions, Answered

“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

-Neil Gaiman

Have you ever had a conversation, where you stood there for ten minutes and you swore that you felt like you were being interviewed by someone? You felt like all that people were doing were digging information as if they were a computer trying to know as much information as possible. What's your job? What are your hobbies? What's the name of your pet gold fish?

Let's face it! You don't want to be ONE of THOSE conversationalists - do you?

Stacy was an attendee for a speed dating event hosted by Luvhat. It was her first time and she was nervous, anxious, but still excited. As she sat down on her seat and eagerly awaited for her first “date,” she kept wondering what the conversations would be like. As time went on she was being asked the same questions by different people. Her mind began to wander, and her hopes of meeting someone interesting that night began to wane off.

I asked her afterwards what it was that didn't give the experience she was expecting. “Vince, most of these guys are terrible at initiating conversation and asking good and thoughtful questions! Who wants to answer the same questions again and again? It's like talking to the same person and being interviewed over and over!”

Stacy is not the only person I've met who has encountered such dilemmas. People and clients have told me the same thing when they are at parties, or they attend networking events. They get asked the same questions, but also they don't know how to ask questions that start engaging conversations.

From the previous section you learned a basic structure of conversations when you're talking with people. You follow the conversation structure of asking the person a question and then answering the question you've just asked. This is a good structure to start off with. What makes a great conversation is learning to ask the type of questions that want people to salivate to answer.

Now the questions that you choose to ask can produce three types of results. These questions will 1) raise the energy level and intensity of the conversation, 2) keep it the same level, or 3) drop the energy

Most conversations will go through all three stages at different points. If you ask the right questions you may find that there is liveliness in the conversation all night, but there may be stalls which temporarily drop the energy of the conversation.

There are two broad types of questions that people will ask. And these two types are:

1. Data Exchange Questions (Often associated with dropping the energy or keeping it the same.)
2. Emotional Exchange Questions (Associated more with raising the energy of the conversation to more personal and interesting topics.)

Data Exchange Questions

What exactly are data exchange questions?

Let me give you some examples of data exchange questions first.

“What are you planning to do this weekend?”

“Did you get a chance to go snowboarding or skiing this season?”

“How do you get to work everyday?”

"Do you think the weather will improve in the next week?"

"What did you study in school?"

If you look carefully, data exchange questions are questions that gather information but don't get people into an emotional state where they have the desire to share information with you.

The main difference between both is that emotional questions create **motivation and desire** for the other person to want to answer the questions you've asked.

Whether we believe we are creatures of logic or emotion, in the end we are still emotional beings of varying degrees. If not, then why do so many of us stay in jobs we dislike? It's because of the emotional attachment we have towards having money versus being poor. Logically, we should move from a job we dislike to one we do. Many of us don't, but that's beside the point.

Data exchange on its very basic level is like asking questions as if you were back in school. A teacher asks you a question, and a student gives an answer, but there's no feeling or engagement behind it.

The most common topics that I've heard from the majority of people that are considered data exchange are:

1. Their job (only a very small part of the population enjoys their job. Sometimes you do get an emotional response from them if they hate their job as well. And if it happens that a recession is going on, a terrible question to ask.)
2. What they studied back in school
3. What they did the past weekend
4. Good Restaurants to Eat at
5. Sports (if they aren't sports fanatics)
6. Weather

7. TV shows (especially if they don't watch, or it's not their favourite show)

Asking Emotional Questions for Impact

The second type of question is the emotional exchange question.

This type of question focuses on how someone feels, and this is where great conversations happen. These types of questions tend to happen naturally and spontaneously. People luck out and have something in common, and all of a sudden the conversation is charged up. It's not really what the people have in common as so much as their emotional response and connection when they find out what they have in common.

I don't want you to mistaken that I'm saying that all your conversations have to be upbeat and positive. Sometimes the best conversations do go down in the dumps.

Here are some examples of emotional questions.

1. What was the last adventure you've been on?
2. What's the favourite part of your job?
3. What kind of places would you like to travel to that you haven't travelled to yet?
4. Why do you think makes a great date in this city?
5. What would you love to do if you weren't in your current job right now?
6. Where do you think a great place would be to take a date?
7. Disney claims to be the most fun place on earth. What do you think, where do you think the most fun place really is?
8. What was the highlight of your trip to Europe?

Asking emotional questions allows you to know the real person. What do they feel about a particular topic? How do they perceive things in the world? While I'm not saying that you can't ask intellectual questions, such as: "What do you think

about gender issues in Sudan?" You want to dig in to see if that person is interested in talking about that topic. Using questions to fish for follow up questions is quite common and is okay. And when I do question people and start fishing, I may start off with data exchange questions that will allow me to switch into emotional questions quickly. But the goal is to be able to switch to emotional questions as soon as possible. Here's an example of where I start with a data exchange and then into an emotional question.

A: "Oh, so what is it that you're studying in school right now?"

B: "I'm studying psychology at the moment."

A: "What was the last exciting psychological concept you remember studying?"

B: "Hmm, the last...well there was this section on abnormal psychology that I really enjoyed. It was talking about how geniuses are created..."

Now if you're wondering how you actually form an emotional question, the easiest thing you can do is to put an emotional word into your question. Literally putting an emotional word into a question can make a difference, or asking how a certain activity made her feel can help move the conversation into an emotional state.

Examples of emotional words are: fun, exciting, sad, cheerful, happy, angry, enthusiastic, adventurous, fearful, scariest, grateful or enjoyable.

"What was the most enjoyable aspect of your last job?"

"What aspect of your life do you personally find most grateful about?"

"What was the scariest thing you've tried, that you don't regret?"

"Who was the person you feared the most when you were growing up?"

"What's the most adventurous vacation you've been on?"

"What kind of activities are you most enthusiastic about doing?"

I'm sure you get the point. By putting an emotional word into a question, the question then takes on a life of its own.

The other simple way to get people to be in a positive mood when they do talk to you is to simply ask them about their favourite anything. What's the most favourite part of their job? What was their favourite part about writing their own book? Who was their favourite childhood friend? Simply using the word "favourite" in a question will automatically get the other person to focus on a highlight in their life.

Like most parts of conversation there are no clear set rules, only strong guidelines. There are some questions that happen to fit into both categories depending on the person you are talking to. They are neither black nor white. What you may consider a data exchange question may be an emotional question for another person. For example in Canada, many people love watching hockey, there's the statement that it's like a religion. So for many Canadians talking about hockey is an emotional topic not a data exchange one.

Beware of Cliché Questions

The second part of asking great questions is not only asking emotional questions but you want to avoid asking cliché questions the way they are normally asked by literally millions of other people.

Cliché questions include and not limited to:

"What do you do?"

"What are your hobbies?"

"Do you have any siblings?"

"What did you study when you were in school?"

Unfortunately people have heard these questions again and again in their life, and many times they often give automatic responses without thinking too much about the question. However, a charismatic person doesn't try to reinvent the wheel, she knows she has to make it packaged and marketed better. You can ask about a person's job, or what their hobbies are but you want to be able to ask someone in a different way that they've never been asked before. Let's demonstrate this with a food analogy. Person A says that a cake is delicious. Person B says the cake was irresistible. Which cake would you most likely try? Probably cake B. Even though technically they could have had the same cake, but by rewording how the cake tastes makes us more invested into wanting to eat it.

Questions are no different. Simply by wording them in a way that makes them irresistible, we can't help but want to answer them. Ask yourself, haven't there been questions that someone asked you that you wanted to pounce on and answer?

When I ask questions like the ones above, I ask:

"So in your current job what do you like the most about it?"

"If you weren't doing the job you were doing right now, where would you enjoy spending most of your time?"

"Tell me who your favourite family member is?"

"So what was the last interesting subject you remember studying in school?"

Which set of questions is more engaging? I didn't need to create new types of questions. All I did was repackage them.

Now here's an exercise for you, I'm going to write down a series of cliché questions and I want you to be able to reword them yourself to give it that extra spice it needs.

"What kind of music do you listen to?"

"What's your passion in life?"

"Where have you travelled to?"

As time goes on, you'll find out which questions are great to ask, and receive good responses, while other questions just seem to flop. Try out different questions and have fun with them. The most important thing to remember is to record down your thoughts and reflect on what you believe made a particular set of questions work well and other ones that didn't.

Key Points to Remember:

- ✓ Two types of questions that you can ask are data exchange questions and emotional exchange questions.
- ✓ Data exchange questions are used to gather information, and often create low energy and superficial conversations.
- ✓ Emotional exchange questions are used to get emotional responses from people. These are questions people want to answer, and they help create more spice in the conversation.
- ✓ Good emotional questions generally only need emotional words in them, such as fun, exciting, or asking them about their favourite activity or part of an experience.
- ✓ Avoid asking cliché questions that you've been asked five thousand times before.

Conversation Exercise 10: Emotional Engagement

Look over some of the example questions in this chapter. Choose 2 or 3 emotional questions that you would like to try asking in your conversations this week. I would encourage you to create your own emotionally engaging questions and try them out with people.

Once you've asked the emotionally engaging questions, try asking data exchange questions, and pay attention to the energy of the conversation. Do you notice if there is a difference? Do you find that people are more involved with one type of question versus another, or do you think they feel the same?

Notice which questions are getting good responses, and which ones are falling flat. Record your findings in your journal.

Creating a Top Ten List of Topics to Talk About

"Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers."

-Anthony Robbins

Martin was one of my adult students at the Vancouver School Board conversation class where I was an instructor. He was feeling frustrated because he didn't feel that he could connect with his co-workers on a deeper personal level. He knew enough about their professional life, after all they all worked in the same department together, but he wanted to know more about them. Martin had a genuine interest but wasn't sure what questions to ask them, and even what kind of questions he should be asking people in general when he was meeting them for the first time.

Martin has the same issues that most of my clients face. How do you connect with people to go beyond the small chat? How do you connect with others as easily as possible?

Asking questions and listening to their response is still the best way to understand people. You want to be unique, you want to stand out, and the last thing you want to be is one of those boring old biddies that happens to be asking the same questions that the last ten people she's talked to have asked.

You don't have to be that person, and the great thing is that you don't have to have a whole barrage of questions. The best and easiest thing that you can do is to have a top ten questions list that you can keep handy with you at all times and even remember.

Here are some example questions I like to ask people where I know I'm in a people will be asked the same questions over and over again.

1) What's been your favourite job that you've worked at so far?

- 2) What did you imagine as your dream job when you were a kid?
- 3) If you weren't working in your current job that you are right now what would you dream job be? (Surprisingly some people may not know what their dream job is - they don't give it some thought.)
- 4) When was the last great adventure of your life?
- 5) What would be the ultimate adventure in your life that you would like to experience?
- 6) What has been your favourite vacation spot so far?
- 7) What do you consider one of your favourite activities for doing in this city?
- 8) If you were going to have a superpower as a hero, what would that power be?
- 9) Where in the world would you love to travel to that you haven't been to yet?
- 10) I'm curious, what do think about the dating scene is like in this city?

I have a lot more questions that I can ask and I'll give you some more at the end of this section, but those are just examples of questions that you can ask as well. I would challenge you to come up with your own top ten list of questions to make having conversations easier and enjoyable.

Asking my questions is good, but learning to be creative in conversations and learning to think of intriguing questions in the moment is more important. With spontaneity comes true genuineness.

Now you don't want to use this as an interview style. So don't have the ten questions lined up and ask them in a row at a date or a fun networking event. The point of the questions is to use them as a back up in case you find you're stuck in a situation where there is too long of an awkward pause.

If you're starting off and you feel uneasy, feel free to carry the list of ten questions in your wallet. That way if you forget what they are, you can excuse yourself and take a look and then use 2 or 3 of them at the next conversation. Eventually, you'll have your own repertoire of questions to ask based on memory.

Here's the important part, find out which questions seem to receive the best responses for you, and keep those questions. The ones that seem to receive the flattest responses after four or five tries should be thrown out like an old shoe, and be replaced with a new test questions. And then try out those new questions. Repeat the process until you find that you've found 10 questions that seem to work well in most social situations. Just remember that comedians test out new material all the time. They get booed for the stuff that sucks, but they always keep their best material. And once they have their best material, they use it non - stop. The top ten list is your comedic act with nothing but applause.

Another trap to be aware of is that you may find yourself being in a reverse situation where you are bored of asking the same questions. Don't be afraid to change your list around and to constantly try new types of questions. You may never know, you may find a question that is even better than any on your previous top ten list.

Key Questions You Can Ask on a Date:

- What's one talent you like to secretly brag about?
- What do you imagine your perfect relationship to be like?
- If you could describe yourself in just three words what would it be?
- What's one talent you would love to have?
- What was the best birthday gift you remember receiving?
- What were summer vacations like when you were a kid?
- Do you remember the best Christmas present you've ever received?
- Who do you consider your favourite family member?

- Who do you consider your favourite teacher or professor?
- What's been your favourite music experience you've ever had?
- What superpower would you like to possess?

Key Questions You Can Ask Professionally:

- What's been the greatest lesson you've learned professionally?
- What kind of skills do you believe are the most important to have?
- Ideally is there place in the world you want to work and live in for a year?
- Who do you consider the biggest influence in your life?
- Is there another career path that you're interested in?
- Do you see yourself doing this in the next 10 years?
- Is there a good book or resource that you would recommend?
- How do you maintain a healthy relationship with family and still juggle a great career?

Key Points to Remember:

- ✓ Try to be creative in asking unique questions that stimulate interesting answers
- ✓ Creating a top ten list of questions that you can ask can help make your conversations easier and make you more engaging.

Conversation Exercise 11: Your Top 10 List Come to Life

If you did the previous exercise, you should be finding some questions are better to ask than others. Now create a top ten list in your journal, and keep a piece of paper in your wallet or purse as a reference.

Don't forget to keep pruning your questions until you find a set that you are confident and comfortable with.

Part 3: Enhancing your Charisma



The Art of Captivating Storytelling

“Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today.”

-Robert McAfee Brown

Storytelling is probably the oldest form of verbal communication known to man. I could even write a whole book on storytelling alone. Even before men were able to speak coherent words, they were drawing out their stories on caves that described their hunts. And when men and women were able to develop speech, they sat around campfires that described triumphant stories or tragedies that happened in their nomadic tribes. Women have told stories to their babies and children for who knows how long to keep their attention and to explain to them about life’s lessons. As people, from children to senior citizens, over hundreds of thousands of years we have evolved to enjoy storytelling on such a primal level that no other form of verbal communication is as encapsulating. So why has storytelling survived this long?

Storytelling has survived this long for several reasons:

- Stories are memorable and can burn into a person’s long term memory. People may not remember all the facts about you, but they will remember a great story you’ve shared or told.
- Stories are emotional. Unlike facts and job descriptions, telling a story about what you do, or how you help people in your career can allow for a powerful connection with others.
- Stories can break the complex into the simple. It can be hard to explain difficult concepts or even what exactly you do in your job to others. A story can simplify the concepts in a way that others understand.
- Stories can unite people. When Haiti had an earthquake in 2010 that killed hundreds of thousands, it wasn’t the numbers that moved the world to action. It was the stories of the people living there that united them to help the nation.

- Stories are relatable and more personal. Unlike sharing statistics about famine in Africa, charities will often share a tragic but success story to help you relate to what it is like to be a person in Africa with those conditions.
- Stories are persuasive and they help close sales. When stories are told, they can often be used to persuade others towards a certain action. Life insurance agents will often tell the most upsetting story about a person who didn't get insurance and what happened to their families afterwards to move them to buy life insurance.
- Stories can convey your personality without bragging. When you want to highlight your great personality, a story can do this without you coming off as arrogant.

And those are some of the reasons why storytelling has lasted through the ages and is such a powerful communication technique.

Now stop and reflect back to a time you heard a story from your friend that made you ride an emotional roller coaster and touched you from down deep inside your soul. What was great about that story? Was it a story where he was the underdog, and went through so many difficult life circumstances that your heart just wrenched as you were listening to his every word? Did your friend come out of those particular hardships with a positive outlook and was able to have that fairytale happy ending? At the end of the story were you just absolutely amazed at how this person lived his life and you were just left with nothing but awe and inspiration and felt closer to your friend?

For myself, I love hearing inspirational speakers talk. I love to hear their stories that they tell at their seminars. One of my idols is Brian Tracy. Here's a man that is now known as one of the best sales gurus in America, now a multimillionaire, who didn't even graduate from high school. He was working on a farm doing back breaking labour and was always going from job to job. Until he couldn't find

a job and so he decided to take the only job available at the time which was a sales position. In his first year of sales he was absolutely terrible, and could barely sell enough to keep the rent going and to feed himself. Then at 24 his life completely changed. He asked a simple question “What’s the difference between the best sales person and the worst?” He made a smart decision to sit down over lunch and talk to the best salesperson in his company. He listened and applied some of the knowledge that he learned about the sales process. And by doing that he went from near the bottom of the barrel to the top within a year for his company. A top sales person in his company who didn’t even have a high school education! Imagine the feeling of accomplishment that he went through.

Great leaders and people who are charismatic have been using this form of storytelling for ages. What’s the form? A story that contains a journey, a conflict and a resolution. Of course this format is overly simplistic, but this is the basis for bestselling novels and great biographical writings of the world’s leaders.

Life is partially about struggling and being able to overcome the challenges that occur in our life. It’s about appreciating the journey that is set forth before us, and learning the lessons that come from that journey and being stronger and grateful for such an experience occurring. Think back to all the people that were memorable in history: Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, Dalai Lama, or Ghandi. All of them had such internal and external challenges, but they also celebrated their many victories.

A captivating story leads people through an emotional rollercoaster ride. And like a rollercoaster ride you want people to feel emotional highs and emotional lows when they least expect it. And it is this emotional roller coaster that will allow them to feel like they know you better and in some cases get them to feel as if they have known you forever. Watch the movie *Titanic* if you’ve never seen it. It’s such an emotional rollercoaster ride that the audience can’t seem to get enough of it. It’s filled with so much drama, inner conflict, excitement, adventure, and overcoming conflicts in love and resisting what we know doesn’t feel right.

In the end, it was a positive experience for both Jack and Rose. Of course, there's always a death to top it off. And this is a movie that is three hours long. When I went to go watch it, it felt like one of the shortest three hours of my life. Whether you like the movie or not, you can't debate that movie captured the hearts of millions of people and the power it had and still has over them.

Let's look at an example of a captivating story told in the first person narrative.

"I remember there was one summer in my early twenties that six of us decided to take a road trip around Vancouver Island. We were visiting Victoria, and all these other small cities along the way, and one of the cities we visited was Nanaimo. What made Nanaimo unique was that it had a place to go bungee jumping. My friends were all excited. We all agreed that we were going to bungee jump and I had never done anything so daring in my life. I was scared, excited, and could feel my heart thumping at a thousand beats per minute.

"After I signed the waiver form saying that they wouldn't be responsible for my death if something happened, I joined my friends at the top of this metal bridge. As my turn came up, they tied a white piece of cloth around my legs that was attached to this long rubber band. I inched forward slowly my feet tied, as if it was tree stump, onto a wooden plank. I was now becoming feeling my throat getting dry and was wondering whether what I was doing was brave and adventurous, or just plain crazy and stupid.

"I looked down for two seconds from this metal bridge that was 140 feet above rushing cold water. I told myself that I needed to get this done. That if I can overcome this, then I can overcome many fears in my life. I know it's safe, I just have to push my comfort. And finally as I crept ever so slowly I took a deep breath, fighting my own instinct not to jump, I fell over slowly. Letting gravity work its magic as I free fell from over 140 feet. I fell so quickly and was paralyzed with fear that I couldn't even let out a scream. And as I was falling all the trees and rocks looked like a massive blur as if I was driving on a highway at 100 km/h.

And there was one specific moment where time seemed to freeze as my face was two feet away from the water and my right hand gently dipped into the cold water. For that single moment, I felt completely lost and free. And then the bungee cord yanked me back up ever so quickly and I was soon bouncing like a ball.

“It has been one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life, and I was able to find courage in myself that I never knew I had the support of wonderful friends to share a wonderful memory. Hands down it was one of the top three memories of my life.”

Now that we’ve looked at an example of a story, what elements are needed to make a captivating story?

1. Do your best to talk about yourself in the story using the “I” Perspective.

Here’s a common blunder I hear during conversations.

“You know when you go bungee jumping and then you’re falling 140 feet from the sky. It’s so exhilarating.” The other person’s subconscious thinks... “No...I don’t know what that’s like. Why are you saying it’s MY experience? It’s your experience.”

The best way to tell the story is if it is your experience to ensure you use the “I” perspective. “I went bungee jumping, and I was falling 140 feet in the sky. It was so exhilarating.”

I once had a student of mine ask me if it was conceited to keep using the “I” perspective during storytelling. Here’s the reason why it’s actually very effective. Most of us never grew up with stories in the “You” form. We all grew up from stories of either “I” perspective or the “Third person” perspective. Now imagine you had grown up reading Cinderella like this.

“YOU had two evil step sisters and they treated YOU horribly. YOU then one day met a charming nice prince...”

Here’s the dilemma. What if you don’t want to meet prince charming? Then the ability to relate to the story is then lost and soon we dissociate from the original story being told.

You can always tell stories about other people which are what fairy tales and most novels do. Just ensure that you mention the character’s name. However, telling stories about other people is good, but it doesn’t allow the other person to know who you are. And that is where over time you become known as the person with a lot of stories (almost like a court jester), but you don’t have any of your own. So ensure you have stories about yourself.

2. It is crucial that you are involving **emotions** into the story about how you felt when you were struggling. Did you feel frustrated, sad, defeated, or depressed? In the story above I mention how I was anxious, excited and exhilarated. All humans relate to emotions. If stories had no emotion of any type then we wouldn’t be able to relate to the character as deeply. The goal of a good story is not to express one type of emotion, but to express the good and the bad emotions you felt throughout the journey. The emotional rollercoaster is important for people to feel close to you.

One of the pitfalls of this particular style is to be careful from overusing one single type of emotion throughout the story. An ex girlfriend of mine used to complain to me that I was always a positive person. This drove her partially nuts because she didn’t feel that I was “real.” I was always in an upbeat mood, and she felt like I had no problems. The truth was I was going through spiritual ego, instead of expressing some of the negative

emotions I felt I decided to keep them inside, and remain optimistic. I didn't share with her my struggles and so she felt less connected to me.

In order for someone to feel connected with you in a faster time frame you need to be able to give them a series of emotions to feel. Just imagine a whole movie dedicated to nothing but bright, positive feelings, and imagine one that was about depression. It wouldn't be very entertaining for long.

3. Mention the details of your struggle. What was your conflict? Was it an internal or external conflict? Or was it both? Were there other people involved? Where did it take place and what sort of environment was it? Were there any particular details about the other person? What visual details are you able to share? What was she dressed like? Or again, was it something that you psychologically battled and it was on your mind the moment you woke up till you went to sleep? Sounds? Colours? Smells?

Notice how I use the visual details of me being tied to a white towel, or my face being two feet away from the water. I even purposely exaggerate some of the details using sound effects such as my heart thumping at one thousand beats per minute. Or how I was 140 feet above cold water while I was falling on a huge elastic band. It is all these details that will vortex people into your personal experience and life.

4. The fourth element is the solution to the problem. How did you overcome the problem? What was the solution and what role did it play? And how did you feel along the way to finding the solution? You always want to try to end this story with a happy ending. Even in *Titanic*, Rose and Jack were eternally together after all.

In my story, I overcame the conflict simply by taking small steps forward and then falling over the wooden plank. This is the physical solution to the actual physical problem. But I also tried to solve the problem by mentally

talking to myself and encouraging myself to get over my fear and be courageous. This is more of an internal solution to an internal struggle that I was having.

Now, in a story you tell, you may have never solved the problem. This may be a problem about how your first business was not the success that you had hoped it would be. How did that particular story or experience impact your life for the better? What lessons did you learn from that particular experience that has made you into a different person? For me, bungee jumping showed me that I had more courage than I thought and now when I feel afraid, I remember the courage I had to fall 140 feet from the air.

What's interesting about the captivating story is that it allows people to get to know who you are without coming off as 1) arrogant and 2) sounding like a victim.

Pitfalls of Storytelling

Pitfall One: Bragging the Wrong Way

One of the biggest pet peeves I hear from other people is that they hate people who just brag about their accomplishments and are arrogant about them. This is because the people who go straight into talking about accomplishments forget to tell people about their struggles along the way - the people that challenged their dream or those that didn't believe in them. Therefore it can be hard to relate to their success. However people will, and always have, related to the hardships along the way to get to success or to an outcome they desired.

"Yeah, so now I'm a surgeon, and I've been living near the penthouse floor for the last two years. It has this amazing view, as a matter of fact Pamela Anderson used to own the place before I took it over." Not exactly the greatest way to talk to someone."

I was talking to a woman about her dating experiences at a party. She told me that a man came up to her at a bar and told her how he owned three houses within three minutes of meeting her. The moment that he started to talk about his properties, and only about his properties, she became completely turned off. The error that the man made wasn't in telling her he had three houses. It was the fact that he did not mention the struggles and the journey he took to be able to accomplish having three homes. Telling any person that you have three homes doesn't make you human, but the hard work to get to that dreams is what makes you human. Vulnerability goes a long way in connecting with others.

Pitfall Two: Believing You're a Victim

The second pitfall that can happen during storytelling is the "I'm always the victim talk." I have a friend that always goes and tells me the "It's so hard to date women in this city" speech over and over again. He tells me how he's frustrated. So he has some of the elements to a great story: the emotions, the "I" perspective, the details, and a conflict. The trouble is that the emotions are mostly negative and no solution was found nor a lesson learned. When this happens, the people listening to the story go into a negative emotional dumpster. This is problematic because most people don't like a Debbie Downer. Most people don't mind listening once or twice to someone's struggle, but get very tired of hearing people whom they meet who complain throughout their talk or date. Don't be one of those people. You're going to bring down other people's mood and eventually they will stop talking to you.

This is especially true when networking. I've met too many professionals, who don't enjoy their current job, and during their discussion, they share negative aspects about their job. But these are people who are looking for a new career, and they give off a terrible impression. The first impression I get is, "Well I hope you don't expect me to refer you to a new career."

Pitfall Three: Looooonng stories

Pitfall three is not keeping your stories relatively short at first when you're talking to other people for the first time. I try not to keep my stories more than three minutes when first meeting someone, after all, you should be courteous and inquire about the other person. If you've known someone for a period of time then feel free to share more, but don't hog up the conversation.

In this day and age, I have found that people are dying to have real conversations with people. People they feel connected with on a deeper level. And it has been my personal feeling that at times we are afraid to be vulnerable to express our feelings, hardships, and lessons that we have received in life. That at times, we may not want people to perceive us as weak or somehow think less of us. I believe that this can't be further from the truth. People respect those that can talk comfortably about themselves and their real life struggles. Everyone has their struggles in their life. But I'm not suggesting you reveal everything.

Be comfortable to share a part of your life through story with people that show that you had struggles as well. It's what makes us human. Now if you're not too sure if you're going overboard with your story, then take the time to look at other people's reactions. Are you finding that they are looking around more? Are they fidgeting? Do their eyes look glazed as if they're dreaming?

If you get the instinctual feeling that the person is becoming bored with the story, wrap up the story nicely. And then ask the person a question to get them back into the conversation. As you get to know people more and more, feel free to share longer stories.

When you start to share longer stories, pause in between and ask people a question. If you happen to mention a story about France, ask them quickly "You ever been to France?" And then continue on the story once you've fully listened to their response.

As time goes on, you'll notice which stories will capture the full attention of people. When you're able to tell wonderful stories, stories that are genuine, you

will be able to entertain a crowd of one, or a crowd of one thousand. That is the power of storytelling. You will also find that if you ever want to make a strong point, and want to persuade other people about your perspective, telling a story or a lesson you want people to learn will influence them towards your direction. So go out there, and tell your stories.

Key Points To Remember:

- Storytelling is one of the best ways to emotionally connect, engage another person and have them remember you.
- The four elements of a captivating story are perspective, emotions, details and a resolution to a conflict.
- To give people the impression that they have known you for a long time, you want to be able to describe a wide range of emotions that range from the lows to the highs (like a rollercoaster).
- Ensure you use a lot of visual details so that you can help people paint a picture of the story in their mind.
- The three pitfalls of storytelling are bragging, victim talk, and keeping your stories too long.

Conversation Exercise 12: Be the Best Storyteller

Create three different stories that use all the elements that are listed above. Test out all three stories by sharing them with people in a conversation when you get a chance, and then write down your observations in your journal.

Notice carefully how you tell your story. Did you find that one story had more success than others because you told it with more emotions?

Maybe one of your stories had a more difficult conflict that you needed to overcome and that got people interested? Perhaps the story that people enjoyed

most was from your childhood? Notice the small details. Charismatic people will tell their best stories over and over again.

Change a Debbie Downer to a Positive Pete

"The person who's most patient in understanding others, will learn to lead them."

-Vincent K.C. Ng

I want you to imagine...

You're in a great mood because you've decided that you wanted to go out and meet new people. There you are sitting in a classroom that's teaching you how to have better conversations. You turn to the person to the right of you and start to converse with her, and soon you notice the friendly chat soon turns quite sour. You're thinking to yourself "Oh no, this is not exactly the kind of chat I wanted, and I don't want to keep hearing her complain on and on. How do I change the topic to greener pastures?"

Getting someone out of a bad mood can be one of the toughest aspects of the art of conversation. Sometimes people are in such bad moods that you won't be able to bring them out of it. And this is completely natural as there are times when people need time to feel their emotions through and mourn through what they are feeling.

One of the common mistakes that people make is that they attempt to cheer someone up by making them laugh all the time. While some of us are gifted at making people laugh because we have a particular sense of humour, this is not always an effective way to start transitioning a "poor mood" conversation into a "good mood" conversation. You may want to try this at first, but if you've noticed that it's just not working within the first few minutes, then don't push it, you're not making the situation any better by making jokes that just aren't funny to her.

To change the negative feelings of someone, one of the best approaches is to truly listen and understand what they are feeling. Take a genuine curiosity to know why she is talking that way and empathize with that person. Even listening to the other person is sometimes enough to help her change her moods so that

the conversation becomes much lighter. Your goal is not necessarily to make the person become extra positive and full of life. Your goal is to help them relieve some stress so that they feel lighter.

When I was a manager of a coffee shop for a large coffee corporation, I was doing some table clean up around the store. A lady who sat at one of the tables appeared upset and looked as if she was about to cry. As I approached her and asked her what was wrong, she started telling me how she was been fired from her job of three years, and how she was five months pregnant.

She started to unravel more of the story of how she felt that she was unfairly fired, and how anybody could be let go from their job after three years just like that. I sat there at the table with her, and fully listened. I empathized with her, and nodded with her in agreement to almost every statement that she mentioned. My heart felt sad by her story, and especially knowing that she was an immigrant with a child on the way. As I listened to her for forty minutes, she stopped crying and started to calm down and calmly asked for advice on what action she could potentially take against her employer. I did the best I could to advise her based on what I knew as a manager and she left the store quietly, in a more relaxed mood than when she came in. All she needed was someone to talk to in an open and honest manner.

A lot of times people just need an ear for them to feel lighter since they have so much pent up frustration inside of them. Once they let go of that frustration they feel a huge sense of relief. However, you may want to push it a step forward and here's what you can do next to bring them from relief to a positive mood.

Once you've felt that the person has vented and felt that they have been heard, this is when you can start to transition into a story or potential lesson that will lead to a light hearted tone.

Here is a story that I share with people who may have been recently laid off from their job.

“You know, I used to work for a food and beverage director. And he worked really hard, he was trying to direct over six different departments, wine store, banquets, the coffee shop and so forth. He was always constantly stressed. I would watch him, and though he was a really great director, I felt that he didn’t receive the respect that he deserved. He was working so hard that he didn’t get to spend as much time with his family as he wanted. He had a workaholic lifestyle. The general manager eventually downgraded his work and then basically fired him. Obviously he was dismayed at first. But then the firing was a blessing in disguise. Eventually he ended up managing one of the most respected restaurants in all of Vancouver. It has a seaside view, the reviews are always fantastic, celebrities would go there once in a while, and he was making an extra thirty thousand dollars for doing half the work.

“He was doing less to the point that the restaurant was running so well that he was even getting bored at times. So it’s really hard to say if this is going to be a bad or good thing, because sometimes it turns out to be the best in the world. And I’m sure for you, knowing who you are, and how passionate you are about your line of work...you’ll find great opportunities.”

Now what I did there was that I started to tell her a story that was similar to her story of being let go from work. I was mirroring the way that she might have potentially felt. When people feel that they are understood, they will feel much lighter inside.

Then I slowly transitioned the conversation into a better mood by talking about a happy ending, and how sometimes there are opportunities that are waiting for us out there that are better than our previous job. This is to give the person a sense of hope. I will then move into a compliment about the person that relates to my story. Is this guaranteed to make her happy? No it doesn’t, but it does work quite well in many situations.

At that point it would be good to ask questions that are on a more positive note.

I have done this transitioning with some of the deepest of topics. When my mom was in the hospital she was frightened of her health after surgery and was in the hospital for three weeks. I would share with her stories about people recovering from *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series. And telling her how laughter and happiness are such powerful ways of healing people. That positive energy has healed people from the depths of cancer.

If you happen to find that no matter how you transition away from the conversation, and you ask positive light hearted questions, but he seems to always go back to the same dreary topic, then take some time to listen sympathetically. However, if you feel that you don't have the energy to listen, then don't force yourself to. In my personal experience it's much better to be a genuine listener than to be a person who pretends to listen and care.

Key Points to Remember

- Fully listen to a person's problem and do your best to empathize with their situation, without being critical or judgemental.
- Be curious, and ask them questions about the situation so that it may help them feel a sense of relief.
- Do not attempt to make people laugh if it is a serious issue that they are sharing. I would assume you wouldn't try to make someone laugh at a funeral.
- After fully listening to someone, transition to a story that has an optimistic plot and offers a type of happy ending.

Conversation Exercise 13: Helping Others

The next time that a person comes up to you and is having a rough time in their life, take the time to fully listen. Understand how the person feels by being curious and asking emotionally engaging questions. Then, when you feel the

person has fully expressed herself, take the time to share a story of hope and optimism.

Write down in your journal how well you believed you listened, how well you offered support, and how you did in inspiring the person into a more positive mood. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 each time. With 10 meaning you did an absolutely amazing job.

The Art of Listening: The Yin to the Yang

“To listen well, is as powerful a means of influence as to talk well, and is as essential to all true conversation.”

-Chinese Proverb

I once told my friend, Aaron, about a good friend of ours that never seemed to listen. I remember telling Aaron, “He’s such a horrible listener. All he wants to do is get his own input in. He’ll talk for half an hour, and then when I need two minutes of his time, he can’t even give it.” Aaron listened to me sympathetically. I remember about a month later, Aaron and I were having a conversation on the phone. “Hey, you know how you mentioned that he can’t seem to listen, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN NOW...all he does is talk and talk, and then he just seems to ignore me when I say something, or he’ll let me talk for a minute and then he’ll go on tangent again.”

I wish I could say that this is not a common pitfall in conversations, but it does happen more than I would like. In this case it can be understood why my friend Aaron and I would be upset at this person. He’s a poor listener.

No person can truly be a great conversationalist, without also being a great listener. They are the yin and the yang. If you are able to listen carefully to another person you’re able to understand him, and by sincerely listening to what they have to say you can use the information that he gives you to help further the conversation and to come up with interesting questions. Without being able to actively listen to someone carefully most of what I teach would be useless because it would be about you sharing all your ideas without knowing what the other person is thinking.

Being a great listener is not about just using your ears, there are many factors such as reading body language, their facial expressions, tonality shifts in their voice and the way that you react to a person while they are talking.

What does it really mean to be a great listener?

1) Eye contact and body language. Ensure that you make eye contact with the person you are speaking to, and that your body language is friendly. Body language that suggests you're listening is your face is in line with theirs and your head and eyes are not wandering all over. That you make small nods when you are agreeing with what the person is saying. That you don't have a drink covering your face while discussing topics with him. Make sure you're also smiling when it is a good conversation.

2) Let the other person finish what they have to say. This is very important. One of the BIGGEST mistakes I see people make is that they generally don't let other people finish their thoughts first. And most people don't usually share long thoughts. Even though we may be eager to share our thoughts because we found out we have something in common to that person or we want to share some advice, let the person finish.

(Now if you happen to find that a person is dominating a conversation too much, and you notice that other members of the group are bored, feel free to interject at a reasonable time. If someone has talked for ten minutes straight, then interrupt the conversation when there is a slight pause. Unless the person has not completed their thought. For example, if someone is telling you about the latest discovery about evolutionary theory, let them finish their main thought first. Then once she's done, jump into the conversation when there's a slight pause. Use one of the conversation openers as a way to redirect the topic to something potentially more interesting to the group of people you are with. Or talk about a topic that you would like to talk about.)

3) Learn to paraphrase. I find that being a good listener is having the ability to paraphrase a thought that someone has shared with us, especially if someone has shared something deep and personal, such as a happy moment, or a moment that they found incredibly frustrating. It helps to state back what they

have said. Also as I've mentioned throughout the book, find out the emotion that lies behind the words. And reiterate the emotion they are potentially feeling.

When you are able to paraphrase the way a person feels, you're also able to empathize with her. Empathy is one of the key characteristics of a great leader at work and also is considered one of the essential factors of having a high likeability factor according to Tim Sanders, author of *The Likeability Factor*.

Bob: "Why can't my co worker just do his job? He's always pawning things off on me! What a lazy ass kind of guy."

You: "Based on what you've told me, I can imagine it's frustrating. Here you are... working so hard, and here's this guy that seems to be doing less than you are. It's obviously not fair to you, how long has this been going on for?"

4) Putting Aside Judgment- If you're going to be a good listener, this means that at times you will have to put your judgment aside. This can be very tough for many of us. There are always beliefs and values that we have that are part of our very core. But being a good listener means putting them aside and trying to understand the perspective of the other person you're having a talk with.

During my years as a dating coach, I would meet women who would be very adamant against me being in multiple short term relationships. There were many assumptions that would lead to what I would call "unfriendly conversations." They would conclude that I was probably trying to get as much sex as possible, that I treated women as objects as opposed to people, and they also assumed that the women I dated wanted a commitment. However they jumped to conclusions without attempting to understand the situation. If these women had let me talk, and put judgment aside for a little while, then I would have probably been less defensive and more open to hearing their perspective as well instead of coming from a defensive position. So if you attack people from the start on where they are on an issue, without understanding, then you're just trying to be right. And trying to be right all the time is ego, not charisma.

Keep in mind that a conversation is a two way street.

5) Be curious. Being a good listener is also being genuinely curious about the other person. This can take some practice as there are topics that you may not be interested in talking and asking about.

During conversations it's good to challenge yourself to ask a few follow up questions about the topic that doesn't interest you. Sometimes when I'm having conversations with people, the topic seems very boring at first, but they end up revealing something very profound or they share something that is truly interesting.

If you find that a person is on a roll when talking about a particular topic that he seems passionate about then it's best to fully listen to their thoughts before interrupting with your own. Think of the last time that you were on a roll and the person interrupted your conversation. You were excitedly explaining the thoughts you had about a topic and the person kept interrupting you with their own ideas. Were you fully listening to the other person or more concerned about completing your own thoughts? When you're able to fully listen to someone and have allowed them to finish up a thought then the other person is ready to listen to your thoughts as well.

This is because they are no longer distracted in the mind about completing their thoughts. Have you ever had a moment when you were trying to recall someone's name and you had it at the tip of your tongue. You knew the name but you just couldn't say it, but your brain was working really hard at remembering it. The question is why is it so important we have to remember the person's name. The truth is it's not. But the brain functions in a way that it enjoys closure, so by not remembering the name it creates an "open loop" of information that has no solid ending. And when we don't get closure, our mind fixates on that thought and we can't give 100% attention to other activities, such as listening to another person talking.

Without letting someone finish their thought you don't allow them closure in their mind. And what happens is that thought will remain an "open loop" until the thought is expressed fully.

Just remember to balance out your listening with some talking as well so that other people are getting a chance to know who you are as well. No conversation should involve 100% listening.

Key Points to Remember:

- Listening is an essential component to any good conversation. Five points to remember to being an active listener are: making eye contact, letting the other person finish what they are saying without interruption, paraphrasing a person's thoughts, putting aside judgement and being genuinely curious.

Conversation Exercise 14: Listening

Read over this section one more time so that you have a full understanding of what it means to be a good listener. Pick a conversation this week with someone and just fully listen to what they have to say, don't try to fill the conversation with what you want to talk about, be curious about him, ask interesting questions, put aside any judgement you may have and be present in the conversation.

Write a journal entry on how it was to just listen in on a conversation. Was it uneasy? Did you find that you fiddled with an object while listening? Did you tend to zone out? Write down your observations including what you thought the other person's reaction was like when you just listened.

Sometimes Silence is Golden

"Silence is one of the great arts of conversation."

-Marcus Tullius Cicero

One of the most important aspects of a conversation is not just what you say, but learning when exactly to listen silently and reflect on what has been said to you. I've witnessed and have heard people secretly complain that most people are poor listeners. They're so anxious, that silent gaps between sentences are uncomfortable.

While I must admit there are some people that speak on and on without any courtesy what the other person is saying, you should not be one of those people that talks and talks. Do you want to be known as the "BLAH BLAH BLAH person?" I've seen the people that do that, and unless you're telling a story that is humorous, I wouldn't advise it one bit. This is why you need to learn to pause at appropriate times.

Pausing at the appropriate times can show someone that you're listening and reflecting on what the other person is saying.

However, if you pause too often or too long during your conversations then this can make the conversation awkward. And to prevent that awkwardness, there are three situations where you should pause during a chat.

Pausing During Emotional Connections

The first situation where you should pause is when someone has shared an aspect of their life that is personal and deep. When I was single, I went out to a night club with my friend Michael. Michael and I started talking to three women at the night club near the coat check as they were leaving. As I initiated a conversation with a tall blond we ended up quickly talking about about my best

friend, and within five minutes of the conversation it had become very personal and deep conversation as you'll read.

Now the following example is paraphrased but notice where I pause in this real life situation, so that I'm not rushing the conversation but digesting the thoughts that she's sharing to show that I'm listening carefully.

Woman: "My former best friend died during our grad night while back in school. I read through his journal and noticed how cruel he was to the people there. I realized that I was like that...that I would make fun of people and take pleasure in all of that. Then I realized after his death that I was a bitch and I didn't want to be like that. I didn't want to judge anymore."

Me: (2 Second pause). "I can't imagine what it must have been like to lose your friend. (Pause) Especially your best friend. But for you to go through all of that, and to be able to come to grips and to be able to be such a different person is amazing to me."

Notice that I'm pausing for about two seconds to reflect on what she said. If I jump in too early then it seems that I'm not taking the time to think about what is being shared, if I spend too long reflecting then it can seem that I'm speechless. In the case that you do become speechless with what a person has confided in you with, just politely let them know that you're not 100% sure what to say. People appreciate the honesty.

Remember, when a person shares something that strikes an emotional string with you. Take the time to pause and reflect on what they're saying. This will allow the person to know that you are listening to what he or she is really saying without feeling that you have to fill the whole conversation with actual talk. A pause is a powerful way of being patient and acknowledging that you are not a conversation hog.

Pausing from Intellectual Stimulation

The second situation where I pause during conversations is when someone has offered something intellectual that is challenging me. Any time that you need to reflect and process on what someone has said that requires strong brain power, then that's a good time to pause.

My district manager and I were having a conversation about coffee. We were discussing about the history behind coffee, the economic and social responsibility that coffee companies have towards farmers, and why it was that a large company such as ours couldn't certify organic and provide fair-trade coffee in all our coffee shops.

As she kept telling me the corporate side of the story, I would pause on some of the statements that made impact on my intellectual mind. Simple facts that blew my mind away like the fact that coffee was the second most traded good in the world next to petroleum. And the more it stimulated me intellectually the more I paused and reflected on what was being communicated to me.

Pausing for Answers to Interesting Questions

The third scenario where you should pause is if you ask a person a question. Be patient and if someone doesn't answer your question right away then take the time to wait for their answer. Pausing shows that you care about their answer that you're genuinely curious to know what the other person is about. Don't jump into filling up the silence because you feel uncomfortable. Wait for the person's answer.

I've found in my discussions the more interesting the question is the more time the other person needs to reflect on that question. Asking people when their last great adventure was can take a while for them to process. They're not used to the question itself, not because they haven't been on an adventure, but because it's such a rare way of asking a question. If I asked the person where their last vacation was, chances are they've been asked that before and would answer within a split second.

Key Points to Remember:

- When you pause appropriately during a conversation you are being courteous by showing you are reflecting on what is being said.
- You should pause when someone has shared something deep and personal with you, has shared an intellectual concept that has changed your understanding of the world, or when you are patiently waiting for someone's answer to your interesting question.

Conversation Exercise 15: Pausing for Reflection

Instead of rushing through your conversations next time, take the time to slow down the conversation and reflect on some of the more important aspects of the talk. Just because a person has stopped talking doesn't mean you have to automatically step in and fill the small gap of silence. Take the time to practice pausing for two seconds to ensure that the other person has fully stopped talking before you contribute to the conversation.

Going Wide and Deep with Rapport

"The reason why so few people are agreeable in conversation is that each is thinking more about what he intends to say than others are saying."

-Francois de La Rochefoucauld

After I graduated from university I remember going around to different networking events specifically for young professionals and new grads. The talks I had with others were about work and what the other persons did.

If I ran into a person who loved their job it would lead to an excellent conversation, but often times it was rare to find such passionate people. The majority of time the conversations were dry and plain would focus mostly on one topic.

My friend Andrew also finds that he has this issue of talking about one topic with co-workers who seemed to solely focus about sports talk all the time outside of work. We both made the mistake of allowing a conversation to be about one topic instead of directing the conversation to allow for a variety of topics.

I remember hearing a concept from a multi level marketing manager for a financial company that made a lot of sense to me. They would initially recruit as many people as possible to increase the number of members in their organization. This was often referred to as going wide. Once they were able to recruit a variety of people, they would select the ones that had the most potential talent and most likely to stay with the company the longest and work with them to train them into superstars within the organization. This was often referred to as going deep with the new recruit. Their philosophy was simple, you need to recruit wide, and then train deep with the talented recruits.

I realized good conversations have depth and they have variety. One of the best goals you should set for yourself when first starting off a conversation with a particular person is to be able to discuss a variety of topics. Some of the topics

you'll find will get you excited, while there may be topics that are of less interest to you. The only way to find out which ones grab your attention is for the both of you to explore. (Refer to the section on fishing for topics on how to get a variety of topics in your conversation.)

After you've talked for four or five minutes and have covered a variety of topics, and I wouldn't suggest anything less than three topics and nothing more than five, go back and explore the topics of the conversations that interested you the most. Let's say that you happen to notice that one of the topics you had brought up was about dating or relationships. Then take the time to converse about the topic in depth. Share your views on dating and what some of your previous dating experiences were like (nothing too negative, you don't want to sound like you're complaining). By choosing a topic you go deep with you become more emotionally connected with the other person, and you create a more memorable first conversation.

By discussing a variety of topics, this will give you power into always going back and forth between different topics so that the conversation doesn't become stale.

One of the most common mistakes that happen during any conversation is that people will often latch onto the first commonality that people discover.

And what ends up happening is two things.

1. They go too deep into that one particular conversation and then after that particular topic they stall.
2. They have trouble transitioning to another topic.

When there are a variety of topics that have been established, this will help solve both problems that are mentioned. In Vancouver, there are a lot of people that love to talk about hockey. I used to love to talk about hockey myself, but after a while there's only so much to say regarding hockey.

By diversifying your topics to be about topics such as hockey, business, vacationing, dating, and fun jobs, then you can go back and ultimately choose the ones that interest you the most. For me they're dating, books I've read, advice my ex girlfriends gave me and what I learned as a dating coach. And if I have trouble, then I start the process of finding a wide variety of topics to talk about and then going deep with one of them.

The great thing is that if you find your conversations are stalling, that this whole cycle can be repeated throughout the conversation.

Key Point to Remember:

- When having conversations, choose a variety of different topics (3-5) to talk about. Then take the topics of the most interest later and go into more detailed conversation about those topics to keep it lively and continuous.

Conversation Exercise 16: Variety is the Spice of Life

This week, when having your conversations, purposely within the first five minutes of your conversation talk about a variety of different topics. This can seem awkward and abrupt at first but it's important to practice so that you're never stuck on one topic. Once you've been able to talk about different topics, choose a topic that is of particular interest and challenge yourself to see how long you can have a conversation with that one particular topic.

Once you're done, write down the conversation in your journal and notice what worked, what didn't work, and start learning to observe all the elements of the conversation.

What did you notice about the other person's body language? Did you continue to make eye contact? How was your body language? Start putting in all the details and different aspects about what it takes to be a great conversationalist in

your journal entries.

P.S. Have you still kept up rewarding yourself for your hard work in improving your conversations? If you've kept up with all the exercises then you're doing a fantastic job. Nothing can replace real world experience.

Appreciation and the Art of Complimenting

“Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.”

-Voltaire

I remember there was a weekday I was working in my coffee shop, a young Japanese woman in her mid 20's was looking for assistance in the type of mug to buy from my store. This was the first time that we chatted. She was curious about all the different mugs and asked a lot of questions about them, ranging from colour to functionality. I didn't give it much thought until she walked into the coffee shop a second time. On our second encounter I later found out her name was Megumi, and while I was explaining to her about our mugs again, I also found out that she was hoping to practice and learn more English. I asked her if she would like me to be an English conversation partner. Megumi agreed enthusiastically. She was more than happy to finally have a person whose English was their first language converse with her. And so we met up on a Tuesday, and we started talking about our families, our university studies, what she thought about the cultural differences between Canada and Japan in English for two hours.

Two days later she came back to my store, she purchased a mug that she really liked. But as she purchased the mug at the cashier counter, she looked at me with these glowing eyes, and a smile almost as wide as the ocean. With a soft sincere, cute tone, and some broken English she thanked me. I'm paraphrasing but she said something along the lines of, “You are so nice. Thank you so much for taking the time to show me (the mugs). I'm very glad to have met you. You are so kind to me.”

At that moment I was actually a little embarrassed. As a matter of fact I had to tell her to stop because she was making me blush. The trouble was that she didn't know what blush was, so I had to explain to her what that meant as well.

Why did this particular comment make me blush? First off, it was because she told me a genuine compliment. From the glowing look on her face, the tone from her voice and her smile that was as wide as the Pacific Ocean, it showed me that she meant every word of it. And when someone says something genuine it can truly be felt at the heart.

Number two, even though it could have been a potentially awkward time for her to tell me (after all, she was buying a mug) she went ahead and told me anyway without reserve. And that's the way appreciation should be, it should be spontaneous.

However, it baffles my mind that in this day and age it seems taboo to compliment people for their personality trait. We are stuck in a society where we can be afraid to express our genuine appreciation for someone because it's being too "touchy feely." And we're now a society starving for validation on who we are as a person as opposed to what our job is or what material goods we own.

My first dating coach Dan from Charming Geek really taught me the important lesson of not being afraid of letting people know how much we appreciate someone. He told me that I could be bold, and show someone how much I liked their personality even if I had met that person for five or ten minutes, as long as it was from a place where I believed was sincere.

He told me that when I find a characteristic that I appreciate about someone, that I shouldn't just hold back and not say anything. When I do find something, even something small, that I do appreciate about someone, I try to express it right away.

There is something more important to this. He told me that it was important not to express appreciation for what the person was directly saying, but what that statement might mean to the larger context of the person's life.

Let's look at a specific example that happened in a real conversation I had.

"Wow, you know what I really admire about you? It's the fact that you take the time to do yoga in your life."

Now this a good compliment on its own. In the above statement I'm saying I appreciate what she is doing directly. There is of course nothing wrong with this particular compliment.

The goal is to look to see what yoga represents in the larger context of that particular person's life, or what value does this represent in her life.

"Wow, you do yoga. I really appreciate that you take time for yourself and you value your health. And the way you balance out your life. That's just amazing."

Now if you notice in the second example. I don't just state about yoga, I look at what yoga represents about that person. What does yoga say about that particular person's personality? In the case above 1) I suggest that she values her health and...

2) That she really tries to balance out her life, and that's a great thing.

Most people hold back their compliments and so they lose that genuine factor. Let's look at the emotion of fear. Fear is most real when it happens at that moment. We scream at moments when we're truly scared in a horror movie. We don't go, "Oh, I feel scared, my gut is telling me, but I think I'll express my fearful screaming after the movie." It almost sounds bizarre when I put it into that context. Yet compliments are the same. There's a gut reaction that you go through that suggest you should say something about the person and the characteristic that you admire. You want to be able to tell that person as your gut feeling comes out. This is to ensure that the compliment stays as sincere as possible. The longer you wait to compliment, or if you wait till the very end, then

you could develop too much nervousness and that compliment could come out worse than it should be.

Learning to compliment and appreciate the person for who she really is, will ultimately make you a charismatic person who connects with others. Learning to see who the "real" person is can help you develop faster connections than any other method. Recognizing a painter for a particular piece of art is what he does. Recognizing him as a person of creativity and expressionist of his thoughts and feelings is the "real" person. Recognizing a dating coach as someone who helps people find dates is what he does. Recognizing her as a person who genuinely cares about the well being of the people she helps, whether its her clients, friends and family is who she really is.

What constitutes this sense of "real?" To me it's what a person stands for, what their values and beliefs are. A person who genuinely cares about her clients is most likely the type of person who cares about the world in general, she cares about people, she cares about the barista she meets, she cares about the neighbour who's in distress. Her belief is that people should have a sense of community and belonging. This is who she really is and all the things mentioned above are just activities that represent that caring value.

Learning to see the person for who he really is can be a tough task at first, but it does get easier over time. You just have to ask yourself, "What this person does, what would it mean in terms of his or her values?" Does it mean he carries the value of health? Or is it the belief that regardless if people are rich or poor that they should be treated with respect? Whatever it is, think hard about it.

One last example, I know my step mom cooks for me when I go over and see her. She does a great job cooking. I could take the time to appreciate her time to cook and prepare the dishes. But this is just complimenting the act. What does her cooking represent? To me it represents her love to me, her willingness to sacrifice her energy and time to ensure that I'm happy and know that I'm always

welcomed in her home. This is the bigger picture to me. And so I would compliment my mom on her cooking, but also tell her how much I admire her continuous love that she showers over me all these years. The last part can be powerful in connecting.

Here are a few topics that someone mentioned in their conversation. What do you believe is the real aspect of this person?

- 1) A father takes his child to soccer every weekend.
- 2) A stranger you meet tells you that he volunteers his time at an animal shelter.
- 3) A woman you meet tells you she's a vegetarian.
- 4) The entrepreneur you meet has been struggling to run a successful business for the last year.

Key Points to Remember:

- When complimenting a person, you want to compliment on what their values are based on an activity or characteristic they have shared with you. An activity would be jogging, but the value would be health.
- When you feel in your gut that you should be complimenting someone, then that is exactly the best time to compliment that person. Delaying a compliment increase the anxiety you'll feel, and the anxiety soon takes over the sincerity of the compliment.

Conversation Exercise 17: Emotionally Complimenting

Now that you have a better understanding of complimenting, go out and practice your complimenting. Compliment three people on who they really are, and not what they do. Aim to compliment on a deep emotional level when talking to another person. Once again, record all your observations in your journal and notice your delivery of your compliment.

Did you find that if you stumbled on your compliment that it was less well received than when you were able to deliver the compliment slowly and with confidence?

For Your Sanity , Please Exit this Way

“Exiting is just the same as opening. You go in with style and grace, and you do your best to leave with grace.”

-Vincent K.C. Ng

I remember I was having a conversation with a woman about what she thought the biggest turn off was with single men that she talked to. She told me that there was one specific incident where she was at a party, and there was a man who was interested in her. She had caught his liking, and he went over to talk to her. He kept bulldozing in his conversation and kept talking to her and she kept listening to him even though she was clearly bored. She spent twenty minutes talking to this guy. I asked her, "Why did you stay in the conversation that long if you didn't want to talk to him?" She told me that she didn't want to be rude and that she would hope that he would have gotten the hint. But that hint came too many minutes too late for her. I'm sure we've all had moments where we've been stuck talking to someone we didn't want to talk to.

There are going to be times that you're going to network or talk to people who quite frankly can be boring sometimes. I know I've had times when I would rather watch a rock slowly erode. Don't mistaken, they are interesting people, but they choose not to communicate their life with others. These are people who refuse to open up. And though they come to the events to be social, they have a lot of social anxiety themselves. They're not too sure what to say, no one's really taught them about social etiquette, and they're worried that people judge them, so they say as little as possible.

Let's say you've made an honest effort into trying to talk with these people in the room. You open up yourself, you ask them about their work, about their family, you ask them emotional questions, and nothing seems to work, so what do you do?

Truthfully, not all conversations are going to be great. And it's unrealistic to expect that we're going to talk to everybody masterfully. My suggestion is that after five or ten minutes of pulling wisdom tooth after wisdom tooth is a good time for you to leave the conversation.

Or it's the complete opposite, the person does open up, but it seems to be about topics that are of no interest to you. And let's face it, as much as we try to find something interesting in the conversation, it's not always possible, so it's you listening in on a big snooze fest.

I was out with a client, Danny, teaching him how to talk to strangers at a mall. As a way to warm up I asked him to talk to a senior citizen who was sitting by herself. I had the idea that she was very friendly, and soon my client was having a conversation with her for about 10 minutes. I was fairly impressed, except the trouble was that I got the feeling he didn't want to be in the conversation that long. He confessed that he wanted to exit early but didn't know how exactly, so he stood there listening most of the time.

But here's the trouble that people seem to run into: WE'RE TOO NICE! And we don't want to leave the conversation while someone is in the middle of talking. But being nice is only going to get you so far, being excited and enthused about a conversation you're in, should be your goal.

Let's look at some ways that you can exit a conversation graciously.

Exit Method 1: Taking Up Too Much of Your Time

One of the ways you can exit a conversation graciously is to let the other person know that you don't want to take up too much of their time. Let's say that you're in a group setting and the event was designed to go about and mingle. You've noticed the person is taking up your time, at some point during one of those awkward pauses you should go...

“Well it was a pleasure meeting you, but I don’t want to take up too much of your time.”

Now this is a very polite form, and on a few occasions I’ve had people stop me and go “Oh you’re not taking up my time at all.” I’ve found that these people are not too familiar with networking etiquette and probably find you very interesting to talk to. In this scenario, I listen for another minute, and then do one of the following exits.

Exit Method 2: I’m Going to Meet Some New People

The next way to graciously exit in a large group situation where you’re networking or maybe it’s a singles’ mixer is to let the person know, in a very polite tone. **“Well it was nice meeting you, I’m going to go and meet some new people at this networking event.”** Usually this can sting the other person for a little bit, but it gets to the point and the job done. Exiting a conversation can be similar to opening up a conversation. At times it needs to be strong and direct so that there’s no miscommunication.

Exit Method 3: Introduce a Third Party

Now let’s say you’re the type of person that would feel bad about the previous two exiting strategies. Then what I would recommend is that you suggest to the other person, **“Hey you know what? Let’s go and meet some other people. After all we’re here to socialize right?”** Now most people are very happy if they can find someone that’s willing to introduce them to other people because approaching strangers can be scary. If you’re the courageous type, go and introduce yourselves to other people. And then excuse yourself shortly into the conversation.

Another variation of this particular conversation tactic is to find anybody that’s a wallflower and to have him join you. Either wave him over, or you can bring you and your guest(s) over to that person. I’ve found that there are some wallflowers,

who in all honesty are very interesting people. They're just fearful of approaching strangers themselves.

Now remember, if you know something about the person you've just met then do an accomplishment introduction. I was at an entrepreneur networking event, and met someone in a very unique industry. Her name was Eva, she was in the business of designing head stones where cremated ashes were stored inside the head stones themselves. Her business was called Rest in Stone. She told me that she usually scared people off but her business intrigued me. Eva was a little shy, so I went up and introduced Eva to people by saying, "Have you met Eva? She's a little shy, but she has one of the most unique and interesting businesses here."

This is an example of an accomplishment introduction. I've introduced the person as someone with an important business. This gets the attention of other people right away.

This will also give the impression that you and the person know each other well and therefore is perceived to be friendlier. Remind yourself to do an accomplishment introduction when you can at parties with friends, introducing new co-workers or at professional events. It's won't just break the ice, that introduction will crack it wide open.

Exit Method 4: I Need to Grab a Drink

You can also exit away from a conversation at a networking event, a party or any place that serves alcohol by simply excusing yourself to grab a drink at the bar. **"I'm sorry I'm just going to grab a drink."** Don't tell the other person you'll be right back if you're not. There's no need to lie. Now if the person ends up following you, then you might do the following exit.

Exit Method 5: Excuse me, I Need to go to the Washroom

There's the **washroom exit**. If the person insists on going to get a drink with you, let them know that you need to go to the washroom and spend a little extra time. I tend to use the washroom exit as the very last stand to get away from someone who I desperately don't want to talk to. I'll excuse myself to the washroom. I find that most people aren't the type to wait for me outside of a washroom.

As a simple rule of etiquette, always end your conversations with: **"It was a pleasure meeting you."**

Exiting a conversation doesn't have to be tough. Just like learning to start a conversation gracefully can take some time, so does learning how to exit a conversation gracefully and with assertiveness. They are both equal partners in their dynamic duo relationship. A conversation can not start without having another end.

For some exiting a conversation can cause some anxiety and this is not unusual. There will be some conversations that aren't of interest to you even after you've been courteous, but don't ever feel that you are forced to stay in a conversation that makes you feel uncomfortable.

When you start practicing your exits, you'll find that they'll become easier over time and that you will be doing it in a way that is sincere and natural that won't hurt the other person's feelings.

Try out the different styles of exiting, and find the one the feels comfortable to you.

Key Points to Remember:

- Remember the following are ways to exit any conversation.
 - ✓ Pleasure meeting you, but I don't want to take up all your time.
 - ✓ Nice to meet you, but I'm going to go and chat with some other people.
 - ✓ Introduce a third party into your conversation, and slowly slide away after a couple of minutes.
 - ✓ Let the person know you're grabbing a drink.
 - ✓ Letting the person know you have to go to the washroom.
- Remember when introducing people that you should, if possible, use an accomplishment introduction.
- Always end your conversations when meeting and networking with, "It's a pleasure meeting you."

Conversation Exercise 18: Exiting Graciously

Most people are uncomfortable exiting a conversation. Whenever you feel that a conversation is no longer of interest, practice exiting the conversation with the tools listed in this chapter. Also notice if you find yourself uncomfortable leaving a conversation. When that does happen you need to ask yourself, "What beliefs do I have that make me feel uncomfortable about leaving a conversation?"

Document your beliefs, and the actions you took when you exited a conversation in your journal.

Turn a Negative Criticism into a Positive Statement

“Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain but it takes character and self control to be understanding and forgiving.”

-Dale Carnegie

It can be hard to take criticism. Whether it's from a family member, a boss or a friend, at some point in our lives we're going to get criticized about our character, our business ideas or something we didn't do. And it can be so easy to let this criticism become personal, especially when statements that we don't like come from a stranger or someone we barely know. We feel hurt, personally attacked, our egos become bruised, and usually the first reaction that comes out of us is a sense of defensiveness. We want to defend ourselves. It's our fight or flight response. We don't want to be called lazy, we don't want to be called the person with bad fashion taste, we don't want to be called bitter, and we don't want to be called a terrible entrepreneur. That's when our tendency to attack other people's character out of spite or to defend our own out of anger comes through.

The charismatic conversationalist generally doesn't get caught up in that spiral of negative feelings. This is one of the best principles that I learned from several different communication coaches. Never talk to someone out of the defensive. People who are unconfident or feel insecure tend to let criticism or statements of personal attack get to them. However there are ways to be able to change around statements that allow for the positive, sometimes humorous side of life to come through.

Here's an example of a critical statement:

“Wow, you sure have a lot of comics, don't you feel like you should grow up?”

Now this question is loaded to be defensive. And I find the person on the defensive will naturally raise the negative energy of the conversation. Usually

this is indicated from the sudden shift in the tone of voice. If she feels like he is being attacked personally then a typical response might be:

“Yeah, I have a lot of comics, but what do you mean I should grow up. I mean I’ve got a job, and support my family. I’m very sure I’ve grown up.”

Now this is an answer that’s coming from the defensive. This person felt insulted in some manner and in a way feels threatened. I’ve never met a charismatic speaker who didn’t use his wit and charm to move himself away from giving defensive answers.

The goal of answering a defensive statement or question is to get the answer to have a positive spin that makes you look good. This is why spin doctors get paid so much in politics. If someone were to state that I should grow up, the first element is that I don’t disagree...and here’s why. Everybody is entitled to their opinion, and to me, someone’s opinion is neither right nor wrong it just is. It’s an opinion! Nothing more or nothing less. Most of the time, what a person has said to me won’t even matter two hours later, and for most people, it’s a lot shorter than that, so I tell myself, “Do I really need to get upset about this if I’m not even going to meet this person again in a couple of hours?”

Here’s the answer that I would give:

“You know what. I do have a lot of comics and I do like having that part of my childhood alive. For me it’s how the stories come alive, it’s watching a movie unfold from page to page and admiring beautiful art. And most of it all it’s being able to just have fun and that’s important in my life.”

This answer makes it frame the situation as something positive. Because I read comics that I enjoy beautiful art, enchanting storytelling and that I’m always looking for fun.

If you happen to be in a dating situation or in a hostile situation where someone is accusing you of a negative trait, it's important to diffuse it with wit and humour.

There have been situations when I'm flirting with a woman I've just met and she might go "Wow, you dress really well. I'm curious are you gay?"

Now I'm not homophobic, so I don't need to get all huff and puff when someone says I'm gay. As a matter of fact, I take it as a compliment that I dress well. But here's the perfect example. Where I see some guys go "No, I'm NOT GAY. What would make you say that?"

The type of answer I would go is "Yes, I'm totally one hundred percent gay. But the only trouble is that I just can't stop sleeping with women. If women like you weren't so beautiful and sexy, then I wouldn't have to be seduced by your type."

What's happening here is that I've also blown what she said way out of proportion by using a little playful exaggeration. By acknowledging it and using a playful tone back at her for what she has said, I've used the humour tactic of exaggeration to let her know that I don't really care if she thinks I'm gay or not.

For example, if I'm with a group of guys and there's a woman in the group and she says "Oh my gawd, you are such a pervert."

I don't disagree with her and get defensive. I might go.

"Yes, I'm the biggest pervert in the world, and yet, if men weren't perverts, there would be no babies in the world."

When someone criticizes you, don't get on the defensive. Calmly think it through and think of a smart response. If you have a tough time coming back with a witty response, remember what the person said and go home and make notes about how you could have responded. The reason why we don't think of humorous responses is because we don't take the time to THINK about how to respond. Let your brain have creativity.

Reframing the Context

What this is all about is reframing the context. Reframing is about taking one situation and giving it a whole new perspective. This is usually done in many personal development seminars and allows the brain to focus more on positive aspects of solving problems, which makes it easier for it to solve the problem. If we always come from a place of fear to solve our issues it can be incredibly stressful and tense. Don't let criticism put you down. Allow it to be a time to practice your humour, spontaneity and assertiveness.

Some reframes would be:

"I just recently got laid off from my job." A good reframe for this would be "I'm going to find the job that I've always wanted", or "I know there's a higher purpose for me which is why I'm not at that job any more."

"I recently got robbed of all my possessions." A reframe for this would be, "Now's a good chance to see if I need to simplify my life, and see what I didn't need."

But reframing is vital when you're learning to help other people get into a positive mood. In the movie *Apollo 13*, the astronauts drifted aimlessly in space in their rocket due to some major technical difficulties. At first it was considered a nightmare by NASA. They were somewhere between the moon and earth in a big void of space. "This could be the worst disaster NASA's ever faced." However, shortly afterwards, this grandeur line comes in, "With all due respect, sir, I believe this is gonna be our finest hour."

I Keep Getting Insulted. What do I do?

I'm not suggesting that life is always going to be perfect. Nor am I suggesting that if someone continues to insult you that you need to stand there and take it. After all, wit can only go so far, but some people are just plain rude and you're in no way obligated to take that. If you feel like you've been personally attacked,

and you've been witty and given the other person a chance to be civilized, and it still doesn't work, then feel free:

a) to walk away from the conversation. Why spend your time with someone who's going to be a jerk to you anyway? Trust me there's plenty of great people talk to in the world. TONS!

b) to defend your decision in a civil way (example why I collect comics and the fun behind it)

c) to be witty in a humorous manner or

d) to insult them back in the same manner that you were as well.

Option d can be a little tricky. Only because I truly believe you don't need to sink to someone's level, but I also believe in defending myself as an absolute last necessity. Let's take the comic book example, "You collect comic books. Don't you think you should grow up?"

If the person continued to push this particular topic I would look at him and say, "I made it a point in my life not to talk and associate with people who are being disrespectful and obnoxious. You'll have to excuse me."

I don't suggest doing this, and I use it rarely. For me, it's always a last resort. So please be mindful of not going out and insulting people. PLEASE.

One of the best ways to diffuse situations where you are dealing with people with high egos that don't seem to stand down is to offer them a sign of respect. A good way to do this is to reframe the situation and let them feel like he's important. Here's a statement that I use when I find that I'm dealing with another person who is absolutely determined to defend their point but is not doing it to insult me.

“You know what (pause). I have complete respect for you that you feel strongly about that. I respect that.” I smile, shake hands, and change the topic. Most of the time, most men and women just want to be acknowledged.

Remember that people are entitled to their opinions, but at the same time don't sit and be insulted by someone. Either you accept it (which is not a good way to develop social skills), change it (reframe the situation) or remove yourself from it (leave). Those are your three options, but take the time to realize that every bad situation can always be reframed into a positive one. And if you take the time to find funny and witty answers, you'll find that people will be eating out of your hands. In our society, people like intelligence served with a big bowl of comedy.

Key Points to Remember

- When someone criticizes you, don't become defensive automatically.
- Reframe criticism into a positive statement that either shows your wit, humour or intelligence. But don't put yourself down.
- If the criticism is become insulting, then either walk away, defend your point of view civilly, use humour to diffuse the situation or insult them back.
- If the person is passionate about their perspective and is adamant about imposing their perspective on you, then kindly let them know how much you respect them for the passion they have for that perspective.

Conversation Exercise 19: Reframing Positively

Examine the following statements carefully. Look at how these situations can possibly be reframed into a positive experience or a witty comeback. Write the answers down in your journal.

- 1) You find out that someone wasn't able to go on a date with the guy she really liked.
- 2) A stranger tells you have terrible taste in clothing.
- 3) A waitress has called you a wussy because you don't drink beer with the rest

of your buddies.

The Importance of Touching

“I forgot to shake hands and be friendly. It was an important lesson about leadership.”

-Lee Iacocca

Lee Iacocca talks about the power of handshaking and making physical contact with another person in leadership. And when he forgot to shake hands with that important person he was perceived as unfriendly and simply forgetting to shake hands he had set a negative tone for the rest of the interaction. He that not shaking hands as poor leadership.

But it's not just in business that touching is important. Before I studied with dating coaches, I would be hesitant to touch my dates on the hand, give them hugs, or give them playful pushes. But when I started to take initiative and started touching women on my dates I noticed that these women felt much more attracted to me. When I met my current girlfriend, I held her hand before we even officially had our first date, and since then I've kept her happy through the power of touching. It has made her feel secure, happy and feeling in love. What is it about touch that seems so enchanting to women and men?

If you ever want to speed up the connection with someone, then you need to understand the importance of touching when you're talking to someone. I know this may sound like a very odd thing to do. And for men touching men can almost seem like a social taboo. But let's look at touching from more of a scientific perspective. During intimate moments with people we trust we produce a hormone in the brain known as oxytocin.

Oxytocin is produced naturally and is often given the nickname "the hormone of love." Which of course is not that simple. Oxytocin is a hormone that allows us to feel good, it helps relieve stress, and some studies have suggested that it makes us a more generous, trustworthy and friendlier person as well.

Oxytocin production is more powerful in women, and though men produce it, testosterone helps balance it more. But what's also interesting is that oxytocin levels rise when someone touches us in a caring manner. And this is what this particular chapter will be focusing on, the importance of touching to develop a faster trusting relationship with another person.

I want to give some general rules between genders and when and what is considered appropriate touching during your conversations.

Touching for many people can be extremely difficult and is not considered part of their everyday routine. There are some cultures where touching someone the wrong way can be lethal. And at other times it can seem strange to us. For example in the Middle East, it is quite common for people to talk to each other face to face a foot away from each other. A coffee shop manager I consulted for would have his face close to mine that I could see the wrinkles on his face, it was a bit of a culture shock. And as we got to know each other better he started hugging me on many occasions. He was Persian, and I later discovered that it was very common in their culture for this type of physical contact to happen.

While in North America we tend to like our space. And men hugging men is not a common occurrence. In India, men often hold hands, while in North America it is women who commonly lock arms with their female companions. Keep in mind that touching is quite gender specific depending on the culture and in what situation. This section is not to be followed strictly, but is to act as a general guideline.

What does touching have to do with conversations anyway?

Well, the first thing about conversations is that it's really about connection and building trust. And being charismatic means getting someone to feel like they've known you for a very long time in a as short time as possible will help build that trust and connection in life.

Let's look at the root of how touching became such an important part of our lives. Touching has its roots in evolution. Most of us growing up were touched by our mothers and fathers in loving ways. And so what happens is that we become ingrained with the belief that the people we trust have the right to touch us. I'm sure many of us have had the experience of someone touching us or hugging us that we didn't trust or like and it felt weird and goose bumps started to pop all over our skin. When this person did touch, it drew away from the actual interaction as opposed to bringing it closer to an emotional connection.

As people release more and more oxytocin this causes people to bring their guards down and give strangers the chance to bond faster.

What are some ways to touch that promote bonding with strangers, friends and family?

It can be very hard to discuss through words but generally if I'm having a conversation, the first thing that I want to focus on is the space between me and the other person. I call this personal geography. The general rule that I've found that makes people feel safe and intimate during the conversation is what I call the 90 Degree Rule. The rule is simple, let's say that there's just two people talking. You want to be able to angle your body to theirs so that you are perpendicular to the person. This is really important. Because if you face him head on, this can be very intense and overbearing to strangers or people you've just met. Now you don't want to be at 180 degrees with someone either, because if you stand right beside her then chances are you're going to have a crick in your neck. But if you're perpendicular then your neck should be comfortable to turn and talk to the person but still be able to give her space.

You also don't want to be too far away from the person so that your arm is way out of reach to touch him. The best way to keep people at a comfortable distance is to get your bicep and forearm to form 90 degree mark with your elbow pointing straight down. Another visual to help out is that you would imagine that your

hand is at the same height as your shoulder, but they form a 90 degree angle. This is a good distance that provides intimacy as well as a comfortable space for most people in western culture. I would suggest that you practice in the mirror first to have an idea of what the distance looks like.

The Six Best Times to Initiate Physical Contact

Now let's look at the different times and suggestions when you can touch so that you don't accidentally freak someone out. Here are six ways and situations in which you may want to touch someone during your platonic conversations when standing next to them in a conversation.

Situation One: As If You Have a Sporadic Question

When I have a question, I might have a drink in my hand, and then I turn around and tap him gently on the shoulder, as if I just had a very sporadic question.

And then I ask the question. "Oh, Bob, where are you planning to travel to this summer?" I look in his direction and then touch him on the shoulder at the same time to get his attention.

Situation Two: When Making an Exciting Statement

When I have an exciting statement that I want to share and get the other person's attention is also a good time to initiate contact. So if someone tells me something exciting I might touch her on the side of their shoulder and go "Oh my gawd, I love that show. It's so funny!"

Situation Three: Teasing Another Person

When you're making a teasing statement is one of the easiest times to make physical contact. If someone says something childish, I might give her a gentle poke on the shoulder. Or if it's a guy, then I give a light slap on the back. Ensure

that you use enough force for him to feel, but not so much that if he had a drink his drink would move from his hands.

A good statement to tease someone might be “I can’t believe you enjoy that hobby as well, we are going to get along just fine.”

Situation Four: When You First Meet, Shake Hands

Shaking hand is considered touching. It’s a simple ritual that is done a lot but most people I find still don’t shake hands when they meet people. And this can leave a very sour impression. If someone reaches out to shake your hand, kindly shake it. It’s like you smiling, and someone decides not to smile back at you.

Remember the quote that Lee Iacocca stated. Shaking hands can also be a small sign of leadership and trust building.

Situation Five: High Five

If you find yourself in a casual and fun party and someone has told a great joke, you may want to high five that person for a joke well done. Or if someone has said something you agree with strongly then you can reward them with a high five.

“You’re a Vancouver Canucks fan, they are doing so awesome this year. High Five to celebrate their season!”

I was out celebrating the gold medal win by the Canadian men’s hockey team at the 2010 Olympics in downtown, and it felt wonderful as everybody was hi fiving each other and chatting away in such a festive mood. It’s a sign that you know how to have fun and are friendly.

Situation Six: A Gentle Touch on the Wrist

If you're a woman, and you're meeting a man for the first time, and you would like to grab his attention then gently touch him on the wrist. You can do this when you would like someone to accompany you for a drink, or even if you would like their opinion on a matter.

When talking to women you can touch their jewellery that they may be wearing on the wrist or a ring that captures your particular attention. But be careful not to hold on too long or else this could be interpreted as a romantic gesture.

How often should I touch someone during a conversation?

I wouldn't recommend touching anybody more than 3 times during a platonic conversation. Now if it happens to be female to male conversation, you can touch one or more times since it's more acceptable. When women make physical contact with each other, it's acceptable to touch more often as women generally don't find touch as threatening. But with men making contact with men, it's generally different, and should be kept to once or twice so as not to alarm the other person.

I would definitely recommend that you touch a person at least once during a conversation if you want to earn the trust of the other person. It's actually been shown that servers on average get better tips when they touch their customers gently on the shoulder when asking them if they need anything or would like something else. So, if you find that you want to make a more lasting impression on a person, then you give him a gentle touch.

When You Know They are Uncomfortable

If you notice that the person you're touching slightly backs away, then you're dealing with someone that hasn't warmed up to you yet. And so it's important to take a step back and then step forward after the conversation has warmed up a bit more. This allows the person to have space. And then feel free to step a little closer when you feel that you are reconnecting with the person again.

How and When Not to Touch

DON'T lurch and grab when talking to people. This will startle them and if you're unlucky you'll get the big googly eye reaction.

DON'T touch someone in an area that may be considered romantic if you are trying to be professional. No touching the lower back or their face in any way.

DON'T keep touching someone repeatedly, it becomes noticeable and strange. Even too much female to female touching scares women.

DON'T touch someone during a period of silence in a conversation. Let the words come out first, and then touch shortly afterwards so that it eases the shock of touching by a stranger.

Using Touch to Increase Attraction

When I used to go on dates with women, I was always too polite and too afraid to make physical contact. I never gave them hugs, never held their hand or touched their shoulder during conversations, and this often would put me in a frustrating position known as the "friend zone." As I researched more about touching, and started to apply what I was reading, I noticed that women were more attracted to me as I started to touch them during our dates.

I even remember one conversation with a female dating coach from Happy Sexy You who couldn't quite explain why she was attracted to another man until a few of us had started to discuss the power of touch in attraction. "He was touching me frequently through the night, that's why I'm attracted to him!"

Whether you're a man or a woman if you decide that you're not going to make physical contact with someone during a date, then you're definitely hindering the attraction between you and the other person. You cannot be afraid to touch your date if you want to create some spark and romance.

The question that remains is, “When are the best times to touch so it’s not creepy, but subtle?” Let’s look at a common example I get from male clients.

Let’s say you two are sitting at a table, and you’ve noticed that she’s leaning in to you and just seems to be mesmerized. She’s put her hand on the table and you know it’s within reach. If she is sharing something intimate or sharing something romantic with you, feel free to touch her hand and just hold it.

Let’s say that her hand is on the table but it seems to be placed with her palm right on the table so it might seem awkward to hold it, then feel free to reach over and just leave one or two fingers on the tip of her hand. This will give her a safe space without her feeling that you are trying to be overbearing.

During the beginning of your date, you want to keep your touching light and in places that would be considered platonic. You may not want to touch her cheeks right away until you’ve touched her hands or even when you’ve touched her shoulders a few times. If she becomes comfortable with the touches on the hand, then her body will be more comfortable when you decide to touch her in a more intimate manner.

As you start to elevate the touching to more intimate areas such as the cheek, or to hand holding then you will also have triggered her body’s production of oxytocin.

Five Ways to Increase Intimate Touching To Increase Attraction for Men

1) Palm reading. Palm reading can be a lot of fun, and most females find it interesting enough to be listening to what you have to say. There are a lot of books out there that you can read up about this ancient art. Palm reading is also a good conversation topic to talk about at parties and social gatherings.

During a palm reading you can gently glide your fingers along her palm and other fingers. She may be consciously aware of what you're doing, but will generally go along with it.

2) Making a comment about her ring and then examining it carefully with your hand and ask her a question as your holding the ring in her finger. A question you might ask is "What's the story behind this particular ring?" You may also make a comment if notice if there is any other form of jewellery on her hand.

3) Taking a look at her nails and hold onto a finger and complimenting her on her nail care (only if the nails are well taken care of.) This is similar to the above situation. You want to be genuinely curious about her nails or else it can come off as creepy.

4) Playfully bumping into her on your date, but don't do it too hard of course. There may be moments where during a date that she may have made fun of you, you can bump her a little or give her a light push.

5) Tell her that you have a secret you want to share with only her and then wrap your arm around her back temporarily. Women love to share secrets and it can be hard for them to resist. When you are about to share, put your arm around their lower back while sharing with her and then slide your hand back to where it is normally when you're done.

Elevating Your Temporary Touching to Handholding

Eventually if you've found that she's been comfortable with you touching her hand, or shoulder when you make a statement, then you should consider taking her hand.

There are several ways of doing this, such as extending your arm and hand out as an invitational signal for her to hold your hand. If she refuses to take your hand, tell her,

"You know, a true lady wouldn't refuse the offer from a gentleman." This doesn't always work, but it's worked for me most of the time.

Sometimes even letting the romantic side come by and just holding her hand naturally and spontaneously works well. However this needs to be done with confidence and in a non defensive manner. There have been times where I have held woman's hand that won't hold my hand on a first date (mostly conservative women who lack dating experience or have been hurt from past relationships). However, don't make a big deal out of it. This is part about being a charming man, you don't sweat the small stuff in a big picture situation

Women Touching Men for Attraction

The good thing about a woman touching a man on a date is that a woman doesn't have to be as covert. Touching a man even once on the shoulder or giving him a hug when you first see him will turn on his attraction signals. However in order for men to feel the same level of attraction and connection through touching men must experience approximately three times more touching than a woman would. If you want rev up the attraction between you two, you may want to consider giving him a little bit more extra in your hug.

Unlike men, women don't need to keep elevating the touching. I find that if you keep touching and he doesn't touch back it's probably because he has no clue on what to do next to raise the attraction level between you two. But don't be afraid to touch at the odd times so that he starts getting the hint you find him attractive. The subtle hints that a woman is able to pick up is not always clear to men on dates.

If you don't want to seem that you're obviously touching the gentleman, you can use some of the techniques that were mentioned earlier. For example if he is wearing a watch then touch his wrist very quickly to observe the type of watch that he is wearing, or if there is a secret you want to share, bring him close and whisper in his ear that secret you have to share.

Key Points to Remember:

- Incorporate touching into your conversation in order for you build trust and connection faster with another person.
- You can touch another person quickly on the shoulder when you have a question to ask, an exciting comment to share, or when teasing another person. Shaking hands and hi fiving are also great ways to have quick physical contact.
- To speed up attraction between two people it's important that touch is incorporated. Men need three times as much touching to get the same chemical and happy response that women get from oxytocin.
- Stay with a bent arm's length away from another person who is standing so that you are able to reach over and touch comfortably.
- Never lurch at another person just to touch him, never touch him during periods of silence, and touch persons in areas that are considered romantic in nature if your intention is to be professional.

Conversation Exercise 20: A Gentle Touch

Next time you have a conversation, try to gently touch someone on the shoulder when talking to him and her. Get in the habit of gently touching someone on the shoulder so that you're able to speed up the connection faster. Write down in your journal entries your observations and how you felt when touching others. This exercise can be hard for some, so be patient with yourself if you are struggling.

Continue this exercise until you feel comfortable touching others, as well as notice if other people have been comfortable with your touching as well.

Add a Dash of Flirting

"It's not lying, it's flirting"

-Neil Strauss, Dating Coach

Neil Strauss' quote is not designed to be taken literally. To me he's just being playful. I hope I don't get messages from people saying that every lie they make is really just a flirt. The quote above does indicate some truth and it mentions just one of the millions views of flirting. After all, flirting is a complicated form of communication. Not all of us know how to do it the right way. I've found that some flirting works well at attracting women, while others crash and burn. I've met people who have never even attempted to flirt with someone in their life. Then there are people who are not comfortable being flirted with because of their shyness and their repressed feelings. They may feel "dirty" for having someone flirt with him or her.

Before we go into the different ways to flirt, let's take a look at what flirting is defined as. I decided to go to dictionary.com and type in flirting to see what I get.

Definition of flirt: "To make playfully romantic or sexual overtures."

Hmm, to make playfully romantic or sexual overtures...and why is this important? I believe it's important because flirting is one of the ways we communicate that we are attracted to someone. Now I know the word "sexual" can cause a lot of bad tension between people, but keep in mind that without sexual tension and romantic playfulness, then people are just going to be good friends. And if that's what you're looking to be, good friends with another person, then I advise that you don't flirt. But if you're looking to spark that romantic chemistry in your conversation I think it's absolutely necessary to flirt with someone. I think humankind would be absolutely boring if we couldn't flirt in our romantic relationships.

This book can't encompass all the ways to flirt, but I want to be able to cover two broad categories of flirting through the use of your tone of voice and the words that you use. The first category is the classy flirt, which is serious and focuses on increasing the sexual overtones through seducing his or her personality. The second method is the playful flirt and this type of flirting brings out the fun of being like a kid in an adult world.

Let's look at flirting method number one, the classy flirt. Since most people I talk to find that this is the way of flirting that's more unconventional to them but seems to get the results of chemistry started and gives it that "Bam" feeling out of nowhere.

One of the best ways to flirt is to notice something about them that might seem small but can be put into a bigger context to show what kind of person she is. For example, I had thrown a small fundraiser for the Chinese earthquake that happened in 2008, and there was a group of us that went out for a quick late night snack at 1 am. One woman, Samantha, who happened to be a pharmacist, was pretty, tall, slender and had long black hair, and a gorgeous smile with a slight mischievous look was eating with us. She had caught the attention of a few men at the party. She did something that just blew my mind and caught my attention, she took my empty bowl and filled it with congee (rice porridge) and passed it back to me as I sat down for less than thirty seconds at the table. To say the least, I was impressed and at the same time shocked by her courtesy. I barely knew this person, but Samantha didn't just do it for me, she did it for two other friends as well. This made her much more attractive. I then looked at her and said, "You know I don't know much about you, but I know the fact that you're a very caring person. Look at how you're willing to just feed us without even really knowing who we are. I like that about you." And with that comment, she beamed an even greater smile that made her night.

Now in this particular scenario, what I've done is that I've made something small (her feeding us) into something larger (you're a very caring person). As people, what we do represents who we are. And finding out what values, our personality, and why we do certain things is more important to us than the act itself. People don't volunteer for the sake of volunteering, they volunteer because they feel in their nature it's important to contribute to the well being of others. They believe that we are a community and that we should help each other when we can. Ultimately one of the classiest ways to flirt is to ensure that you're expressing who the person really is, not just what he does.

This can be adapted to many situations. For example, if you notice that she's a personal trainer. And she talks about how much she loves it. You might tell her "That's so amazing! You've decided to help these people not only to be healthier, but to feel more confident in who they are and what they're capable of in their lives. And that it must be so rewarding to you as a person, not just as a trainer, but when a client comes up to you and has told how much you've really helped their life. I think that is so attractive about you."

It almost sounds extra gooey, but if you say it with sincerity and you can capture the essence of what she's doing then you've captured her attention. This is what I call the essence of genuine flirting. And the best part about this particular method of flirting is that it works equally well for both men and women, because it's about flirting with who the real person is. To me, this is flirting at its best, because:

1. You're creating an emotional connection with her/him
2. You've recognized something beyond any physical beauty and you recognize something that's deep within her.

How you say your words are more important than the words themselves. Let's say you decide to say the exact words from the quote above I used with Samantha. This is how I would have said it. I would slow down my pace and use

a slightly deeper tone (not too deep, and yes woman should deepen their voice as well), and then pause at certain moments to create a sense of drama. “You know (slight pause) I don’t know much about you, (slight pause) but I know the fact that you’re a very caring person (slowed down at very caring person, and then pause). Look at how you’re willing to just feed us without even really knowing who we are. (Pause) I like that about you.

It’s important that with what I’m about to share with you doesn’t be used as a standard conversation piece and should be said if only you truly feel this. During some of my conversations when I was talking to strangers, whether in a bar, at a party, or at a networking event, one of the things I would always mention that seemed to flatter people was how genuine they were.

I live in Vancouver, there seems to be a reputation that Vancouverites aren’t very friendly, however, I think there are lots. I used this to my personal advantage when I do meet open and friendly people. I will state it directly, “Wow, you know what I like about you so much? We’ve only talked for a few minutes, but you’re such a friendly person. And so genuine. That’s so rare. I can really appreciate that about you.” This is when someone is friendly and genuine, and truly does deserve such a comment. And rarely do I have a woman that doesn’t melt when she hears those words.

For a more direct way of flirting with another person I’ve used phrases such as, “I like that...” or “I find attractive that you’re...” instead of the I appreciate that about you to turn up those butterflies in a stomach a notch.

There are many people who I have taught the technique to, the trouble is that when they are flirting with someone, they become incredibly nervous. Flirting may be difficult for some but it has to be done if we want to turn on the attraction factor with the opposite sex. With the whole nervousness, and the worry about what we say might sound stupid, we try to get words to come out too quickly. When this happens, take a small breath, and purposely slow down what you

want to express and deepen your voice in a slow tone. This will allow for you to deliver your message with a sense of sensuality.

Upping the Sexual Ante

You can also up the ante when you're flirting with someone and tell him that a certain part of the personality and who he is is sexy. This can be incredibly scary. "Can I tell a man that he's sexy? Won't that make me sound desperate?" As I've mentioned before, it's how you say it, and what you're exactly complimenting on that can make the difference.

If you're telling him he's sexy because he has these gorgeous piercing eyes, that will get his attention, however more of his raw sexual side that starts his inner caveman feelings. But if you tell him that he's sexy because he has so much humanitarian ambition, then that's a unique compliment that shows you find his personality sexy and therefore creating a deeper emotional connection. "You're such an ambitious person. Willing to take time to help others and make your contribution to the world. I really admire that about you. I think that's very sexy about you that you're willing to care about other people who you don't even know." By doing this you're flirting with him, not only in a sexual manner, but what you're also doing is you're complimenting him on who his real self is.

Attempt to make the characteristic related to something bigger, something that seems human and touches the soul. If not, even saying "Wow you're a writer. That is so sexy about you," is better than leaving the compliment tied and twisted to your own tongue.

Be a Playful Flirt

The second category of flirting is being playfully flirtatious.

Being playful can come in many manners. One of the ways in which I enjoy flirting with other women in a playful manner is to tease the other person.

Teasing is not to imply that you're insulting someone, as this will hurt their feelings and lose rapport with her. But teasing has been a form of communication that we've been using since early childhood. And when done properly is a lot of fun and can create the romantic tension that helps build chemistry.

I remember one time that I was at a bar and I was teaching a workshop on how to approach women. There were these two women that were sitting and looked as if they were open to being chatted with. I introduced myself, and soon had an animated chat with one of them. As we started talking she told me how she was a manager of a restaurant, and I screamed out enthusiastically to her "No way, you're a manager of a restaurant. I manage a food and beverage joint, too! We have way too much in common already. Before you know it, we'll discover we have even more in common and then like each other."

How was the last example a form of being playful? I was using exaggeration as a technique of being playful. I only discovered one thing we had in common but I used exaggeration by stating that we have way too much in common by using a friendly but not a sarcastic tone. I assumed that we would also have more in common as the night went on. And then I make the light joke that we'll like each other as we discover more things in common. I'm using the power of suggestion to help create a flirtatious environment.

T.E.A.S.E

Now if you were expecting an acronym then I apologize because there is none, but I was doing it to tease you into reading more, to get you curious about what's being written next. A good tease can create flirtatious tension among two people as well as making fun of the other person in good humour. Here's an example of teasing.

Let's say you're a woman and a man touches you, you might want to give him a sly smile and go, "Hmm...I have to make sure. Did you get your cootie shots yet?"

I've heard it's that time of year where they're infectious. I bet you have the worst cooties!"

In this case if you notice that I make it sound like we're children. I'm making a negative statement about the other person, but I'm doing it in a manner that is light, childlike and is probably not going to be taken too seriously or hurt the other person's feelings. This is teasing.

However if you make a comment such as "Hmm...I have to make sure. Did you take a shower today because you really smell? I bet you have terrible body odour." If you notice that the structure of the comment is the same as above, but the message is no longer playful and comes off with an insulting tone.

Role play as if the World is Your Stage

Another way to be playful is through role playing with the other person. This method can be a complicated one to start, but is a lot of fun to try and definitely gets the imagination and heart going. What role playing involves is stepping outside of reality and creating a new situation that has not happened yet. Different flirtatious role plays include, pretending someone you've met is going to be your boyfriend for five minutes, or you imagine that you both are in Paris, and the one I like to use the most is meeting a woman for the first time and pretending that I'm totally in love with her and I'm going to ask her to marry me. The possibilities are endless and only limited to your playful imagination.

The executive dating coach of Man Meets Woman, Ronald Lee, has a specialty in which he imagines that him and the girl he's met have been separated together for a long time and they finally get to catch up with each other, and she misses him so much, that their hearts were aching, and they are there to greet each other at the airport. It sounds cheesy on its own context, but I've seen it work in the most unlikely places. And women enjoy the creativity that goes along with it. This method works well with men too, you might turn to a man and go "You're going to be my boyfriend for the next five minutes, but that's all you get."

The upside of the playful way of attracting is that it can get somebody attracted to you very quickly. It's designed to grow feelings of attraction, fun and humour in a short time, and this is where its downfall lies. If you use it too often, it can end up making the person into a sexual object, and though you two may be attracted to each other, and there's some mystery going on...too much will not allow you to know who the other person is.

In the past, I've attracted many women simply by doing playful flirtation through a variety of different ways, but many of the interactions never lasted because we never got to know each other. So be advised that you should use playful flirtation sparingly. But do use it...once you get the hang of it...it's so much fun!

UPPING THE ANTE:

Now, some people will tell you that you can't tell a woman that she's beautiful the moment you see her because she hears it hundreds of times. Now this is true that not all women are going to respond in a pleasant manner, but in some of the cases women do respond well to a man who can comment about a woman's beauty quite confidently. Women, I find, seem to find comments about looks distasteful because they come off insincere or the message sounds too generic as if it had been said a thousand times before.

If you choose, this can be the opening line if you want to show someone you're interested in her: "I have to say, you're very cute."

At some point during the conversation it's okay to elevate the conversation to include looks as well. Letting her know that she has such a wonderful and warm smile is charming and specific, and I encourage it. Or to let her know that she has such great fashion taste that the dress looks so sexy on her. Or if you notice that she's spent a lot of time on her hair then don't be afraid to let her know how great her hair looks, especially the way that it curls on the very end.

Now, if you're not too comfortable telling her she's beautiful from the start then it's a good idea to find out something a little bit more about her and then comment on anything that might be physical.

Flirt and Continue the Conversation

A big pitfall that people make when they are doing verbal flirting is that they will make a comment but wait for the other person to react. This is a bad conversation move. Let me put it into another perspective. You ever watch a movie where the male lead goes "I love you," in a romantic movie. He's just staring at her and waiting patiently for her to say it and she doesn't know what to say. Well flirting can be the same thing. Some women are not used to receiving flirtatious comments. They could be in shock. Don't be mistaken that they aren't flattered, it's just that they might need time to process the comment. But with flirting, you don't want to offer them time to process. You want to make your comment, and not become attached to what they feel about your flirtatious remark.

For myself, when I make a comment, I just follow up in a calm manner by asking a question about the other person so that the conversation continues to flow.

This way the comment has been made and processed by the subconscious but the shock doesn't get experienced consciously. The person doesn't have time to think about the compliment because they now focus too much on the conversation or question that is being asked.

Imagine that you're looking at a billboard that's across from you at a train station, you pay attention to it for a split second, and then the train comes, even though your main focus is to get on the train, your brain has already processed the advertisement. The way compliments work, is that they can be slipped into the subconscious in the same manner. It's a little sneaky, but very effective when it comes to flirting.

But keep in mind that flirting is about being playful and showing that you're interested, and it does take practice. But when you start flirting at the appropriate times (don't flirt with your boss at work) you'll find that conversations become more light, there's more humour in them, and a sense of risk and adventure in them as well. I used to be very shy of flirting, but once I did, I realized there was a whole new world I missed, and I'm glad to be a part of it now.

Key Points to Remember:

- A powerful way of flirting with another person is to tell them what you like, find attractive or sexy about a personality trait or value that he or she carries.
- You can also flirt by being playful, being exaggerative, teasing and role playing.
- After you have given a flirtatious compliment, don't wait for someone's reaction. Just continue on the conversation as if it was nothing unusual.

Conversation Exercise 21: Playful Flirting

If you are single, go flirt with another single person at your next social event. Find something that you really like about the person and tell him or her why you like that characteristic.

If you're not single, then take the time to flirt with your significant other or with the person you are currently involved in a relationship. Tell him or her what you find sexy about their personality.

Write your thoughts in a journal entry and notice what the response was when you did flirt.

Crowd Control, How to Start Conversations with Groups of People

“The desert has its holiness of silence, the crowd its holiness of conversation.”

-Walter Elliot

I was on a bus one day, and coincidentally I bumped into one of my students, Jason from Quadro Media, from the conversation workshop I was teaching. I looked at him, and asked him, "What conversation tip would you like to learn in the class that you haven't learned so far?"

He looked at me, and without hesitation, "I want to know how to approach a group of people."

Jason is not the only person who has asked that request. Many of my clients have had that exact same curiosity and fear about approaching groups of people. Talking to strangers is scary enough, but to jump into a conversation where there are three or four people in a tight knit little circle can almost make any person's heart rate skyrocket.

Some statements that I've heard before from previous clients are:

“I don't want to bother them because they seem so busy in their conversation.”

“I'm always afraid that when I stop the conversation they'll look at me, and then I freeze up.”

“I find that I'll lurk too much, and it makes me feel uncomfortable.”

“I don't know how I would start a conversation with a group of people once I interrupt them.”

“What if I do interrupt them on a topic of importance, how would I exit without feeling embarrassed?”

I've been there myself, and even though I've approached hundreds of groups, I'm still continuing to find better ways to be able to make that smooth transition to join a group of people.

Here are five guidelines that will help you enter a group of conversation with confidence and poise.

1) Observe the group for a little while. Can you hear what they are talking about? And if not, do you know what kind of energy the group has. Is it a fun, high energy and humorous group? Is it in a serious tone? Just stand back and observe for four or five seconds. You will see why this becomes more relevant at a later stage.

2) Next, look for the biggest gap where you can fit in. When people congregate in groups, I always notice that approximately 9 out of 10 times, there is a gap that you can slide into more easily than others. Once you've spotted the largest gap, this is the spot you want to enter the group from. The reason is because this will make it easier for people to move graciously aside as opposed to you looking like you're pushing your way into a group like a little child. The goal is to enter the group by making it look physically effortless when you slide in. The more you disturb the group physically, the more you will disrupt the flow of conversation that is taking place.

3) Now that you've identified the biggest gap, the next step is to make eye contact with everyone in the group you are trying to approach. This step is extremely vital, and often can make or break a transition into a group. This doesn't necessarily mean that you are going to make eye contact directly (eye to eye) with everybody in the group, this can be difficult. What it does mean, is that you need to be in the peripheral sight of everybody in the group. You do want to try to make direct eye contact with as many people in the group as possible, but if you can't, ensure that they can see you from their peripheral.

This is because their subconscious is preparing for the potential that you are planning to join the conversation. Think about this, if someone in a clothing store looks at you, or you see a salesperson in your peripheral then you are more likely aware that the person may come and talk to you to ask if you need help.

Let's imagine that while you are looking for clothes, the salesperson is not in your line of sight. All of a sudden, she starts greeting you from behind, while you are slightly bent over and completely focused on choosing a top for yourself. I know I'd be a little startled. And go "Where did she and that voice come from all at once?"

Yet, most people I know have this style of networking. They look for the biggest gap and enter it, and in return scare the people on the side of the circle who have their back turned toward the approaching person. The person entering gets so nervous, that she only thinks about herself and not about the other people she's interrupting.

Do you remember the last time someone snuck up from behind you while you were talking to two or three other people? Or maybe someone snuck up from behind you and started talking while you were at your desk? How did you feel? I can tell you that it still jolts me when people do that.

The best way to accomplish this is to make a semi circle walk around the group so that you'll be in every person's peripheral vision and then slide into the largest gap. By making a semi circle or a circular movement that is somewhat larger (never make a full circle, this will look like you are hunting, I would suggest no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ circular movement) the whole group will see you in their peripheral, and will mentally be prepared for you to jump in. Basically the less you shock them, the better.

4) Since teaching the workshops and classes, I can solidly conclude that the following is the biggest mistake in transitioning into a group dynamic smoothly and easily. It's the ability to match a group's energy when attempting to join the

group. Remember in step one I told you to observe the energy. This is where observing will serve its purpose.

Every group of strangers will form an invisible circle. Once you've identified that invisible circle that these people have created, you need to have one foot step on that invisible circle, and then to have one foot slightly pointed outwards. The reason for this is because your body language states two things. Your foot that is now on the inside circle suggests that you would like to be part of the group. The other foot that is pointed away suggests that you could also leave at any time. When people look at your body language, your feet are giving them mixed messages that people are comfortable with.

If you put both your feet in the circle then this can be perceived as being too pervasive. "Who invited you into the group all of a sudden? You seem to think you're welcome into our talk."

Then there is the other common mistake, I'll watch clients stand on the outside of the circle lurking. And they lurk so long that eventually they get more anxious and the group conversation may not even stop. You cannot stand outside of the invisible circle either.

What do you do? As I've mentioned, you keep one foot out and one foot in on an invisible circle that the group forms. By having one foot in, this suggests, "I'm interested in joining your group, but I'm not completely sure. I could leave at any time. I have one foot that's ready to exit at any moment."

After I've set a foot in, this is when I start to make an apologetic type statement that matches the group energy.

“Excuse me, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt your conversation. I just wanted to join your group, there seems to be a good energy here. What were you guys talking about before I interrupted?”

If I happen to be at a party with a lot of high energy people, then I would say the sentence above with enthusiasm. I would not approach this group with a low, shy energy. This is what causes the group to stop their conversation, because your low energy ended up being a mood killer.

If I’m at a professional cocktail event, then I would use a more serious and polite tone when entering a group with a sturdy smile. I wouldn’t use a high energy tone that I would use at Mardi Gras.

If I happen to be approaching a group of shy people, I’ll tone down my energy and be slightly calm and quieter to ensure that I keep the flow the same.

Think about this: when you’ve been really excited, and someone comes in with this really sad tone, doesn’t it ruin your mood? Groups are entities of their own, and their energy needs to be matched.

And your foot work. Once you’ve said “Excuse me...” and you find out what they were talking about before, and you start having a conversation with at least one person in the group, is the time to start to pivot your other foot into the conversational circle. With people busy listening and talking, most people won’t notice you joining the inner circle.

5) Once you have entered a group, you want to start a conversation with the most talkative people in the group first. They can usually be identified easily by asking a generic question and seeing which people are the first to answer. People tend to look for validation based on other people’s reactions, so if the

social leaders of the group have a rapport with you then others will naturally as well.

Let's look at the opposite scenario. If I end up talking to the shy people in the group and they give short and coy answers, this potentially makes me look bad. However, if I converse with the talkative people in the group first, then it makes me look as if I'm naturally a part of the group. This also is known as social proofing, because the social leader of the group chats to me, then therefore this is "proof" I must be a worthy person to talk to.

After you've established some quick rapport with the social leaders, then start talking to the other people and have them involved. Or else if you don't, you'll make them feel awkward for just standing there.

If you do all the steps correctly that were mentioned above, you should be able to have a great conversation with a group quite easily.

A great conversationalist will try to get people involved in the conversation. He'll know when to step back and listen to the opinion of others, and is patient with sharing his own opinion, but ensure that he is confident to voice an opinion when he can.

And when in doubt, just remember your conversation structure. Ask a question, listen for answers from all the members of the group, "Oh how about you, what industry would you love to try it out if you could?" And then answer your own question if you feel it contributes to the flow.

A very important note to remember is that approaching groups takes practice. Don't be discouraged if what I've taught doesn't work the first time. The more you do it, the more it will make sense. Every time you approach a group, create a journal entry, and then look back on the notes on this book and see what you could have improved upon. As time goes by you will be much more confident in approaching groups if you make it a point to keep practicing.

When You've Disturbed a Private Conversation

This being stated, it is also important to know what actions to take when you have interrupted an important conversation:

Steven, a hotel manager that lived in Squamish once asked me an interesting question. "How do I exit a group graciously when I've found out that I've disturbed a very important conversation?"

There was a tendency for him to feel awkward and embarrassed when he felt that he interrupted people's important conversations, but you don't need to feel embarrassed at all.

There are going to be times when you might go into a group of people who already know each other, and they may be talking about a topic that is highly confidential and requires privacy. If your intention was to introduce yourself, and get to know some new people, then you've done nothing wrong, and therefore you shouldn't feel one bit embarrassed. Most people don't approach a group with the intention of destroying a private conversation. I know I don't think that way.

In the case that it does happen, and you notice that a person glares at you, or says something to you about this being a private conversation, all you need to say is this:

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt your private conversation. I just wanted to introduce myself. I'll come back at a more convenient time."

And you exit the conversation, as if it was no big deal. The bigger deal that you decide to make it, the bigger it will be.

Key Points to Remember

➤ When approaching a group follow these steps.

1) Observe the group and its energy

- 2) Look for the biggest gap to slip into
- 3) Ensure that peripheral eye contact is made
- 4) Step into the group and excuse yourself
- 5) Talk to the social leaders of the group and then to the people who are less talkative.
 - When you have disturbed a private conversation that requires you to exit, do not feel embarrassed or shy, just exit with a stern politeness and apologize for the disturbance.

Conversation Exercise 22: Approaching Groups of People

Next time you attend a social gathering, practice approaching three different groups of people using the tools provided in this chapter.

One of your groups should have at least 3 people or more.

Write down your thoughts in your journal, and notice carefully the steps you took to approach each group. What was successful? What needed improvement? And write down the strategy and order that you took to break into a group?

The order of the steps you take to approach a group is important. These steps are the equivalent of following a recipe for a pastry.

Part 4: Conversation Blunders

The Put Down: The Unintentional Conversation Killer

“It seldom pays to be rude. It never pays to be only half-rude.”

-Norman Douglas

Ever have a conversation that went something like this?

Girl: “So what do you do?”

You: (About to speak.)

Bert: “This guy, all he does is sit at home and plays video games all day. I mean he’s so lazy his mom still does his laundry.”

You: (Wanting to give him a slap on the face for making you look bad in front of the girl you’re interested in) Actually, I work with children on developing their confidence through public speaking presentations.

Bert: Yeah, presentations on how to chase girls all the time!

I think there have been times when we’ve all met someone like “Bert” in our life. He’s the person that seems to always unintentionally insult us. He often means it as a joke, and then when you mention to him that he should stop, he either says “Can’t you take a joke?” or is defensive about the situation because he’s felt like he’s been personally attacked.

Let’s look at a three reasons why people do the “unintentional put down” at the oddest times.

1. People will try to insult you because they want to get the approval of the group, and so if they can make the group laugh at your expense they feel like they’re in. It’s the equivalent of roasting someone during a comedy show. And when a group does laugh, he gets that validation he’s looking for, and therefore, may even stack another joke on top of it. It adds insult to injury when the person

ends up stacking one joke on top of the other as if he was doing a comedic show. This may occur when people are meeting someone new and want to fit into the group as soon as possible.

An example of this might be, "Look at Bert, girls, what do you think of his pink shirt , I mean come on...Pink? I think the metrosexual look was so last year!" The girls might laugh. "Come on man, dress up like a real guy. Seriously, don't dress like a pansy when you come out!" The girls smile at the insulter.

Remember there's no need to insult someone to get approval from the group. If you're a witty person, positive, a good listener and outgoing, you don't need to put down anybody.

2. Sometimes people will insult each other unintentionally because they are competing for a girl or a guy in the group. And in order to do it, they try to make the other one look as bad as possible. You happen to be out at a party. Your good friend introduces you to someone new. She's attractive and you strike up a conversation. Your friend comes along and then goes "Have you met this guy yet? You know he does weed almost every weekend. He practically grows it. Oh, by the way, I'm Bert. So who do you know at this party?" Bert is doing this because he's also interested and wants to appear as the better candidate.

While there are some dating advice books that advocate that you should insult a person to disqualify him as a potential dating candidate. I truly believe this is not necessary. When you're meeting people it is much better be truly admired for your charisma. Let's face it, Nelson Mandela probably never had to insult anybody to get them to pay attention to him

3. Then there are times when people don't know they're even insulting someone to begin with. If you ask them why they do it, they go "I don't know." It's almost become second nature for them just to make fun of people when they talk. These might be the sarcastic types or people who do feel insecure about themselves. Many times these people are not in touch with their emotions and therefore can't explain why well. Don't be surprised if these people get defensive if you confront them about the issue.

Another common scene I see is when two people are being introduced by a mutual friend. The two new acquaintances may decide to bond on embarrassing experiences they've witnessed of the mutual friend. It's two people against one is what it is.

Friend 1: "That's so funny. I remember there was a time that he wanted to ask this girl out and he just stood there frozen. But he was still drooling. To be honest, she was okay looking."

Friend 2: "I know, what's up with him. I mean I think the girls he goes after are okay looking. Nothing special, really."

WOOOO...let's stop it there. When someone is kind enough to introduce the two of you together, don't go insulting that person. He's taken the time to introduce you and you end up insulting the guy? What makes you think he'll ever introduce you to any of his friends after that? I sincerely doubt he will again. I know I wouldn't. Whether the person he introduces you to is interesting or not, don't be ungrateful for the new opportunity to meet someone new.

The charismatic suggestion in a situation like that is to ensure that you put a positive spin about the person. There are times when I'm in the situation of Friend 2 where I could stack insults but instead I put a positive spin and try to make people laugh. Here was a real life situation where a group of us were in a van and there happened to be someone joining us for the first time.

Friend 1: "Hey Randy, how come you have so many tools in your van. What are you a terrorist?"

(This might seem funny, but it's not very witty, and quite insulting. I don't think a lot of people want to be referred to as a terrorist.)

Myself: "Yes, he is. He's a TERRORIST OF LOVE! Right? You are a ladies man!" (In a playful tone.) The response had the whole car laughing, but this is

because I changed the insulting comment into a positive comment. If you start practicing this, changing negative statements into positive humorous statements, then you will have understood a big part of being charming.

Noticed what I didn't do was stack on the insult in order to try to feel validated as part of the group or with that person.

Friendships can break up because of too much insulting that goes on in every day chat. People might be able to put up with it at the start, but over time it becomes frustrating and unforgivable. I've personally asked people not to invite back their acquaintances and friends because they seem to keep insulting the guests I bring.

“How do I know if I'm one of those people?”

There are usually a few signs that may indicate you insult people unintentionally.

1. You're not being called out by your friends as much as you used to. This may be due to social awkwardness, but sometimes it's because you've been too much of a jerk to them.
2. You only seem comfortable insulting people, and you think by doing that you're being funny and you believe you'll be able to fit in this way.
3. Your friends have told you that you're being rude and you just act defensive. The other thing is that your friend will literally stop talking to you for a while after you've made an insulting comment about him/her. So there might be a strange pause, and she's given you the cold shoulder throughout the night.
4. You've been described as overly sarcastic. Being too sarcastic can be at times interpreted as insulting.

If you suspect that you may be a person that fits these characteristics, the best suggestion I can make is to take your time and really analyze what you're saying to other people. If you find yourself about to say something negative about

someone, then you need to stop and ask yourself, what could I say that would sound more charismatic and funny as opposed to insulting?

Keep this in mind, just because you don't find what you say offensive, or rude, that doesn't mean another person doesn't. Just remember not everybody shares the exact same sense of humour that you do.

Now, if you really don't know if you're putting down people unknowingly, then I would suggest you ask some close friends if you do. Let them know that you want to be a more charming speaker and that you want to correct this area of your life if it does exist. I'm sure your friends may be hesitant at first, but this absolutely must be fixed if you desire to be a charming conversationalist.

Other ways to know is to look at how people react. Do you find that there are sudden pauses during a conversation where you feel a sense of coldness? Are you finding that after you've said something that the person is getting defensive and reacting to you with a strong tone of voice? Did the person insult you back for what you said or talked back to you in a sarcastic way? "YES, I AM SUCH A TERROIST! I BLOW UP STUFF ALL THE TIME. HAHAHA, very funny."

Most people I know are generally forgiving for the first few times, but after a while it can be very annoying, and then to the point where someone might blow up in your face.

I've found that charismatic people don't need to put down other people to feel that they belong. They don't need to make a joke at someone else's expense. They are confident to talk about themselves and other topics. Charismatic speakers, don't put down people, they bring them up.

Key Points to Remember:

When being introduced to another person, do not insult the person who introduced the both of you.

When you are talking to others be careful of how you are talking to them and

notice if you are unintentionally insulting anyone. You can tell if you have because the other person may start to be defensive or give you the silent treatment, or suddenly start frowning.

Thirteen Deadly Sins of Conversation

“The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right place
but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.”

-Dorothy Nevill

Have you ever had a moment in your life where after you've just met a new person, you're thinking “Why in the world would that person say that?” And though you're trying to maintain proper etiquette by not reacting to it, your stomach wants to hurl and you want to show your terrible disgust for what that person said. You might have even had a moment yourself, where you talked about something that was quite normal to you but all of a sudden the person you're talking to seems to have given you the cold shoulder.

Just remember that you only have one time to make a first impression and friendships take time to build. First impressions can last a very long time. Imagine someone came up to you and punched you in the face. Chances are you probably wouldn't want to talk or see this person ever again. Even though he could be the nicest person in the world afterwards, that punch was still a strange act. Words and poor social etiquette are the same; it's just a different kind of punch that a person receives.

For myself, during many of my past conversations I've pushed the boundaries a little bit just to see how far I can carry a conversation, not so much for the purpose of actually being interested in the conversation but to test the social boundaries of what's considered acceptable by others. And during that time of informal research, and many cold stares and quiet moments later, I've found that the following 13 topics are topics to avoid when you're first meeting someone.

Stay Away from Talking About Sex.

1. Sex. The trouble is that talking about sex is very personal to people. So talking about your sex life is not always great. As a matter of fact I

wouldn't even suggest bringing this topic up, unless the person happens to be a sexual therapist, or sexologist. While there are some men who bond on this particular topic with other men, it is best not to talk about this topic at all. The truth is you don't know if one of those men you're in a group with happens to be a CEO or a potential client. This also includes making sexual jokes or references that are inappropriate. Sexual flirting is off limits during professional events. You don't want to have a reputation that could ruin your professional career. I've seen it happen in a corporation I worked in. It can be very nasty to deal with afterwards, especially if they need references from your previous job. Now you're probably wondering, what about sexual flirting, is that off limits?

Let me explain the difference between vulgar sexual comments and sexual flirting. Sexual flirting is still a risk, but sexual flirtation is meant to imply something sexual between you and the other person you are attracted to in a social setting. This can be done in a serious tone or more of a light playful tone, the latter being my favourite. So here would be an example of sexual flirting.

Smiling: "You would look so seductive and sexy next to me in bed. But we've just met each other and so it's not good to talk like that. That's kind of taboo."

This is known as sexual flirting, and depending on where you are in a seductive conversation, it can be acceptable.

But this is what I don't consider appropriate conversation talk for meeting someone for the first time. Sexual jokes that refer to porn, the size of someone's "package", using terminology that people would go... uhhhhhhh... or ewwww. I've had a lot of people think that when a girl goes ewwww...that because he was able to get a reaction out of her that that is a good sign. UMM...NO!

Asking someone if they know what a (fill in the blank with a sexual term) is is not a good way to start or continue on a conversation. And don't think I haven't seen it happen before. Leave the vulgarity at home or with friends that you're more familiar with and trust.

Crimes and Depressing News

2. Gory crimes and sad news. I've heard and saw a lot of tragedies in my life so far, the 9/11 incident, the tsunami that hit the Asia Pacific area, the earthquake in China, and the genocide in Rwanda. These are all very important events that have happened globally and have impacted my life. And I do believe there is a time and place to discuss these issues for more humanitarian purposes. However, it's best to leave these conversation pieces out when you're meeting someone for the first time. You want to be able to keep conversations light and fun if possible. If the other person ends up discussing such topics, the most charismatic thing that you can do, is to spin the topic to something positive. Such as the Rwandan genocide. I would tell people, "It is truly a shame that people have to be persecuted for certain traits, ethnic background and over power. I'm glad that I live in a city where people can walk outside and shop for food without worrying for their lives. I'm truly grateful for that. What do you really enjoy about living in Vancouver?" And now the conversation has moved back to a positive spin.

Stop Complaining

3. Leave your complaining or whining at home. I know we all have problems. I've got problems with family, staff, my girlfriend, and so forth. But the truth is that someone you first meet is not your therapist. He doesn't want to listen about your problems.

The one that seems to irritate me the most during conversations is how someone just broke up with their ex girlfriend, and this is usually after a

very serious loving relationship, that he starts telling people he's just met. I have not had one single person that didn't think it was absolutely creepy how someone would talk about their ex girlfriend after they have met for only 10 minutes.

This also includes not diving too much into your family issues or issues with employees and co workers. Or complaints about how this city has nothing to do, (I get this one a lot in Vancouver, and I can tell these people are not the people who know their city well).

Now here is something that's very important. Don't mistaken complaining with vulnerability. For example, this would be complaining: "I wish my dad wasn't such a depressed person. I would have had a much a happier childhood and my life would be so much better if he could be the father I wanted."

This is heavy, and it's complaining.

This is being vulnerable: "Yeah, I had a bit of a rough childhood. I grew up with a depressed dad. But the truth is, if I didn't go through that, I wouldn't become the person I am today. So it's really hard to say if it was a bad or a good thing, but I would like to believe that it was a good thing."

Being vulnerable is about giving reflection to moments in your life, and being aware of how it has changed your life. And when you're vulnerable people feel that you are relatable.

Religion and Spirituality

4. Religion and spiritual philosophy. I would generally agree that people should stay away from talking about religion during their first meeting. Not that religion is not worth talking about. I talk about spirituality, religion and philosophy all the time.

Here are my general rules when it comes to talking about religion:

Listen attentively and withhold judgment as much as possible during conversation. Respect that it is their life and perspective. At that point feel free to share what common ground you have and share what you disagree with. But remember never to make religion into an ego battle or an end all be all. Some people may bring it up, just feel free to go with the flow and if it gets too personal, just ask a question on a completely different topic.

Racial, Ethnic, Sexist and Sexuality Comments

5. Making racial, ethnic, sexist or sexuality comments that are negative. This is a big no-no. To me, these topics remain off limits the first time that I meet someone. And quite frankly, when I'm in a conversation I think it's rude when people talk about certain races and ethnic groups behave a certain way. Same goes with saying gays and lesbians are a certain way. I personally get turned off and you honestly will never know who you're talking to. What if you make a joke about the Japanese, and the person just happens to have a Japanese wife? And this person could have been a good business connection. Now you've just offended that person and he's potentially going to tell others. **SO NO RACIST, SEXIST AND HOMOPHOBIC COMMENTS! NONE!**

Disagreeing with Everything

6. Disagreeing with everything someone says or challenging them on every point of view, or always offering criticisms. I remember hearing a story from Brian Tracy, the great sales guru, about this. He mentioned that he used to think he was really smart and so he would go into a room and argue the opposite perspective of any person's view. If someone was a Republican, he would argue in favour of Democrat. If someone argued Democrat, he would argue Republican. As a matter of fact he would argue

until he felt like he “won.” Eventually what happened was that one day he went and approached a group of five people. As soon as he went up, all five people walked in five different directions! That’s when he realized that people don’t like talking to a know-it-all.

Don’t be the type of person that has to disagree with someone in order to feel that the conversation has to go somewhere. It’s important to find some mutual ground as well so that each person feels that they are connecting. No one likes a know it all that purposely always disagrees.

Lurking in the Shadows

7. Lurking during conversations. Let’s face it, you’re trying to enter into a conversation with a group but you’re just standing there waiting either for someone to introduce you or waiting for the appropriate comment to jump on board. But if the right moment never seems to come by, you won’t be able to jump in. I feel that if you’ve been on the outside of a group for about 30 seconds and you haven’t had the courage to step into the conversation, I would suggest that you find an easier group to go and talk to. After all, you don’t want to be rude, but at the same time, you don’t want to be creepy and just be the person that “doesn’t say much” at events or social gatherings.

Don’t be a Bragger

8. Don’t brag. Honestly I don’t know why I hear men do this. Telling a woman that you own this, or you have a place on Beach Avenue, may impress her. But it’s going to impress the wrong side of her if you’re not careful. Read the section on the Art of Captivating Story Telling to get all the details.

I remember one time when I was asking a woman for her biggest turn offs about men who approached to talk to her. She said the worst thing that

happened to her was when a man approached her and within thirty seconds of meeting each other, he told her he owned three houses. She ended the conversation shortly afterwards realizing that he was not the type of guy that she wanted to be associated with.

One of the best ways to sound like you're not bragging is to have a networking partner to introduce you into a group. For example, one of my friends Nelson Chow does this very well no matter where he goes. I may have used a casual opener such as "I'm really bored, would you like to chat?" And then he might come along and go "Did this guy tell you that he's a dating coach." With a stranger I usually don't reveal that detail. But it never sounds like bragging if someone else is the one to push it.

Money, Money, Money...

9. Money. Talking about money is great, don't mistaken, I love talking about money and what it can do for my life. However, it's rude to ask someone what they make at their job. If you're interested in knowing, you can ask people what the range of salary is for entry levels to managers. This is a more tactful way of asking. Now if they don't want to answer the question then don't push it. I never asked any of my dates how much money they make or any of my friends to this date.

However you can talk about business, finances and stocks that are available to buy. These are considered business topics not money topics.

Too Personal, Too Soon

10. Asking questions that are too personal too soon. Stay away from asking questions that could be considered too personal. All you have to do is ask yourself, "How comfortable would I be answering the question I'm about to ask on a scale from 1-10 by a stranger?" 1 being absolutely

uncomfortable and 10 being you would answer it every time it was asked. If you're question is not in the range of 6-10 then don't ask it.

Revealing What's Behind Door Number One Right Away

11. Revealing too much about yourself too soon. Honestly, you don't need to reveal your entire life story with someone in order to connect with her. I know some women do that on some dates, and then realize they don't have much to talk about after the fact. To have a really great conversation with someone, all you need to do is just reveal one or two personal areas of your life. But again, the conversation doesn't have to go into such great detail that it would fill a novel. For example, talking about your family or talking about vacations is a pretty good start.

Talking Too Much about Ex

12. Talking about ex's on dates. I have to mention this again and again, it's only because after people who suffer break ups tend to go through emotional roller coasters. They are vulnerable and will often spill their guts to people who are willing to listen. Remember, strangers are not your therapist. Your sorrows from a previous relationship should be kept private and within close and trusted friends.

Can You be Any More Sarcastic?

13. Being sarcastic too often. This can be a killer on a conversation if you're not careful. I've noticed that it's okay to have a sense of humour and even teasing in a playful but not hurtful manner is fine, but if you're going to be sarcastic too often during the conversation this can be an annoyance to others. I've found that people who are often sarcastic throughout a conversation are people who generally have trouble having deeper emotional connections with others. For example, a woman may say something sweet and caring to you, and instead of replying back with

something genuine, you might make a remark about “AWWW DAT’S SOO SWEEET.” A little a bit of sarcasm is good but don’t lay it on too thick.

Take your time to look at the list again. Is there anything on this list that you believe you do? Make sure you take the time to be aware of what annoys you, and ensure that you don’t do that to others that you’re having a conversation with. And remember if you happen to find that you're making some "mistakes" in your conversation, realize that it's not the end of the world. Take the time to find out what you thought didn't work in your previous conversations and make the small adjustments necessary and write them up in your journal entries.

Key Points to Remember:

13 Deadly Sins of Conversation to avoid in a first time conversation:

- Talking about sex
- Gory crimes or depressing news.
- Complaining
- Religion and spirituality.
- Racial, ethnic, sexist or sexuality comments.
- Disagreeing with everyone and trying to be a know it all.
- Lurking too long in a group setting with strangers.
- Bragging too much.
- Talking about someone’s personal income.
- Getting too personal too soon.
- Revealing too much information so that there’s nothing left to talk about next time you meet a person.
- Talking about your previous relationship such as your ex’s.
- Being too sarcastic.

Start Now!

There is no better time to take action and improving your conversation skills than this very moment. Now is the time for you to take responsibility and use the tools that have been written in this book to improve the quality of your friendships, the quality of your business relationships, and the quality of your love life.

The difference between great champions and those that never quite succeed is that champions keep practicing the fundamentals and never stop practicing.

You have to be your own champion if you want to be a deeply charismatic person that connects easily with others. If you want to get better at you communication and charisma, then you have to go out and talk to people. You have to be able to make mistakes, try new things, and write down what you learned from the experiences. You can always sit and read about tools and techniques in a book but if reading ultimately led us to success in everything in life, then librarians would be the richest, powerful and most charming people in the world. That is not the case. It's people who decide, and commit to taking action towards their goals that make the difference. And commitment is to do things you say you will do long after the feeling of motivation is gone. You picked this e-book for a reason but you have to ensure that you follow up on that reason.

The question remains, what kind of goals do you want to achieve to be a more charismatic conversationalist? If you're not sure, you need to take time to think about the possibilities and decide on a path of action that will help you achieve massive success in your conversations. I'm glad if this book gave you some tips but in all honesty until you actually do something with those tips then this book is just useless bunch of letters put together. Go and have conversations with all sorts of people.

And lastly remember that by improving your conversations, you're also improving the quality of life for others. If you can make them feel appreciated, feel

connected to another person, or make them feel sexy, then you've added to their happiness. This has always been the joy of great conversation. It's bringing community among people.

I would also suggest that you come and take courses that are offered by Conversation Arts to help you understand your communication style and to help you improve your conversation skills with others.

But whatever you do, don't treat this as a leisurely activity, commit to the time and watch yourself connected to others in ways that you've always imagined.

If you have any questions or would like to share a success story, then please feel free to contact me at Vincent@conversationarts.com. I'll do my very best to answer you.

About the Author:

Vincent K.C. Ng is the founder of Conversation Arts, a premier conversation coaching company that helps gen x and gen y's connect and communicate more effectively one on one in professional environments and in romantic situations.

He has also been a published columnist for the Asian women's magazine Audrey. And has been featured on Breakfast Television of CTV, Mandarin Magazine of OMNI television in Vancouver on behalf of Man Meets Woman, was on the Bill Good Show on CKNW and as well as being featured in the newspaper the Globe and Mail.

Vincent has also been a professional teacher, teaching the "Art of Conversation" for continuing education students for the Vancouver School Board for a year.

He has presented networking, communication, and conversation workshops to organizations such as Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver, L.O.V.E. (Leave Out Violence), BC Cancer Agency, Governexx of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel, for IGNITE Conference for the Commerce Undergraduate Society of University of British Columbia, the Emerging Leaders Network, Circle K, the Arts Co-op of University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University's Student Leadership Summit.

He was voted as one of the top 3 speakers in 2007 at the Student Leadership Conference at the University of British Columbia for his presentation "Coaching for Executive Leadership."

He has coached both men and women for the dating companies Happy Sexy You (<http://www.happysexyyou.com>) and Man Meets Woman (<http://www.manmeetswoman.com>) in Vancouver for over three years. Helping single men and women become more attractive and get more quality dates and relationships in their lives.

He's literally had thousands of conversations so far with strangers every day when he worked as a Starbucks Manager for a busy downtown store, and trained others to on his staff on how to have confident conversations with customers to deliver the best service possible.

As part of his "street wise" experience, he has talked to strangers at bookstores, on the street, in bars, at networking events, seminars, markets, in malls, at leadership conferences, coffee shops, and hosting his own parties.

As a person, he loves to read relationship, communication, personal development and leadership books, and writes about them all the time and can't seem to stop talking about them.

If you would like to book Vincent for a speaking engagement or for personal conversation coaching you can reach him at

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Currently Vincent is in a fantastic loving relationship and enjoys spending his days writing and reading and currently lives in Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada. Visit his website

<http://www.conversationarts.com>

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