

Dimwit's *Guide to...*

Conversation

Key to Enhancing Your Personal and Social Effectiveness



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INTRODUCTION

For most of us, the faculty of speech is something we acquire through the years as we mature, though there are those who seem more adept at it than others. Why is it your next-door neighbor finds it so effortless to articulate his disapproval of your dog relieving itself in his backyard or your car blocking his driveway, whereas you think that the very act of talking, in any form or kind, is an exercise in futility?

Let's face it. If we were all born conversationalists, then there would be no such things as miscommunication and misunderstanding in the world. So don't be disheartened. If ease in speaking doesn't come naturally to you, this e-book is here to help you hone your skills.

Knowing how to be a great conversationalist can be quite handy, too. It can help you land that dream job you've been eyeing for years, or it can give you the confidence to finally approach that person you've been attracted to since third grade. So if you're serious and willing to learn and apply this skill in your daily life, read on.

CHAPTER ONE - WHAT IS CONVERSATION AND COMMUNICATION?

The Microsoft® Encarta® Dictionary defines *conversation* as “a casual talk; the activity of talking, especially informally.” It sounds so easy, and yet so many people do it wrong, albeit unknowingly. Still, for others, the very idea of conversing is so dreadful that it is enough to leave their insides, not to mention their tongues, in knots.

Communication is a natural and very essential part of life. Even animals do it. Humans, however, have evolved from the grunting and groaning of our prehistoric ancestors to the complex speech patterns and individual nuances of today’s many languages. And along with that evolution came deterioration, eventually.

Truly, the quality of conversation these days is nothing compared to the so-called ‘verbal jousts’ of yore—healthy, lively banter among peers and strangers alike. Indeed, French Renaissance writer Michel de Montaigne thought of conversation as “the most fruitful and natural exercise of our mind.” So why the seeming decline?

In fact, many of our present-day conflicts stem from either miscommunication, or a total lack of communication altogether. When we also take into consideration a person’s culture, circumstances, and state of mind when issuing a certain communication, what may be harmless to some could actually be quite offensive to others. For instance, a joke that you find hilarious may be considered in bad taste for another. When a supervisor barks an order, you may either take it personally or just assume they’re having a bad day.

Today’s fast-paced, technologically advanced but emotionally detached lifestyle plays a huge part in this misunderstanding, as well as in the decline of quality conversation. Because there is an overabundance of hi-tech, though impersonal, ways of communicating—texting, email, instant

messaging—face-to-face discussion has been rendered practically obsolete. Or if not, it is largely deemed an inconvenience. Really, why talk in person when all it takes is a few clicks or keypad presses to state your message? And so, many people have lost touch with that human connection that was once innate in all of us.

Perhaps it is time to reclaim it.

In recent years, emphasis has slowly shifted from IQ, or intellectual quotient, to EQ, or emotional quotient, as the greater barometer for just how successful a person becomes in life. In almost all jobs, having the right people skills is one of the foremost requirements expected of applicants. At the very heart of these people skills is an above average aptitude for communication.

The master communicator, therefore, is the one who is able to express him/herself with more clarity and precision, the one who is able to relate to clients and coworkers alike with equal ease and confidence, the one the boss turns to in order to get things done. In short, if you are a master communicator, you are a winner and a leader, not only in the workplace, but also in life.

Being a huge success, however, cannot be achieved alone. You'll need all the help you can get, and this is where communication comes in.

Communication skills have proven to be so extremely critical that they are part of all major business schools' MBA curricula. Special courses on communication, public speaking, and speech power are legion, and the fact that you have to pay good money to enroll in these courses and learn all about the basics of communication is a testament to its importance and indispensability. Unless you are a hermit entirely cut off from all human contact, you won't be able to survive without communication.

Indeed, communication has ballooned into a multi-billion dollar industry, and today we are connected in ways that people a mere generation ago would never have imagined. Mobile phones, video conferencing, wireless Internet—the possibilities are endless!

But, as stated earlier, as advanced as these modern devices and systems are, they have only made face-to-face communication and personal correspondence that much more rare and precious. Do you even remember the last time you wrote a handwritten letter and mailed it the old-fashioned way? Have you ever even done so at all? Or how about meetings at the office? Was there ever a time you did not think they were a complete waste of time and that communiqués via email would be more practical and efficient?

The capacity to converse and communicate is an invaluable skill that, though currently overlooked for more futuristic means, will never fade away. After perusing this e-book, and given time and practice, there is no reason why you, dear listener, should not become a master communicator and a great conversationalist yourself.

CHAPTER TWO - BENEFITS OF BEING A GREAT CONVERSATIONALIST

Whether at home, at school, at work, or even at the bus stop, being able to converse properly and communicate clearly is imperative. And to be more relevant to 21st century telecommunication, you could translate this ability onto paper or onscreen, so that even email can be less impersonal and more of a friendly exchange or correspondence.

Perhaps the most impressive of these benefits is that being a great conversationalist can turn any social setting into a land of opportunity for you to market yourself and expand your list of contacts that might prove invaluable in future business endeavors.

The more you stand out when it comes to small talk and mingling, the more people will remember you, which is always good in any enterprise. Not to mention the heads that will turn in your direction. Being a great conversationalist is a very sexy and attractive trait, indeed, and people will be drawn to you as a result.

On a more personal level, simply taking time out to sit with a loved one, a friend, or even a stranger and engaging them in heartfelt conversation is an excellent chance for you to bond and get to know each other more. You get exposed to different points of view, plus you learn to be open-minded and more accepting of others. It's a very humbling experience, too, because you realize that there is