

**Say What You Mean:
Overcoming Social Anxiety
So You Can Become a Great Conversationalist**



By JoJo Tabares

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Note: This is a sampling of excerpts from some of the lessons found in *Say What You Mean: Overcoming Social Anxiety*. To order the full version, click here:

<http://artofeloquence.com/store/SocialCommunication/SWMAnxiety>

Section I: Introduction to Social Anxiety



My Testimony

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” -2 Corinthians 5:17



I was born a strange, shy child. As I grew, I realized that I was not like most other children I encountered. While I was awkward and lonely, they were outgoing and having fun. While I was fearful of what others might think of the fact that I said “dungarees and pocket book” instead of “jeans and purse,” some were almost comfortably rude. While I was always the new kid on the block, they had a history with their friends and neighbors. While I wanted to talk about the moral lessons of history and implications of technology, they wanted to talk about Sassoon labels, Shawn Cassidy's hair and who was “cute.” Let's face it. I was painfully shy and, even worse, I was WEIRD!

I was shyly strange and strangely shy. I was different, but instead of embracing my uniqueness, I sought to hide it in order to attempt to fit in. And my brand of shyness was so pervasive I was hardly able to hide my strangeness even from strangers. When a recent acquaintance waved hello, I was petrified I'd have to wave back. For one thing, how embarrassing to wave back only to find they weren't waving at ME! In addition, just the act of waving back caused others to look in my general direction and I couldn't handle that kind of scrutiny! What if I had a weird smile on my face? What if someone else wanted to...(gulp!)...TALK to me!!

As I matured (and though I moved around a great deal, giving me ample opportunities to gain experience in meeting and greeting), I found it easier to avoid first contact than to bite the communication bullet and try my hand (or in this case, my mouth). This created a vicious cycle. The more shy I was, the more shy I became because shyness is as shyness does. And I was not about to jump into the waters of conversation. I mean, the water's cold and it's deep! Besides, after a while, I came to accept what society told me about shyness. The world thinks shyness is a part of your personality. It's just who I was and there was nothing I could do about it.

I *knew* this to be true because well-meaning adults would often dump me into Communication Lake and expect me to swim to the other side. I'm sure you've had this happen at some point. Someone tried to push you into a situation where you'd HAVE to talk to someone. It's kind of like learning to swim.

When I was a kid, we had a neighbor who had a pool. He taught his kids to swim by throwing them in and letting them feel the accomplishment of getting to the other side. We were over one day when he decided to do that with my sister and me, but you see, this method of total immersion works only half the time. My sister got to the other side and thought it was so fabulous she wanted to do it again! I got to the other side and vowed NEVER to do it again...in life! So which one of us do you think gained mastery? Please feel free to ignore the wall flower in the corner with her dry bathing suit on!

Well, years later I found myself in many situations where I was uncomfortable. The older I got, the more people expected me to be able to handle myself in social situations. However, the older I got, the

more I shied away from these situations and the more I retreated into myself. By the time I started college, I was incredibly lonely and I didn't know a soul on campus. I vowed to get involved so I joined a sorority...a social phobic's worst nightmare! I was desperate to make friends and so, as uncomfortable as it was, I ever so slowly dipped my toe into the waters and began to make my mark. It was a long and painful process for a few years until, one day, I had a change of major.

I was a music major who couldn't read music and I just couldn't learn. To me, music was something you heard and sang, but it most definitely wasn't a bunch of black dots with squiggly lines on a strangely lined paper. This just wasn't going to work. I was in the market for a new major. A sorority sister of mine was majoring in speech communication. I was intrigued. The more I looked into this, the more I realized that this was what I needed to do. This very traditional way of learning about communication took me a long while to master, but when all was said and done, I realized something very important. I wasn't shy! I'd be willing to bet you aren't shy either! OK...you can pick your jaw up from the floor now and prepare yourself for what I'm about to say next.



I'm actually quite outgoing. Shyness isn't part of my personality, as I once believed. It was simply the result of a total lack of social communication skills which allowed fear to enter in. In fact, research shows that most of what is considered shyness is just a simple lack of these vital skills.

I'm going to share something else with you that you'll probably find brings great relief. You don't have to take years of painful experiences jumping into Lake Communication to go from social anxiety to social butterfly. Just give me 'til the end of this eBook.

Can you stand some more good news? My original idea for this study was simply to give shy souls the confidence to enable them to step into social situations, but as I began to write this study, I realized that I had an opportunity to give you more than what I had experienced in a much shorter and less painful way. So my focus for this study changed a bit. Not only will I share tips to help you overcome social anxiety to give you a level of comfort in social situations, but I will go beyond comfort, past mastery and right through to excellence! So hang on to your hat, we're going for a FUN ride!

JoJo Tabares

Section II: Achieving Comfort



Ten Reasons to Overcome Social Anxiety

"I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred." Psalm 39:2

You probably know many of these reasons, but what you probably don't know is how it feels when you do overcome this issue in your life. Study after study shows that effective communicators have longer marriages, deeper friendships, better relationships, more successful college and career experiences, make more money and are generally happier than their less articulate counterparts. Most people know communication is important, but they don't fully understand to what degree. Eighty-seven percent of everything we do during the day is communication-related. Communication is far more than just making speeches or having good manners. While you may manage to live your entire life without making a speech, you will not get through one day without communicating something to someone! Here are the top ten reasons you and your children should learn social communication skills and how each of these areas will be blessed when you do.

Your Education

"He who answers before listening-that is his folly and his shame." -Proverbs 18:13

"Students with ineffective listening skills fail to absorb much of the material to which they are exposed. Their problems are intensified when they respond incorrectly or inappropriately because of poor speaking skills." -National Communication Association study on Why Communication is Important

As a young college student, I was quite shy. I hardly ever raised my hand for fear I'd have to...TALK! After all, I could be...WRONG! I could look silly, be mistaken or say it incorrectly. This meant that I often went unnoticed in class. I often frustrated myself, kicking myself for not saying what the other guy just said or, worse yet, what nobody else would and what the professor was looking for!

The more a student feels comfortable enough to voice his opinions in class, the more a professor will take notice. Further, the more a professor sees a student participating in class discussion, the more studies show that student is thought of as a good student and expected to get higher grades. Studies show that professors are human and that this assumption can lead to a student actually receiving higher grades in the class.

As I gained more confidence in speaking up socially, my professors began to take notice and my grades improved. In fact, I remembered more of the material because I had processed it more thoroughly and felt even more prepared for exams and further class discussion.

Your College Career

"From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied."
-Proverbs 18:20

College applications require several essays these days. Not only do they evaluate your student's accomplishments, which are written into the essay, but they evaluate the ability of the student to convey this effectively. Admission officers are looking for articulate and accomplished candidates. If your student is accomplished but cannot convey that to a college admissions board, he will be passed over for one who can! Even the college entrance exams are communication skills-intensive these days. Back in my day, college applications were different, but I can tell you that my daughter's ability to

express herself and her confidence in doing so allowed her to be accepted to two of the most elite universities in the country. I don't think I would have had the confidence to go through a college interview when I was an applicant, let alone come across well.

Your Job Interview

"A fool's mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul." -Proverbs 18:7

These days, companies are looking for someone who is knowledgeable and confident without being arrogant. They ask interview questions designed to flush out your true desires and beliefs and they evaluate your appearance to help them judge which candidate is best. Not all of your interview is based on your resume; in fact, they will only grant an interview if you have a stellar resume! The resume is just the beginning of the job interview process. Interviewers will ask you things like, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" Employers want a concise, but not negative reason why you left your previous employment. According to a study in 2000 done by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 1000 human resource managers ranked preferred skills for being hired as follows: 1) Oral Communication Skills, 2) Written Communication Skills and 3) Listening (which is a communication skill).

There was a time when an interview of any kind scared the bejeebers outta me! However, the more my confidence grew and my experience in social situations matured, the more comfortable and confident I was during job interviews. In fact, I now do radio and TV interviews and it gives me such great pleasure to tell you that I absolutely LOVE being interviewed! It's such fun!

Climbing your Corporate Ladder

"He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend." -Proverbs 22:11

People with good communication skills are more likely to do a better job, which would naturally result in promotions. Here are some of the results of various studies on the impact of communication skills on job success. Research done by the U.S. Department of Labor concluded that the skills most needed by employers in the 21st century that tomorrow's workers must master are "listening and speaking abilities." Persuasion skills and the ability to interact with others result in greater career advancement and higher salaries for graduates, according to a 20 year-study of Stanford University MBAs.

That's the clinical and statistical results. While your mileage may vary, I can tell you that I had several jobs where I was put in charge over people who had been there longer than I had. There was even one time when I was hired as a manager of a glamour photography studio where I had absolutely zero training or experience in photography, no familiarity with makeup and I had never managed anyone before that time! I got the job entirely because the owner knew that I could handle his employees better than HE could! He told me as much. He hired me because of my ability to communicate and relate to them on a more social level.

Your Business

"Let your conversation always be full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." -Colossians 4:6

Business owners have to communicate on a variety of issues including 1) How to save time and money

on your supplies, 2) Creating a communication package for your business, 3) How to present yourself as an expert in your field, 4) How to effectively handle customer service, complaints and returns, 5) How to make contacts, 6) Effective use of social networking groups, 7) Handling kids and business, 8) How/when to share your faith in business, 9) How to gain support from family and friends, 10) How to motivate your employees, 11) How to train your customer service staff, and 12) How to deal with customer relations and company image issues. All of these issues involve mastering certain communication skills!

When I started Art of Eloquence almost eight years ago at the time of this writing, I had one little communication study to sell. Back in those days, before eBooks, we sold hard copy print books. As a small business owner with one lonely communication study, my options for printers were limited and most were expensive because I wasn't having them printed in bulk. With my confidence in my social communication in hand, I walked into a printer's office and negotiated a deal for my company that allowed me to take advantage of a price that most self publishers couldn't beat. In fact, I had several printers contact me to ask if I would consider switching due to the fact that they had saved so many self-publishers hundreds of dollars. They were more expensive! Why? Because I was able to chat with the owner of this wholesale printing company that usually dealt with the California school districts and huge organizations in volume I would never know and gain the same low price even though my first print run was only 25 books!

I was able to comfortably and confidently convince the owner that my company would grow and that while I may not have the volume he was used to, it would be worth it to him to take me on as a client. It was just a simple chat we had in his office, but it was a chat that would have previously intimidated the pants off me! An intimidated communicator is usually not a successful persuader.

Your Friendships

"An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of the citadel." Proverbs 18:19

Good communicators enjoy 1) Self-Confidence, 2) Leadership, 3) Personal Presence, 4) Credibility, 5) Ability to Explain and Persuade, 6) Understanding of Others, and 7) Interaction Enjoyment. Every one of these qualities helps us to make friends and maintain relationships!

Your Marriage

"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." -Proverbs 21:19

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, over half of all marriages end in divorce and the number one reason cited is lack of effective communication! By the way, that number doesn't improve if you only consider the Christian community. No two people are going to get along ALL the time. The trick in a long relationship isn't avoiding conflict, it's the successful resolution thereof! In addition, men and women communicate in completely different ways and sometimes for very different reasons. I talk about this in chapter one of my book *Say What You Mean Every Day*, "How to Talk to Your Spouse 'Cuz You Must!"

When my husband and I were dating, I was just beginning to understand social communication. It was difficult for me to share things with him that I thought he didn't want to hear. As I began to overcome my shyness, I felt more comfortable telling him things and sharing my feelings. Over the years I was

able to share more of my thoughts and feelings with him as we grew together as a couple. It has become an invaluable tool for our marriage, as well.

Your Kids

"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." -Colossians 3:21

Studies show that parents who communicate effectively with their children give them a clear sense of boundaries and security. They show them love and give them a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Children who learn to communicate effectively can articulate their wants and needs. Those who don't are led to violent behavior in order to have those misunderstood needs met.

One of the things my research turned up is the number of people who are uncomfortable speaking to their own children about issues such as dating and drugs for fear they will drive their children away. Shyness can exacerbate this and cause parents to avoid issues that children really need discussed.

My daughter has told me on many occasions that she appreciates the way I shared my thoughts about her life and choices and the fact that I listened to her wants and needs. She realized that I wouldn't always agree with what she wanted to do, but she knew I cared and took her feelings into account because I really listened to her. Now that she is in college, she tells me how much she appreciates it when I discuss difficult issues with her. She says my experience has helped her so much that she now calls me from college to ask me what I think, even if she doesn't take my advice. She knows that even if it is difficult for me to say, she can trust that it comes from my heart.

Your Ministry

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" 1Peter 3:15

What harm does it do if you approach someone the wrong way about Jesus? The worst they can do is say no, right? Wrong! Someone who has been told repeatedly that they are going to hell may grow weary of people spiritually beating them up. It leaves them with a bad taste in their mouth about Jesus, Christianity or Christians in general. This can apply to other Christians who don't see things exactly as you do. *"Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-"* 1 Cor 10:32

This is such a huge subject that I have written an entire study about it. I go into great detail in [Say What You Mean: Defending the Faith](#), but here I just want you to know that my shyness had previously stopped me from even admitting I was a Christian, in some cases, because I knew how the other person would react, especially those in my own family who are Atheist or Agnostic. Now I not only feel free to live my life, but I am more apt to discuss my faith with those who are not Christians.

Your Happiness

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." -Proverbs 25:11

Studies show that effective communicators are actually happier than their counterparts. This is precisely because they have happier marriages, better friendships and relationships, better careers, make more money and are fulfilled. They know how to get the things they want and need in life because they know how to communicate those wants and needs effectively.

In today's complicated and secular world, miscommunication and misunderstanding abound and, because of this, it takes far more communication skill to get along in the world these days. Further, each aspect of communication requires different skills and techniques in order to master. For these reasons, the Lord mentions communication skills HUNDREDS of times in His Word. Communication skills are vital for all relationships, for career success, and most importantly, are imperative in order to fulfill The Great Commission. God talks about communication skills in His Word literally hundreds of times. Isn't it about time we heed His warnings and study them?

The more I learned about social communication skills, the more practice and experience I gained. The more experience I had in social situations, the more confident I became. The more confident I am in discussing my ideas, my hopes, my fears, my dreams and my faith, the happier I am because I know that I can live the life God has for me and help others to do the same. I am fulfilled.

Seven Habits of Highly Successful Communicators

“My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” Psalm 45:1

Eighty-seven percent of what we do all day long is communication-related. It was such an important skill, that the Lord saw fit to include the topic in His Word many times over. Successful communicators make successful people because it touches almost every single aspect of our lives from personal to professional. The more you know about how successful communication works, the more confident you will become. This is an article I wrote several years ago that will help you understand seven habits that all successful communicators have in common. You can, too!

1. Successful communicators know the significance of the 1st Rule of Communication

Rule #1: It is the speaker's job to be understood and not the listener's job to understand. If you understand this very important principle, it will help you avoid much misunderstanding and frustration. Many people mistakenly assume that once they say something, it is the listener's job to figure out what they meant. When the listener does not, they say things like..."I just told you!" or they repeat the same statement (perhaps louder as if the listener was hard of hearing... or slower as if the listener was a few brain cells shy). If you understand that it is your job to get your message across, you will take more care to put things clearly. you will be much more forgiving if someone doesn't understand you the first time. or you will find some other way to say it ensuring the other person will better understand.

2. Successful communicators build large vocabularies

There is a reason your teachers and parents were so concerned that you learn your vocabulary words! The bigger your vocabulary, the more ammunition you have in your arsenal with which to make yourself understood. Someone with a large vocabulary can choose to speak plainly for clarity or to speak with technically accurate terminology to relate to those who are more knowledgeable in that field. So, kids, take your mom's advice and study those words!!

3. Successful communicators know their audience

Effective communicators express themselves well because they have learned to speak to their unique audience (whether it be one or a crowd). One size does NOT fit all! That applies just as much to communication as it does to clothing. As a woman of 5 feet and no inches, a very tiny waist and not so tiny hips and thighs, I can tell you that not all clothes fit me either! My body is unique and so is the way I look at the world. However, I am not unique in my uniqueness! God created each one of us special. No two people see things exactly the same way. Why do you think police officers will tell you that they can have ten witnesses to a crime and come up with 11 different stories! The more you know about your listener(s), the more you will be able to relate to them. Some things you will be able to determine by observing their behavior and some things you may need to ask them. Nobody likes being treated as "one of the crowd". Speak to people as if they are precious and unique children of God!

Six Simple Steps to Conversational Self-Confidence

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7

A great communicator takes some time, study and practice to develop. We will look at the six simple things you can do to become a more effective communicator right NOW! Let's start with the part of your body that most people will notice first: Your Face!

Step 1: Smile When You Say That!

Can smiling make you a more effective communicator? Yes it can! Here's how. If you smile, you communicate that you are open and friendly. This makes you more approachable. It also allows people to view what you say more favorably. If you wear a grumpy face, some of the things you say may be taken negatively. However, if you put your smile on, those same words will also wear a smile.

Consider this sentence. Read it once and picture the speaker frowning. Be careful not to interject an angry voice. Just read it straight, only picture the person frowning.

"Hey, what are you doing?"

Without a smile, this could be interpreted as, "Hey, you aren't supposed to be in here!" "I'm annoyed at you," or even "Get out!"

Now read it again only this time picture the person with a big smile. Keep the inflection the same. The only difference is that you are adding a smile to this person's face. With a smile on her face, it would probably be interpreted more like this: "What are you up to?" or "Want some company?"

Have you ever gone to a party or business meeting and felt a bit out of place? You didn't know anyone. What happens to your attitude and willingness to talk to people when just one person looks at you and smiles? You immediately feel closer to that person. You feel more comfortable being there. Conversation becomes natural and not a chore.

When you go out, remember to finish getting dressed! Put on your smile and watch it help you become a popular conversationalist!

"You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere."
-Lee Iacocca

Step 2: It's Your Reaction that Counts

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."
Proverbs 27:9

I want to talk to you about a simple tip that will allow you to turn Social Disaster into Social Butterfly! You may even welcome mistakes! Ever wondered how someone could trip and fall face first into his meatloaf and come out of it with everyone laughing and thinking he was cool? On the other hand, someone else seemed like a fool after his foot accidentally touched the table and made a slight noise. The difference certainly wasn't the severity of the goof-up. It was the person's reaction!

Let's call the first guy Mark. Mark tripped and fell on his face, got up and took a bow with a smile on his face. (See Tip #1!). What will they remember? They'll remember that Mark is a self-confident guy with a sense of humor.

Let's call the second guy Ted. Ted, on the other hand, tapped his foot lightly on the table creating a slightly audible noise during a meeting when the boss was speaking. His immediate look of horror, followed by his conscious attempt to avoid eye contact with EVERYONE and pretending he was intently interested in the number of holes in the ceiling tiles, left everyone wondering what ghastly event just befell him.

Most attendees never even caught the "mistake", but now EVERYONE is asking him what happened! What will they remember? They will remember that Ted is not very self-assured and that he probably isn't a strong enough leader to take over the New Orleans Division! Everyone makes mistakes. Nobody's perfect. It is your reaction to those mistakes that will decide if people see you as self-confident and fun-loving or nervous and weak. If you don't make a big deal over it, neither will anyone else who saw you, IF they even noticed!

Ted's Tap Revisited:

Ted taps his foot lightly on the table, creating a slightly audible noise during a meeting when the boss is speaking. Almost nobody notices, including the boss. Ted maintains eye contact with his boss as he listens intently and acts as if it never occurred. Ted's confidence and attention to detail are what his boss has noticed and he is asked to head up the New Orleans Division. While it is unlikely that Ted's promotion would come as a result of this one incident, it is VERY likely that Ted's change in attitude about mistakes will quickly allow him to be seen as a much more of a confident leader!

Step 3: Stretch Your Communication Muscles

"In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge."

-Proverbs 14:26

Great communicators allow themselves to experience new communication situations. They stretch their communication muscles, so to speak. Think of it this way...the more often you play golf, the better a golfer you will become. If you don't ever play golf, you will not allow yourself to become a good golfer! The same is true of everything, including communication skills.

"But I'm not afraid to golf," you say! "Speaking is a different ballgame!" Perhaps, but the Lord didn't give us a spirit of timidity. He gives us strength and confidence and we can do all things through Him who strengthens us!

The Lord gives each one of us something to say, something that someone out there really needs to hear. Why hide our thoughts under a bushel? Speak boldly and in grace and be willing to put yourself in gradually in different situations than you are used to. You don't have to throw yourself into public speaking if you have never spoken in public before! Do, however, allow yourself to gradually speak in front of more people each time. Consciously seek out situations where you will be just a bit uncomfortable.

Here are some ideas:

- Invite a co-worker or an acquaintance out for lunch.
- Welcome a new neighbor to the neighborhood. (Bring cookies ...yum!)
- Call someone who has seemed slightly intimidating to you.
- Organize a neighborhood block party. (You'll have to talk to the neighborhood!)
- Ask your boss (or someone in authority) to meet and discuss new ideas.
- Strike up a conversation with a stranger at the dentist's office.
- Tell someone you admire why they inspire you.

Slowly build up your communication experience. You know what you'll find? In short order, you will begin to feel a confidence and it will only grow!

Section III: Achieving Mastery



Creative Ways to Practice

“How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!” Proverbs 16:16

They say practice makes perfect and the more practice you have, the more comfortable, confident and experienced you will become at social communication. But as I shared in my swimming analogy, shy people often find it difficult to jump in where social anxiety fears to tread so...I have devised eight simple and progressive ways to get your feet wet.

1. Social Media

Social media is the next level in social communication. It still allows you to avoid the stress of face-to-face communication and gives you the option to spend time before replying, as well as the benefit of connecting to only those with whom you feel comfortable. Social media is a bit different in that you have the option to connect with a great many more people in a shorter amount of time than you do using Yahoo groups.

In addition, the more people you connect with, the more the communication becomes instantaneous. At this point, I have over 2800 connections on Facebook and about 3700 on Twitter. When I post something, or reply to someone, it is possible that I could have a response in mere seconds. This makes social media feel a bit more like a face-to-face conversation without the face!

2. Talk to those in line at the store

A great way to take the next step in submerging yourself in social situations is to begin having social interactions with people in the “real world.” As you are waiting in line at the grocery store or as you notice someone looking at the same sweater as you are in the department store, make conversation. Use one of the lines I shared with you in the Starting a Conversation section. If one of those will not work, you might try something like, “I just love purple, don't you?” or “Have you tried those before? Are they good?”

Don't worry about sustaining the conversation; just invite a little chatter into your life. Make a connection. Then go your separate ways. Once you feel more comfortable with this and as the situation allows, you might try to carry on a little longer conversation or even make a friend.

3. Video or audio tape yourself

This next step may seem like a step backwards because you are not really talking to anyone, but it can be quite unnerving. When I started doing internet radio, I began as a guest on others' shows. Being interviewed was actually kind of fun. However, when I began recording a short weekly segment for a homeschool internet radio show, I found it quite uncomfortable. I was used to playing off others, making them laugh and hearing that reaction. When recording myself all by myself, I found it lacking and, therefore, I was self-conscious until I got the hang of it. In fact, when I first started, I had to record my segment about ten times on average!

Years later, when I had my own weekly internet radio show under my belt, I began hosting a yearly online communication convention. One of my Keynote Speakers was a very famous woman who spoke at many a homeschool convention. She had no stage fright whatsoever, but

was quite uncomfortable recording a live seminar when she was not able to hear her audience.

That being said, your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to record yourself rehearsing a phone call or making a speech. The idea is to listen to how you sound (or look if you video tape yourself). Notice things you do well and things you'd like to change. Then make those changes.

4. Blog Talk Radio or Talk Shoe shows

The last way to gain more social experience is to call in to an internet radio show or even a traditional radio show. I talk mainly about internet radio because these shows tend to have a smaller audience and they are more willing to put folks on the air.

It's great experience because you still are not seen, but you have more of a conversational experience. The only difference is there is an audience. I recommend looking around on Blog Talk Radio.com or TalkShoe.com for shows that look like you'd have something to contribute. Also, look for shows whose descriptions sound like they are something you wouldn't mind being on record calling into.

Remember that these shows may be recorded to be available for download immediately following the show, so you'll want to be careful about what you reveal. In fact, you may feel comfortable only using your first name if you are concerned about anonymity.

I can tell you that participating in internet talk radio has helped me tremendously in becoming more comfortable speaking with people not only in spontaneous conversations, but in thinking on my feet and allowing me to strengthen my ability to answer questions on more controversial subjects such as my faith.

Meet N Greet

“To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.” Titus 3:2

In order to achieve mastery of social situations, you'll need to learn to “meet n greet.” Some call it “working a room,” but you can just think of it as chatting. One thing that will help you as you meet new people is to make others feel comfortable. If you are concentrating on others, you won't be thinking so much about yourself. Here are 12 things you can do as you enter a social situation.

1. Take the first step and say hello

We talked about saying hello earlier in the study, but now that you have some experience and have put aside some of your anxiety, I want to share something with you about initiating conversation. Most shy people believe it to be a scary step because they are concerned that others will notice, all too soon, our anxiety. The truth is that the one who initiates a conversation automatically puts himself in a more positive and dominant position.

Most people are a bit apprehensive about starting a conversation with someone they don't know. So when you come along (knees knocking on the inside not withstanding) and say hello, they think you don't have this problem. Further, it puts them at ease because they didn't have to be the one to initiate. In addition, it actually causes them to view whatever you do, mistakes and all, with a sort of rose colored glasses syndrome. Often this results in your listener not giving a thought to mistakes, dismissing any nervousness and putting your communication skills on a pedestal. Remember that this person doesn't know you yet. They have no idea you are anxious about this encounter. Why clue them in and spoil your fun?

If you do this, you will find that making the first move will cause you to feel more in control and help you to more confidently achieve more of the following list!

2. Listen carefully to the introductions

As you introduce yourself, listen carefully and try to remember the names of those in the group. If there are a larger number in the group, concentrate on just a few. There is nothing wrong with admitting you didn't remember a name after several introductions. Most people can't remember one name, let alone seven. And most people are fairly forgiving for just that reason.

You might try a technique that will help you remember. One of my son's friends has a name that is very easy for me to remember because his first name is the same as my son's middle name. His sister's name I remember because that was the name of a cartoon character I used to watch when I was a kid. Make a mental note as you hear the introduction and you might be able to remember it longer.

3. Tell interesting stories

Use those Google Alerts, newsletters and Google Gadgets to give you some interesting things to say at a social gathering. You don't need to go in depth, but even a quick mention might spark someone else to join in. I subscribe to “Weird News” and things of that nature. Just make sure the subject matter is appropriate for the audience.

4. Use others' names in conversation

One way to endear yourself to others (and to remember people's names, too!) is to use their names during the conversation. It's so much more personal to say, "What do you think about that, Harold?"

5. Vary your tone and volume

The more nervous a person is, the more they tend to speak in a mono-toned way. This makes for boring conversations so vary your tone, volume and pitch so you sound more animated. Again, this helps you to feel more enthusiastic about the conversation. Others will feel that way, too!

6. Step back to let others join the conversation

As others enter the circle of conversation, step back to show you would like to include them in the discussion. Welcome them or say hello. There's nothing more intimidating than to walk up to a group of folks already engaged in conversation and feel you are not wanted because the people next to you didn't think to step back to include you in the conversation circle. Doing this puts your focus on the others and takes it off of yourself, but it also helps to show the entire conversation circle how well you communicate in a group. It will increase your credibility as a conversationalist and all around good guy!

Building Rapport

“For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” 1Corinthians 9:19-22

The previous section will help you build rapport, but in this section I will show you how to learn about building rapport by discussing what NOT to do. Here are five rapport building mistakes to avoid.

1. Ya gotta love me

While building rapport can and should be done with everyone at some level, one mistake people make is thinking that everyone will or should connect with you on a deeper level. Some people just aren't going to feel a strong connection to you and that's OK. Further, you may not want to build rapport much beyond finding commonalities with certain people you meet.

I'll talk about this in greater detail later on in the book, but you really won't *want* to build rapport with negative, manipulative, rude or angry people. The reason for this is the more you try to find things you have in common with someone, the more you will find yourself wallowing in their negativity or anger. Don't go there. For one, you don't want to spend the night in this unChristlike state. For another, you don't want to set a bad Christian example or give people a false impression of who you are.

2. Trying too hard

People can sense insincerity. Trying too hard to “be someone's best friend” will come off as insincere at best and pushy at worst. You may not want to become too friendly with someone you don't have much in common with. We also gain nothing of value by pushing closeness on someone who doesn't want it. So be honest and don't force an interest in someone or something someone says. You might do well to change the subject or excuse yourself to go meet and greet others at the party.

3. Bragging

Sometimes, in an attempt to build rapport, people can talk about themselves so much that they begin to sound as if they are bragging. As I mentioned earlier, the best way to build rapport is to ask questions. Spend more of your time getting to know the other person rather than allowing them to get to know you. While you do need to share some things about yourself in order to show how you have something in common, modesty is advisable.

Section IV: Achieving Excellence



Dealing with Aggressive People

“An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.” Proverbs 11:9

Some people think assertiveness and aggressiveness are interchangeable. They truly think they're being assertive when, in fact, they're being rude. Others are purposefully aggressive, either because they are covering up for their own fears, or they seek to intimidate in order to control others. According to Webster's Dictionary, assertive means "affirming confidently." Aggressive means "easily provoked to fight". In practical terms, being assertive means that you appear self-assured and being aggressive communicates an arrogant, pushy or angry attitude. Whether or not a person means to be aggressive, here are five ways to successfully handle an aggressive person.

1. Be polite

Those who suffer from social anxiety may mistakenly believe that assertiveness means returning aggression with aggression. However, it's much more godly and effective to be respectful and polite regardless of how the other person is acting. For one reason, the Bible says so...

“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” -Proverbs 15:1

"Let your conversation always be full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:6

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Ephesians 4:29

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:" Ephesians 4:31

"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones." Proverbs 16:24

For another, there may be others watching your exchange. Further, you don't always know the reason for the aggression. How would you feel if you returned anger and then found that the other person had just lost his wife and three children in a car accident? It doesn't excuse or justify his behavior, but it sure does explain it.

2. Be direct

Get right to the point. Excess verbiage may be taken a sign of weakness. Speak a bit slower to allow time to choose the most effective words. This also gives the aggressive person the perception that you are being thoughtful and reflective in your answer. Make sure you are purposeful in your pronunciation and diction as well, pronouncing the ends of words so as not to give the appearance of mumbling. Finally, don't just give a yes or no answer. This makes it appear that you are rattled. Add a few words in order to clarify your position.

Mabel: “Well, are you going to do it today or not?”

Mildred: “No, I just don't have the time.”

Mabel: “Are you aware that this is due on Thursday?”

Mildred: “Yes, Mabel, I am.”

3. Get rid of Weasel Words

Weasel Words are a dead giveaway that you are nervous or not sure of yourself. Weasel Words and phrases exhaust you and suck all the power out of your communication. They zap your leadership, curtail your effectiveness and destroy your credibility. So what are Weasel Words? Weasel Words are extra verbiage used to stall for time or as an attempt to make a request seem more palatable. “I’m gonna go ahead and”, “like”, “you know”, “kind of”, “sort of”, “try and”, and “I think I’ll...” Get those Weasel Words and phrases out of your vocabulary, especially with aggressive people. They are, like, an open, ya know, kind of, sort of, invitation to go ahead and try and...take over your conversation! I think I’ll stop now.

Helpful Resources

JoJo's Articles:

<http://artofeloquence.com/articles>

On this page of our site you'll find a collection of JoJo's best articles spanning various topics and all age ranges. This page is constantly being updated so check back often!

JoJo's Blog:

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