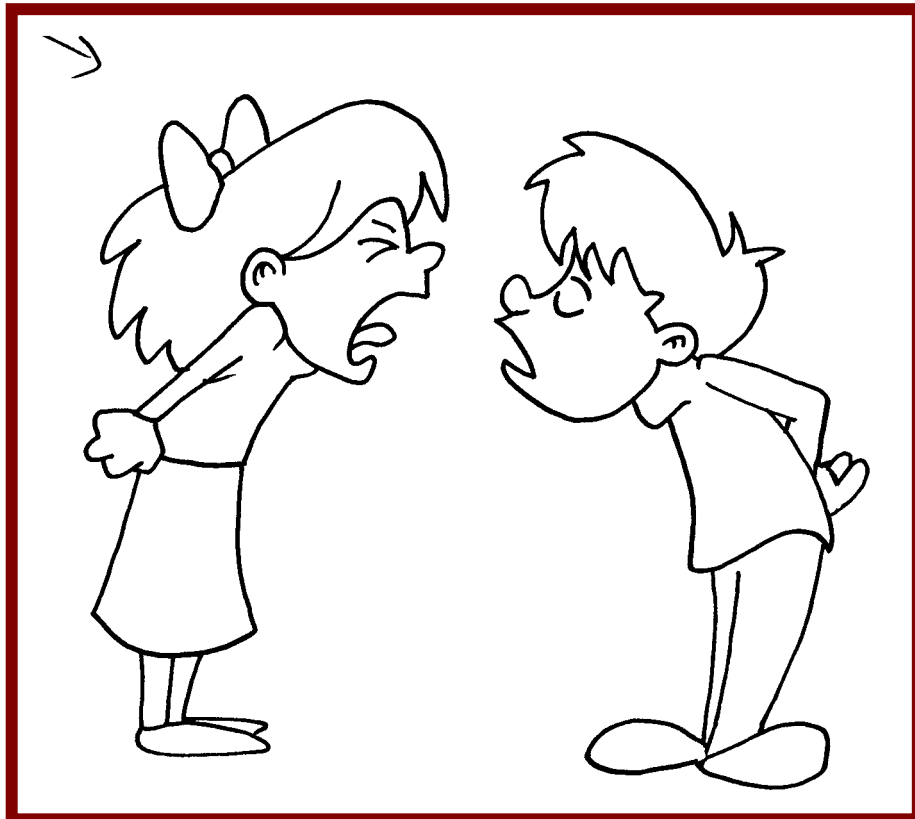


Talk to Anybody without Fear of Rejection:
21 Secrets to Conversational Mastery (Pre-Release)

**HOW TO TALK TO ANYBODY WITHOUT FEAR
OF REJECTION:**

21 STEPS TO CONVERSATIONAL MASTERY



PRE-RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2010

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THE IMPORTANCE OF MASTERING YOUR CONVERSATION SKILLS

What is the point of having great conversation skills? They serve to create and develop human relationships! Human beings are social creatures and our ability to communicate determines the level of success we will enjoy in life. At the heart of communication lies conversation. When you converse well, amazing doors open to you, clients come pouring in, challenges unlock and new information comes out.

When you master the art of great conversation, you will never again be lonely. You will never again be without friends. If you go through a spate of bad luck –and that can happen to us all from time to time – you know you will always have friends to count on because you will have such a powerful relationship with them that they will stand by your side.

Understanding the rules of conversations, and the insights that turn an ordinary conversation into something extraordinary, is also something that is at the root of any relationship, be it romantic or business. It's also at the foundation of this book and at the heart of www.yourcharismacoach.com

Simply chatting with the person sat next to me on a plane, stood next to me in a line, or crushed against me at a rock concert, has allowed me to:

- Meet new people, including the girl of my dreams.
- Network with powerful business leaders.
- Create a social circle consisting of hundreds of new friends.

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- Amass a string of personal invites to travel across the world.
- Hang out with celebrities in London's hottest nightspots.
- Develop a successful business with no outlay for resources.
- Keep my schedule full of fun social engagements.

I've also triggered members of the German public to spontaneously lie on the floor and sing aloud until the police were called! That probably sounds strange but it illustrates the power that conversational mastery can achieve!

I wrote this book to help you sky rocket your social skills and become a more charismatic person. I want you to be able to build strong relationships with people more effectively so that you can enjoy more opportunity in life. Becoming a conversational master is a powerful step on the path to charisma, and in this book I've given you some great tools to get started. It's my intention that you'll never be at a loss for words again!

WHO AM I?

Hello! My name is Marcus and I live in London. I teach people how to become charismatic. I founded 'YourCharismaCoach.com' with one principle in mind that has so far enabled me to live a life more fulfilling than I ever could have imagined: leave everyone you meet better off than you found them!

Following this rule I have personally helped hundreds of clients from around the world develop their own charisma, become more confident, have more fun, and achieve their life long goals.

www.YourCharismaCoach.com

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A big part of being charismatic is being able to converse well. When I was younger, I was always at a loss for words and that really bugged me. Ten years ago I sat alone at a college computer lab, surfing the Internet late into the night. I was searching for “topics for conversation”, “small talk” and (embarrassingly) “how to chat up girls”. I didn’t find much useful stuff at the time but I wasn’t too disheartened and I remained eager to become more socially empowered. I wanted to say goodbye to being a shy guy forever.

My life outside of work consisted of a small social circle, being a wall flower at parties and stuck at home on a Saturday night with no date. Just what every guy wants during his college years!

Through hard work, dedication, and study, I transformed my personality forever and went from shy guy to social powerhouse. What you’re reading right now is a snapshot of the knowledge I obtained during this time, by interviewing experts from across the globe and testing what worked...and finding out what didn’t. It is the result of 1000’s of hours of learning and exactly the type of book I needed when I first started out on my journey to learn the art of conversation that turned both my business and romantic lives around. Unfortunately, none of this knowledge freely existed at the time and I had to learn it all the hard way.

Until recently, I only shared this information with my private clients who flew from around the world to get one-on-one personal training from me in London. With the creation of my company (www.yourcharismacoach.com) I now have a lot less free time to devote to teaching (and can accept far few one-one-one students) so I’m revealing some of my secrets here with the hope they’ll benefit others like

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you. They also provide a basic foundation for all of the other great podcasts, videos and articles found on my website.

I recommend you read this book a few times to really internalize some of the ideas. Plus the more times you read things the more your brain picks up on various points you may have missed the first time.

This information only really scratches the surface of my knowledge with human interactions; after all I am a charisma coach! However, I hope the techniques described prove useful to you and stir your appetite for the more advanced and powerful techniques that I will be sharing with you in the future.

PART 1: BREAKING THE ICE

A lot of people worry about starting a conversation with new people; whether that's a stranger walking toward them on the street, a cute girl sat opposite them in a dentist's waiting room, or a wealthy-looking business man stood behind them in a bank line. This is because they harbor anxiety and fear that they will look silly for trying to strike up conversations with people they don't know, worry that they are going to get a brush off, or are afraid that they are going to run out of things to say.

Having conversations with new people can be a hugely liberating experience. You learn so much about the world, develop great relationships with people and certainly will never have to be sat at home again on a Saturday night! I have met and created relationships with many interesting people from numerous walks of life, because I like to chat.

Talking to people creates opportunity where none existed before. Last week, I chatted to a professional abseiler, a stand up comedian, a property magnate, a ballet dancer, an accountant, Scotland's top card magician, a nightclub owner, an airline pilot and a gentleman who had just climbed Everest. That was in one street. Needless to say, the opportunity for adventure is often only a phone call away.

But it wasn't always like this. To make a long story short, I used be shy, quiet and introverted. Looking back I realize I was scared of talking to new people because I feared being rejected off the bat. I was scared they wouldn't like me, or I'd freeze up as I spoke to them, or I'd open my mouth and fudge it all up. Rather than face all that, I'd clam up and stay silent.

When I was a college freshman I lost count of the times an attractive girl would stand next to me at the bar and I

wouldn't say a word, in case I got a bad response. Likewise, I remember being at a big business networking event for graduates trying to secure lucrative positions. I had no idea how to mingle and came home without a business card in my pocket!

In all cases, rather than face the risk of breaking the ice, I kept quiet. Needless to say I wasn't the most socially savvy guy.

In this first section I am going to reveal to you how to remove the risk of rejection completely and totally remove the awkwardness of starting new conversations. That means you will never have to:

1. Endure the stomach-churning feeling of rejection again
2. Worry if the conversation will hit a frustrating low point
3. Fear saying something dumb

Instead of that trauma I can guarantee that you will:

1. Have conversations that open up nicely and naturally
2. Be warmly received when you speak
3. Never experience rejection again!

Perhaps all that sounds too good to be true? Well, in this section I'm going to show you how you can make this happen. And best of all, it's not going to cost you a penny!

Think about it... wouldn't it feel amazing if you knew that you from this point on you would never get a bad reaction when you opened your mouth?

Wouldn't that make you just want to talk to everyone because you knew you wouldn't (and couldn't) get a bad result?

I'm going to teach you the secrets I learned the hard way. All the techniques that have enabled me to meet new people from all round the world, to make friends, create business contacts, build social circles and have adventures.

So here are my first 7 secrets that cause conversations with strangers to open up nicely and naturally, so you never get a bad response from a stranger, instantly rejected from your dream date, or lose the opportunity to meet that big business contact at the other end of the cocktail bar.

Incredibly, it all has to do with what happens before you even open your mouth. The secrets in this section serve one purpose only. And that's to remove any feelings of anxiety you could have for starting a conversation with a stranger, or even somebody you already know.

SECRET 1

GET YOUR HEAD INTO THE RIGHT PLACE

Our sense of pride has a lot of control over our ability to hold great conversations. Many people spend a lot of time and effort constructing a self-image, or identity, for themselves that they want others to see. For example, they might pride themselves as a business leader in order to feel important, or ride around in a sports car to show off their idea of 'success'.

We create an identity when we don't value our selves properly and have low feelings of self-esteem. An identity

helps to paper over the cracks of poor esteem by painting ourselves in the best light: often, not very accurately.

The persona we try and project onto others is very fragile. Its almost like a balloon that can be popped at anytime. When people 'lose face', its really their pride, or identity, being knocked and it causes a feeling of discord in them. When a person's ego gets knocked everyone else can peek a look at them their true self and see how comfortable they are (or aren't) with their insecurities. Insecure people tend to get angry or upset when their ego gets popped so they do their best to maintain it at all times.

That means they:

- Clam up and censor themselves
- Pressure themselves to keep talking and avoid silences
- Worry that what they are saying won't be interesting
- Doubt their ability to wrestle new subjects
- Stifle their natural ability to be spontaneous
- Get wrapped up in their head rather than enjoying the moment...

...all to avoid saying something silly, making a faux-pas or appearing boring, which would hurt their ego. It's in this way that pride manipulates our behaviors.

If you worry what impression you are making, or are concerned what people think of you, then you have a fear of being judged and have an ego. Just to put your mind at rest I have an ego too -we all do.

To counter your ego you must build your self-esteem. The greater your self worth, the less you need to uphold a front and the more happy you can be 'just being yourself'. There are numerous ways to do this, many that I will be explaining on my website because this book isn't big enough; however,

one of the more powerful exercises you can do to build self-esteem is to do nice things for people.

It may sound a little wishy-washy, but making the world a nicer place is, by far, the most important thing you can do that will boost your self worth. There is something innately heart warming about going out of your way to help others since you temporarily become a force for good in the world. Looking back, I cannot think of a single time that my self worth has not grown when I have attempted to spread kindness; whether it was accepted or not. You can spread kindness in a variety of ways: whether its giving a compliment to a stranger, helping an old lady carry her shopping bags or building a school in a developing country; all it requires is your effort to go the extra mile to get off your backside and do it! One thing seems clear, the more effort you put in, the more spiritual reward you'll get back in return.

My friend Alan and I were stuck on a drowsy train carriage, him munching his way through a box of chocolates and me having a snooze. In a random act of kindness, he broke the silence, lent forward and offered each passenger near him a chocolate. A few accepted and Alan told me that made him feel good. However, his next gesture surprised everyone: he got up from his seat and marched down the isle extending his offer of free chocolates to everybody! There was lots of curiosity, disbelief and laughter; and the whole carriage erupted into happy muttering of conversation at Alan's spectacle; even the grumpy passengers got swept up into it. Alan told me that made him felt great!

Aiming to spread joy like this helps to confer you a history of good deeds in your life. It gives you reason to value yourself as a good person who is not afraid of their ego being judged by others. Another important stepping-stone to reducing

your ego is to make peace with anything bad another person could say about you.

For instance, I consider myself the biggest fool in the world! I'm also the biggest moron! And a dozen more things much too crude to put into print! Why I would say such things? In reality, flaming remarks such as these are really just an attack on our ego, not our true selves. No stranger can have power over you when you make peace with every judgment that you could be afraid of. "It's true, I am a fool; and I've not yet met anyone more foolish, at least in my world. Think you're bad? I'm worse!" The only thing that can ever suffer is our pride, and it's only when we give up on placing value on other people's opinions of us, do we completely remove their ability to harm or control us with attacks on our ego; we lose our Achilles heel.

I am a free spirit in search of experience in a world that is uncertain. I can only continue to exist in this way when no stranger has any psychological influence over me. To achieve this I have to relinquish any fears they could use to control me. For this reason, I have no fear of how others see me because I have accepted that my ego could be judged everything that others see it as.

Whatever vile, disgusting, terrible thing you could call me – on some level in your perception of reality it could be true. So why fight it? All that will do is reaffirm my sense of pride and strengthen my ego. Better to make peace with it - to accept it... and then, be troubled by nothing.

Embrace judgments against you: it will make them powerless and make you feel empowered. I approve of my true self highly enough to not seek the endorsement of others. This perspective allows me so much more maneuverability in conversations because it frees me to talk

about anything without second guessing myself. I can launch into conversations without having to censor myself or worry about what impression I am creating: my ego doesn't need the validation.

“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.” – Bernard Baruch

SECRET 2 **THE POWER OF POSITIVITY**

My good friend Adam has a hypnotic ability to talk to people from all walks of life and befriend them in an almost supernatural way. From actors to architects, role models to super models, his phone book is crammed full of useful contacts that many business moguls would envy and most socialites would scream for. What sets Adam apart from most is his extraordinary outlook on life. His thoughts are always positive in everything he does and his conversation is too.

On account of this, he is happy to walk up to strangers and start chirpy conversations with them. Whether it's at a park bench, train station foyer or work place cafeteria, you can always find him in a conversation. His mood is always lofty and he realizes that nothing can bring it down, except him. For this reason, walking up to random people at a party carries no fear or anxiety; it's eclipsed by the audacity of his positivity. When Adam is happy (which is constantly) he makes other people feel happy too; all of his conversations make people feel upbeat because they bathe in the cheerfulness and warmth of his presence.

The extraordinary ability to befriend your customers, act like a host at parties and even walk up to strangers for bubbly conversations, starts with being positive: it is the energy that expresses your charisma. If you doubt this then (you'll kick me for saying this) you're being negative!

It's very straightforward to discipline a positive attitude; after all, it's just habit.

The following exercise was originally taught to me by my old hair stylist, and has caused many of my students to feel like they have a mighty spring in their step in just a few days. One guy described it as "the most life changing experience [he'd] had in the last 10 years" See what you think:

Place an elastic band around your left wrist. Each time you have a negative thought, snap the band against your skin (-ouch!) and then turn the downbeat thought around in your head so it becomes positive.

For example, if you're suddenly stuck in traffic and find yourself grumbling, stop, snap, then quickly change your take on things. Perhaps you smile and accept the hold-up. Possibly you find a really great song on your radio. Maybe you just think "Hey life's not so bad! Things could be worse... and they aren't!"

Your goal is to last 7 days without a single negative thought cropping up in your consciousness for more than a split-second...if even at all. If you don't succeed and a negative thought emerges, for longer than 2 seconds, you start back at Day 1. Beware: negative thoughts are often very, very subtle. Phrases like: "I can't be bothered", "I'd rather stay at home", or, "I'll do it later", and even "I'm tired", are examples of understated negativity that can be very powerful at chipping away your esteem. Cut them out too. Vocal

expressions such as 'sighs' and 'groans' are also considered negative thoughts in the context of this exercise. If you can make it to 'Day 7' you'll find some amazing changes begin to occur!

SECRET 3

THIS CONVERSATION IS GOING TO GO GREAT...OR IT WILL BE FUNNY

A friend of mine, called Yad, is a very talented conversationalist. He's in his mid-twenties, wears thick-rimmed glasses and sports a big wad of matted hair that resembles a cheerleader's pom-pom in need of a shampoo.

Not only do people love him from the moment he speaks to them, he never gets a bad response when he breaks the ice. Until I met him I had never know anyone with that kind of talent. I had to know his secret, so I asked him: "How are you always able to make all your conversations begin so elegantly and in such an easy and natural manner?"

He turned round to me and said: "Well, I just know it's going to go great because I have a history of every conversation before that going great too!"

I sat and thought about what he said. I realized he was telling me that because every conversation went well, he had developed a competency to breed further success. In effect, the vibe he was giving off to others was one of a comfortable, yet understated confidence, which most people are hardwired to favorably respond to. In other words, because he was talking to them and making them feel comfortable he had probably done it many times in his life prior to that; indicative that he was indeed an authentic individual.

That still didn't really solve the conundrum of what made him so good in the first place! I wondered, how I could get this great history of amazing conversations he spoke about under my belt. I recalled at the time some conversations I had would go well... and others not so well. Some just stunk. There was no consistency and I pondered how I would ever be able to match his level of competency to breed a further proficiency.

Then I realized something very powerful. I realized that most people, at the back of their mind, believe an ensuing conversation will go really well, or really bad.

By going 'really well', it might mean they make the person smile, laugh or have a really absorbing discussion. By going 'really bad' it might mean the conversation hangs, falls apart or they draw a blank and run out of things to say.

I had always approached conversation with the mindset it will either be a success or a failure. Consequently, I'd label the experience with one of those two tags then file it away somewhere at the back of my mind. If somebody stumbles on their words eight times in a row, they'll remember it as eight failures in a row, not funny slips, and they won't have a good history of conversational competence to fall back on.

I wondered how could I change all that for me? How could I ensure every conversation would go well so I could build up a great history of success like my friend had done? Well, I'm happy to say that after lots of thinking, I've hit on the answer: I've changed what's written on my labels!

Before I begin talking I think to myself that "this conversation will go really, really well, or it's going to be really, really funny."

This outlook ensures that whatever reaction I get in the conversation will either be put into the 'really good box' or in the 'really funny box'. There are no other boxes. The bottom line is that it doesn't matter where it actually gets filed to because I'm drawing a positive result from the experience both ways and that helps keep my vibe happy helping to generate further success!

Here is an example that occurred recently: it was a cold day so I decided to buy a homeless man a cup of hot chocolate with my spare change: who doesn't like hot chocolate? Apparently homeless men: when I took it up to him he looked at it quizzically and asked gruffly "have you spat in it?" I assured him I hadn't but he would not accept it.

Once upon a time I might've decided that this experience had gone really badly because I pretty much got rejected. Now, because I decided in advance that the conversation was already destined to go into the 'really good box' or the 'really funny box', the experience simply got put into the funny box. I certainly had a chuckle about it!

The next conversation I had occurred a few minutes later. I was still trying to give away this cursed cup of chocolate to someone in need of it. I saw a cold-looking police officer, and although I hadn't actually spat in the hot chocolate, I decided to offer it to her. Smiling, I approached her and said "I decided I was going to give this cup of hot chocolate to the next cold-looking person I saw... congratulations, it's you!" A huge smile stretched across her face and she said: "You're so lovely but I can't accept it or my boss will tell me off!" Her stern faced, uniformed boss eyeballed us from across the street. I replied: "Look, I can't get rid of this damn thing! The last person I offered it to reckoned I had spat in it! And now you won't take it either! Hopefully it'll be third time lucky!" She giggled and we chatted some more.

In retrospect, I had put the previous experience of the homeless man into my funny box and it came out again during the very next conversation I had, which caused someone else to laugh. Whenever you begin a conversation it's important to remember that it's going to go either really well or be really funny. Regardless, you'll find that if it's a positive result you get a type of snowball effect, where each new conversation begins on a stronger footing, thanks to how you reacted to the last.

“Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it” -Charles R. Swindoll

SECRET 4 **SMILING IS YOUR MAGIC BULLET**

This is perhaps one of the most powerful secrets. Before I even begin to speak I am smiling. The biggest fear other people have when a stranger approaches them is “could this person be a threat?”

Smiling instantly removes this fear and makes people comfortable in your presence because it sub-communicates you are about to bring some joy into their world. And as my friend Jade recently observed: “No one wants to shoot a puppy!”

When I teach people face-to-face, I lay supreme emphasis on the importance of smiling. The trouble is that poor conversationalists just don't do it for long enough; instead they grin modestly and begin talking.

This sets off a really insincere vibe, sometimes its even creepy. A grin is an insincere smile; it is unemotional and

communicated through the mouth alone. Furthermore, often the teeth do not show. Subconsciously, a grin tells the onlooker that we are not emotionally stirred by their presence; not a good way to leave a person better off than when we found them. Avoid this by having your face figuratively glowing. You will be extremely hard pressed to encounter any sort of rejection when you do this.

Some people have asked me whether they should hide their crooked teeth. Showing your teeth, crooked or otherwise, is a lot better than having a grin because it causes your eyes to scrunch up, or 'twinkle'. When your whole face is alight it makes the recipient feel good about themselves on a deep emotional level.

The next time you find yourself approaching somebody, look at them in the eyes and smile at them. In fact, let your face show a big warm smile, the type that says:

"I'm feeling fantastic...and even better now for seeing you!"

People form impressions within seconds of meeting you; do can do a lot of groundwork by wearing a smile. A smile lays a firm foundation with another person by telling them that you like their presence, you are open to them and not a threat and that their state of emotion will positively change in the moments following your meeting with them.

When you need to ask somebody for directions, smile before you speak. Better yet giggle! If you need to squeeze past somebody who is blocking your way, smile before you interrupt them. Incidentally, my friend Sasha has got an amusing habit for this. Every time he squeezes past someone he smiles cheekily and says "ooh, that was lovely!" That always gets him a laugh!

If you buy tickets for the theatre, smile at the clerk in the kiosk before a single sound sneaks past your lips.

The biggest mistake I see time and again with clients is that they do not smile for long enough when talking to new people. They are not consistent because smiling is not yet a habit for them. You want to hold your smile constantly, so before you speak, smile! The differences in response you get are astonishing; try it out!

Exercise:

Here's how to maximise your existing smile:

1. Most of your smile is not revealed through the mouth; a smile is projected through body language- so stand up straight, hold your head up, don't frown, and begin your smile with your eyes.
2. Get a mirror and look at your eyes. Raise your eyebrows and smile with your mouth as wide as you can allow. Let your teeth show. If you smile with your mouth before your eyes you look like you're faking it. Practice smiling with your eyes only; let them sparkle and open up wide and bright.
3. Cover the lower part of your face with a piece of card. Play around with it a bit, and you'll find that you can make your mouth smile when your eyes aren't smiling, and you can also smile only with your eyes. When your eyes do smile, remember how it feels, which muscles are working and how. With practice, you'll be able to smile with your eyes at will.
4. You can't walk around everywhere holding a mirror, so when you know you have pulled a smile that you are happy with; remember how it makes you feel. It is the sensation of

this feeling that you want to replicate in your mind because your perfect smile will show as a by-product from it.

5. Not everybody has perfect teeth, and that's okay. Perfect teeth are nice, but a great smile doesn't depend on them; if it did most of the British population would be in trouble. If you feel uncomfortable about your teeth you may be reluctant to smile, and that's no good. If that's the case, either learn to appreciate your individuality or look into cosmetic dentistry procedures.

A smile is a powerful weapon; you can even break ice with it.
-Author Unknown

SECRET 5

PREFRAMES IMPROVE YOUR CHANCE OF A GREAT CONVERSATION

Now we're going to look at the first line of dialogue that should leave your mouth when you begin a new conversation with a stranger, or even with somebody you know.

I expect I'll come under some flack from suggesting this but starting a conversation with a stranger is downright weird. Think about it: most normal people don't go round talking to strangers out of the blue. However, I never wanted that issue to stop me from expressing myself and prevent me from meeting new people. Trouble is, people are a bit unsure of what to make of a quirky individual who randomly brings up conversations with them. The question is how do we appear smooth and make everything feel natural? The answer is that the first line of dialogue should always be a preframe.

A preframe is a short line that prepares people in advance for a new experience they're going to have. It also gives them

a nice little mental box to store the experience in as soon as they have it.

Perhaps in the past someone has told you a joke and used the preframe: “Here, you’ll laugh at this...” That usually forces the listener to respond positively and with laughter in response to what is said after. Maybe somebody has launched into some negative spiel, and primed it inadvertently by saying: “Don’t take this the wrong way...” Immediately your guard goes up.

As you can imagine, using a preframe is immensely powerful because it will determine how the vibe, and rest of the conversation, will develop.

A preframe also softens the impact of a new conversation for your listener by giving them a few moments to give you their full attention. This helps them to work out what you’re about and makes them feel more comfortable. Another common mistake I see with new students during one-on-one coaching sessions is that they will launch into a conversation with a stranger before that person has had sufficient time to figure them out. Often, their counterpart is not really listening to what the student is saying. Understandably the whole exchange becomes a bit of an awkward mess.

Just using this one simple little technique will allow you to grab a person’s attention and do it in a really positive way. I have found these preframes to be particularly useful:

Talk to a random person: “I know this is completely random, but...”

Build curiosity in someone: “You’re probably going to want to kill me, but...”

Amuse somebody: “Okay, this may make you giggle”

If you start talking to someone in an elevator it may come across weird; invisible social rules suggest we’re not supposed to talk to people in these environments. Happily, we can anticipate any anxiety by mentioning it in our preframe: “This is the weirdest thing, but I thought I’d start a conversation with the next person I met in the elevator!”

I’ll be talking a lot more about preframes on my blog, at <http://www.yourcharismacoach.com/blog> so be sure to check that out as well.

Just remember that to avoid rejection from an icebreaker you will need to:

1. Accept that your next conversation will either ‘go really well or it will be really funny.’
2. Smile happily before you begin to talk.
3. Use a pre-frame to sidestep any awkwardness and capture the other person’s attention before you launch into speaking.

If you follow these 3 steps every person will stop and talk to you. I’ll be demonstrating this technique on the website shortly.

SECRET 6

START CONVERSATIONS FOR ALTRUISTIC REASONS

Before you begin talking to people you need to really have a reason to start speaking. Now that may seem obvious but every conversation starts because of the desire to impress others or the need to express yourself. I wonder if you can already guess what the best reason will be?

When we desire to impress others with what we say we are showing off, simple as that. Our reasons for talking are egotistical because we want to be warmly received and feel validated by our actions. Now when we desire to simply express ourselves something interesting happens: our conversations begin in a much more natural and relaxed manner because we are less concerned by the outcome of the conversation. The conversation will carry a genuine and authentic vibe and the people you talk to will tend to subconsciously notice this and respond favorably.

I have several altruistic reasons I use to start a conversation.

Impulse. That's when I get so caught up in a moment of time that I want to share a great thought, idea or observation with the person stood closest to me. I'm smiling so I'm often warmly received. Let's say you meet somebody just after midnight New Years Eve and greeted them with a rousing "Happy New Year!" That would be an example of beginning a conversation on impulse.

Curiosity. If I happen to spot something about somebody that interests me, I'll talk to them about it. It could be an item of clothing that they're wearing, the happy expression on their face, or the breed of dog that they're taking for a walk. Either way, I'll ask them if it piques my curiosity. First, I'll smile and then point and say something like "Hey! I'm super-curious, where did you get that? I like it!"

Amusement. Whenever I've just had a funny thought or heard a funny joke, I'll often want to share it with somebody to make them smile too. I find telling jokes as soon as I hear them helps me remember them. I want my interactions with people to be fun because when other people smile and laugh I am often laughing too. Typically I'll start a conversation

“Hey I know this is random, but I just heard the funniest joke and since my friends aren’t around I’ll have to share it with you to see what you think...”

Necessity. This centers on the idea that you need to ask information from somebody about something. For example, let’s say you needed to find a post office in the town you’re in, you’d ask somebody for directions. These types of conversations, whilst easy going are often short because they terminate as soon as you get the answers you need. To keep the conversation going, you need to be able to transition your conversations elegantly by changing the subject.

In each of these examples I am not seeking to impress by being liked or admired. I do not consider if someone likes me, or not. Instead, my aim is to simply enjoy my time as I talk by expressing my opinions in an un-stifled way; and maybe the other person will as well.

SECRET 7 **PULLING TOPICS OUT OF THIN AIR**

There is a knack to having the right thing to say at the right time, so that starting a conversation feels natural rather than forced. When you bring the perfect topic to the proceedings you will catch your listener’s attention and maintain it.

It can be very frustrating when you have nothing to talk about yet want to begin a conversation with somebody, whether he or she is sat opposite you in a doctor’s waiting room or at the other end of a train carriage. One way to pull a fitting topic out of thin air is to make a dramatic statement. This is a declaration backed up with the positive, happy energy as you deliver it:

“Wow! I have to tell you that your shoes look fantastic!”

To make your dramatic statement authentic you need to find something that you genuinely admire, or find curious about the person.

“Wow! Those shoes look like they came from Milan!”

Developing your observational capabilities will really help with finding something to draw attention to. An exotic item of jewellery, peculiar bag or a ruffled newspaper carried under the arm can all pique your interest to get a conversation started easily:

“Wow! That newspaper looks well-read; the editor will be happy today!”

You can also make dramatic statements about your environment. This is particularly useful if you the person you wish to speak to is seated nearby:

“Wow! It’s so hot in here I think we should’ve dressed for the beach!”

As a rule of thumb, consider that the more trouble you have to endure in order to make an opening statement the greater the raw energy and passion you should exude in your delivery. Hopefully you’ve realized by now that a preframe helps here too.

For example, if the person you approach has seen you walk 20 yards through a crowded room so you can talk to them then you better have a pretty good reason for doing so. Otherwise you will come off as incongruent: you will look like

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you are talking to them because you want something from them rather than sharing your passion for whatever has caught your eye about them.

To my knowledge there is no magic 'line' that will mechanically start any conversation effortlessly and smoothly every time. However, observational questions come close. This technique relies on you to look at somebody and make a positive assumption about him or her that sticks out in your mind, then share it.

Clothing is a good place to start because it gives you an indication about a person's immediate background. For example, if a person dressed in training slacks there is a reasonable chance that they may be on their way to the gym.

Whether this assumption is correct does not matter because it is at least reasonable:

“Oh wow! I wish I were disciplined enough to go and train. How long have you been hitting the gym for?”

Maybe you see a man walking a dog. We can assume he is either a dog owner or hired dog walker; either way his pet plays an important part of his life.

“Blimey! Do you ever feel like he is taking you for a walk?”

Perhaps you spy a large group of people who obviously know each other. We can assume that something has brought them all together.

“Wow! What's the occasion?”

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If your assumption is wrong they will tell you. Regardless, once dialogue is being exchanged you have started a conversation. To keep it going you will need to barrel through with enthusiasm until you segue into another topic; something we will look into shortly.

As you become more confident, you might just assume a person will know the answer to a question that you need an answer to. For example, you have no idea if somebody watches much primetime television, but you could still ask him or her:

“Excuse me! What time is ‘X-Factor’ on tonight?”

A person’s physical behavior is also very useful to observe. Somebody buttoning up a jacket is probably cold, or fashion-conscious. Somebody yawning probably had a late night, or a very early start. A person continuously looking at their watch might have an important interview, or a romantic rendezvous, on the cards. Do your best to fill in the blanks and use your curiosity to start talking.

“Hey! Just curious, first time late for a date?”

Whether you are stood queuing up next to somebody in a cafeteria or walking past somebody in the street, get used to firing off these little questions based on assumptions you have. Make a guess about their behavior and creatively fill in the blanks with your own imagination. These little conversational starters are meant to sound easy, casual and authentic. Developing this habit will do far more for your natural conversational skills than rehearsing a clever line to say.

PART 2: KEEPING A CONVERSATION MOVING FORWARDS

Okay, I'll come clean: There is a good universal opening 'line' after all. It's "Hi! How are you today?"

It works in most situations when you want to get someone's attention, although there are a few exceptions, such as when you want to stop somebody who is walking. Or canoeing.

What makes this line so effective is that it instantly gets the other person to start investing their time in you as they answer. And most people will answer positively because they have been socially conditioned to do so. After all, they hear "Hi! How are you today?" every time they get seated at a restaurant or check into a hotel.

I remember my friend Andrew always used to use this to start conversations with people sat at cash registers. I also remembered that when I tried to use it I never had much success: the conversation always ran out of steam a few seconds after they answered!

This brings me to an important point: you can have the best (or worst) opening line in the world and it won't make a lick of difference to how well you succeed in the ensuing conversation.

A line is only useful to get somebody's attention: that's approximately 3 seconds of your entire communication. In this section we're going to look at what happens next and 7 tips on how to make your conversations actually go somewhere, rather than fall flat:

SECRET 8

CONVERSATIONS IN THE PRESENT GO NOWHERE

Newsflash: Conversations that stay rooted in the present moment will die. That means if the topic of your conversation is grounded on observations that are in the present moment, then you've got about 20 seconds left before your dialogue takes a nosedive and grinds to a halt.

If you've ever been stood next to a stranger in an art gallery and made a off-the-cuff comment about a painting, perhaps something like "Wow! That's an amazing painting....it looks so pretty", you may have found the stranger smiled, agreed and that was that.

This is the scourge of small talk: starting a conversation only for it to falter and leave you to sit in an awkward silence. It would've been easier to say nothing at all. And sadly, that's what most of us do.

This happens when the conversation doesn't get moved from the present moment into a past or future tense. I'm sure you're familiar with this basic concept of the three dimensions of time; if not then go rent out that 1980's blockbuster 'Back to the Future' and get educated!

When we move the conversation into the future or the past that conversation will develop very nicely. If I say "Wow! That's an amazing painting, the artist must have studied for many years and I bet he made a small fortune when he sold it!" then I have moved the conversation into the past. Not only am I expanding on the topic at hand, it also gives the other person lots of opportunities to latch onto so they can chime in with their own opinions and insights. Likewise, I can move the conversation into the future, this time playfully: "Wow! That's an amazing painting! You know

what- we should try and steal it. You create a distraction and I'll lift it off the wall and sneak it out the gallery... we'll split the proceeds fifty-fifty!" Suddenly, we've turned a casual observation into something much more entertaining because we've given it more directions to progress in.

To direct a conversation into the past, use a phrase like: "That reminds me." To move a conversation into the future, use a phrase such as: "Wow! You know what we should do?" 'Nuff said.

SECRET 9

HOOKING THE INITIAL INTEREST OF THE LISTENER

Have you ever been in that situation where you strike up a conversation and it goes well to begin with but then you suddenly lose the attention of the listener? It might seem like it started off well, but perhaps you got maybe 20 seconds in and then it just died? Perhaps the exchange came to a close because a question you asked was answered; maybe you shared a funny observation, or made a witty remark, which was warmly received -but then nothing else came along to push the banter forward.

When that happens you might be left in a situation where it feels a bit strange to try and put more effort into the conversation any further because it would feel like you're trying too hard to satisfy an ulterior motive other than just being friendly.

What we need is a natural reason to keep talking and take us out of this limbo. Happily, there is such a thing and it's called a 'transition.' A transition is the unspoken agreement of both people in the conversation to find out a bit more about each other, without any sense of pressure.

There's numerous ways to get this sense of agreement. A very effective method is to verbally reward the behavior of the other person for answering your question or laughing at your joke.

After hearing the answer to a question you posed, you might add: "Thank you so much! I could tell you were a good citizen." This reward now gives you a genuine reason to reinitiate the conversation again: "Are you always this friendly... or did I happen to catch you at good moment? Let me bend your ear for a moment..."

In case you're wondering what sort of verbal reward is best, you can't go wrong with a compliment -the more personal the better. If you ask somebody the time and say "thanks" it's not very personal, but if you add: "you're one in a million" it's a lot more specific.

It's possible that any reaction they give to your icebreaker can be met by approval and that in itself will bridge the gap into natural conversation. It's almost as if it you have to go through this invisible barrier in order to get a sense of freedom to talk about what you want, without a feeling of awkwardness in the background that things should be drawing to a close.

It's worth noting that you won't always need to make a transition to keep your conversations running. If you exude enough passion and joyful enthusiasm as you speak, sometimes your listener will want to find out more about you. The emotional energy you bring into their otherwise gloomy day can really suck their attention. When that happens, don't be surprised if they naturally transition the conversation towards you!

SECRET 10

HOW TO NEVER RUN OUT OF THINGS TO SAY

Conversations are kept alive by expanding further on topics that are being spoken about. These topics are what we call 'offers', as in: 'an offer to carry on the conversation a bit longer'.

An offer is any interesting tidbits that we can scoop up and talk about further. For example, let's assume someone said to us "...my cat sat on a mat", you should be able to spot three offers that immediately lend themselves to further discourse.

Lets see: we could continue adding to that conversation by talking about either i) 'cats'; ii) 'sitting' or iii) 'mats'. Here's an example with all 3 offers put to use:

"Oh really? Is it a big cat? They seem to take up so much more space when they're sitting down! Mind you my cat always seems to lie down and sleep, or walk about in a very lazy way. When I was younger we used to try sitting on the mat by our door too. Unfortunately, it was one of those mats with those spiky bristles, like you sometimes got at school, and it was never comfortable to spend any time on; especially when the postman delivered the mail and it fell on my head...!"

You may have noticed from that passage that we make ourselves new offers as we talk. For instance, we could build on that conversation further by talking about 'being lazy', 'school', 'postman', or 'mail'. Expanding on any of those offers would keep the flow of conversation moving along nicely.

Offers invariably get introduced into conversation from either your mouth or the person you are speaking to. This means if you are listening properly you shouldn't run out of new offers to talk about!

People's conversations are littered with offers. If somebody says that they went skiing in the Alps, then we could talk about our opinions on skiing and mountains, and 'presto!' a new discussions will begin take shape.

Sometimes an offer will just leap out at you from the existing conversation. These are always the best offers to talk about. See if you can pick out the most obvious offer in this sentence:

“A man was chased by a rhinoceros”

If you guessed 'rhinoceros', well done, award yourself a gold star! Now start talking about them. If you know absolutely nothing about rhinos then you can still have an opinion about them:

“Wow! I've never seen a rhino, not even in the zoo; they sound like they must be scary! Other things that scare me are....”

If you still run out of things to say then you can fall back on the idea that everything around you is an offer too! Do me a favor and look around you for something that you can't actually talk about; something that you cant even have an opinion on.

You can talk about everything! The problem is that we decide not to talk about random stuff because we don't think we'll be able to say anything good about it. When this happens we start looking for something better to talk about.

That's a one-way ticket to being at a loss for words. What makes something good or bad as a conversational subject is the enthusiasm you attach to it.

I'm looking around as I write this and on my desk is a little speck of dust. It's very easy to dismiss, and maybe doesn't lend itself to amazing discussion, but that's just a matter of opinion. The first uncensored thing I think of when I see dust is a cobweb; the next thing I think of when I think of cobwebs is haunted houses and ghosts. My imagination just chose to go down that mental route of association and made some offers for me.

Lets see that in action:

“I have a speck of dust on my desk! It must have been part of some old spider's cobweb. That's great: first cobwebs and now spiders to deal with. Or maybe it's just that I live in a haunted house... the last thing I need is a ghost trying to spook me as I try and sleep at night! Why couldn't it be useful and go and make me some hot chocolate...?”

The key principal is that we do not censor our offers. The main reason we don't talk about what our imagination creates for us is that we tend to do this when we are afraid of looking silly and our ego could be dented. When we censor ourselves our offers get blocked too. If we can accept what our mind can create for us then the conversation will positively flow.

Welcome the ideas generated by your own mind and bounce off of them. If I asked you to think of a tiger sitting in a tree I'm sure you'd have to imagine one first in order to think of it. I'm sure you added other details too, like what shape and color the tree was and what expression the tiger had on its

face. That's additional content that your imagination has filled in, which you can talk about and expand upon further. Accepting your own offers is the secret to flowing into easy and natural conversations.

SECRET 11 **BE AGREEABLE**

Have you ever heard a charming person being referred to as 'agreeable'? It's quite an old fashioned term nowadays but it does echo one truth: that those who consent or submit are pleasing to converse with.

The most powerful approach you can possess in a conversation is one that is in a state of acceptance and agreement. That means you take on board what somebody says and then you talk about it further. By doing this you are humbly accepting their offer, or topic, and agreeing to welcome it for further discussion.

Bill: ... On Saturday I went to see the new monkey enclosure at the zoo!

Ted: Oh really? I wish I could've seen it as I love monkeys! I think I was a kid the last time I actually went to the zoo, when we visited Thailand.

A mind of acceptance would take an offer in the sentence, probably 'monkeys' or 'zoo' and talk about either of those subjects. This not only helps to move the conversation forward but keeps the emotional energy of the conversation buoyant too.

Poor conversationalists do not welcome new offers into their conversation. Instead, they choose to listen to what some says and then talk about their own idea. This is called

blocking. For example, Bill could mention that he visited the zoo to see the monkeys, and his friend Ted might pleasantly nod ...then change the subject to talk a place he recently visited:

Bill: ...Last Saturday I went to see the new monkey enclosure at the zoo!

Ted: Oh really? I spent last weekend visiting my parents...

Instead of talking about Bill the zoo trip, Ted talks about himself and flow will be lost from the conversation. The blocking of offers in this way causes conversations to become less spirited and eventually dry up because no growth is happening. It may look pleasant on the surface, and people may be nodding and smiling but when offers get rejected it causes the 'flow' of the conversation to stop moving forward and they gradually begin to fall apart.

By flow I'm talking about that experience you get when you're talking with close friends, perhaps you're having a beer or watching television, and you're just hanging out and being friendly. You may have noticed that you never have to really work at conversations in those situations. The reason is because everyone feels comfortable and nobody feels like they have to get their word across anyone else's. No-one's pride is at stake so everybody yields and the conversation effortlessly grows. Therefore, it's pride that prevents flow from happening with everybody we speak to because it stops us accepting offers. When our ego is in control it wants us to maintain our superior self-image and encourages us to get the final word in.

Blocking and rejecting is a very subtle form of aggression. Most irritations, arguments and fights with other people begin in this way. If you're ever worried about getting into a

clash, it'll only really happen if one party disagrees with another, even on a subtle level. If you want to avoid conflict always agree and accept what people say. The only thing that can ever get hurt is your ego. If you can live without ego you can live your life free to navigate conversations effortlessly, as I do.

SECRET 12

THERE ARE NO BAD ANSWERS: JUST BAD REACTIONS

We tend to think there are good and bad answers to questions. When we ask somebody a question we are often have an answer in mind that we are looking for. For example, I may ask somebody if they like mountain biking, hoping they do so I can entertain them with a few personal anecdotes about it. Although it's nice when people say 'yes' occasionally they'll be unable to relate to my question: they may even utterly hate mountain biking, possibly leaving me at a loss for words.

It's very common for us to preempt answers like this, and it really screws up our conversational flow when we don't hear an answer we want. For instance, I really like to travel to new countries. Now let's say I ask you a simple question about my passion to build some commonality: "Hey! Do you like traveling?"

If you replied "yes" (as I secretly hoped) I might then easily add something like: "Me too! There are still so many places I want to see! Last year I visited Europe for six weeks". At this point, the conversation would be ticking over nicely.

However, what if you replied "no"?

No problem, I could always accept that as an equally valid answer and make a positive statement about it. For example: “Well, I accept that it’s not everyone’s cup of tea. Traveling is fun but I always think there is no place quite like home! I really do love getting back and waking up in my own bed again”.

I’ve looked for some area of common agreement by trying to empathize with them: if they dislike travel they must like staying at home! Such a response should keep the conversation flowing nicely because we both love our home-life too. In fact, a great way to handle any answer positively is to smile and say “Hey! You know what...?” That little line can keep you in conversation in hours because it forces you to say something positive about whatever you hear! More about that later.

Let’s say I asked you that same travel question from before and you responded unexpectedly with “Only when I get to choose where I go!” That’s not a yes or no answer – and it’s definitely not what I was anticipating but it doesn’t really matter because I can respond: “Hey! You know what? I think that’s probably the best way to go about things. I remember having to make a trip to Las Vegas and I really hated it, because I was pressured into it...”

Now, lets pretend you gave me a really stinking answer to my travel question. Perhaps I caught you on a bad day and you replied caustically: “mind your own business!” At this stage most conversations would crumble. However, if we just accept that answer as the one we were actually looking for, we’ll have a reasonable chance to keep things moving and hopefully rescue the situation: “Hey! You know what? I’m often getting into trouble for asking that! Only last week a Hollywood movie producer told me to ‘shoo off’ because I interrupted his conversation!”

Any answer you get in a conversation is good. This is because it's all about how you react to what they say, which that makes the difference.

SECRET 13
**HOW TO USE QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS
EFFECTIVELY**

In a conversation you'll be doing one of two things as you speak: asking questions or making statements: that's it. Asking questions helps you find things to talk about. Making statements allows you to express yourself to the other person and control the vibe of the conversation. The vibe is the underlying emotion of the conversation.

It's very difficult to express yourself emotionally with a question because they're just too short: the notorious '?' at the end of the sentence caps them off. For example, if I ask the question "do you like dogs?" I only have four measly words at my disposal to express my emotional vibe effectively. It's going to be pretty tough to make someone feel happy by asking a question.

However, if use a statement to express the same sentiment: "I absolutely love dogs! They're the most fun pets in the world! I get so much joy when I see a dog wag its tail!" I can deliver a lot more of my vibe across to the other person. Now, I know by reading that you can't appreciate the emotion in that sentence when I uttered it, but you should be able to see how much more capacity those extra words allow me to express my emotions.

Questions shouldn't be avoided altogether though as they are very important for keeping a conversation going.

Nevertheless, it's very common for people to get stuck in a cycle of asking 'a question after a question after a question'. You'll know what I mean if you've met somebody new and the exchange feels more like an interview or, worse, an interrogation.

Poor conversations involve stacking questions, one after the other, like this:

"What's your name?"

"What do you do?"

"Where are you from?"

I've certainly been guilty of doing this. I recall spending my first few weeks at university cycling questions like to other freshmen and it exhausted the vibe from my conversations quickly. Perhaps this has happened to you and you were left with a conversation that took real effort to maintain until it burnt out.

Happily, this problem is incredibly easy to avoid. From now on, whenever you ask somebody a question, make a statement based on the answer they give you.

For example, if I ask somebody where they are from and they reply "California", I'll simply make a statement about what I hear:

"Really? California is one of those places I'd love to go in the next twelve months. I hear it's sunny almost every day and a great place to develop a surfing habit. I've also wanted to see San Francisco..."

It's important to realize that I don't necessarily have any first hand experience of California, but those were those first things I thought of, so I shared them in a statement. This

breaks the conversation up and makes it feel less like an interview, until my next question invariably pops up: “Have you ever been to San Francisco?” From there, the conversation rolls along nicely.

In a nutshell: Statements add emotional value to conversations, questions help to keep the exchange moving forwards. If you get stuck just making statements the conversation will be very one sided and people will find it difficult to connect with you. Similarly, if you just ask questions it causes the conversation to become tiring. The best bet is to have a mix of both, by making statements based on the answers you get from any questions you ask!

SECRET 14

THE “OH REALLY? YOU KNOW WHAT?” TECHNIQUE

Wouldn't it be great if a stock phrase existed, which you could consistently use to keep a conversation progressing along nicely?

Well, there is! My friend Jermaine taught me:

“Oh really? Hey, do you know what...?”

Using this line will cause you to automatically acknowledge what your counter-part says (the ‘oh really?’ part), and then add your opinion to it. This will cause the conversation to develop because you are being agreeable and relating to the other person:

Kylie: “I really had fun at the beach yesterday”

Jason: “Oh really? Hey you know what... I think some of my happiest memories are playing in the sand.”

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Kylie: “Yeah, I loved playing with my bucket and spade.”

Jason: “Oh really...? I remember losing mine when I buried under a dune. I don’t think I’ve ever quite gotten over the loss!”

Now this doesn’t mean you should rely on this sentence continuously, otherwise you will sound like a robot; it’s just a nice technique to have at your disposal to make you more agreeable and build rapport quickly.

To incorporate this line into your repertoire, make a point of saying ““Oh really? Hey you know what...?” the next few times in response to someone else, perhaps after you have asked them a question. After a few attempts you will find it rapidly becomes part of your natural repertoire.

PART 3: THE NUTS AND BOLTS THAT KEEP IT ALL TOGETHER

Several years ago, right after a university lecture, I found myself in a pub across the street from my campus. This was typical behavior for us students, chugging drinks in our local boozier and getting a second education from the dusty quiz machine in the corner. However, this time one of our more colorful professors had decided to turn up unexpectedly and he dragged his industrious friend from the city in tow.

My friends and I tried to ignore the pair, but pubs being the social hive of activity they are, we ended up chatting at the bar. I learned that my professor's colleague was the head of a huge multinational company (who you will have definitely heard of) and hungry employer of graduates. When I found this out I suddenly felt very intimidated by his new prominence.

By the time I shook his hand my heart was racing. We exchanged some pleasantries and things started off well: "Great place, this is." I cheerfully observed. He smiled and agreed, and then he asked me a bit about myself. All I could think of was that he was a millionaire and if I made a good impression I'd have a high profile job by the following summer. Nevertheless, the ice was broken and I was speaking to somebody who could open some very attractive doors for me.

"Lovely place in here!" I mused again, in an attempt to retread some familiar ground. He agreed a second time but then the conversation stalled and I froze up. We looked at each other in a silence that felt like a static picture, until he smiled and went off to mingle with my associates.

I finished my beer, made my excuses and left for home but several of my college acquaintances chatted with him long into the night. They played pool and he bought them drinks. I know this because they now work for his company. Although I missed the boat that time round, it reinforced to me how valuable it is to be able to maintain a good conversation!

Once your conversation is flowing, it's advantageous to understand how to maintain it and keep the emotional vibe buoyant. It can be very frustrating to start a conversation off well only to have it disintegrate. Particularly when you consider that the longer your conversation lasts, the greater the sense of rapport you will build between you and your counterpart.

The secrets described in this section will help you to demonstrate smoothness; a quiet wisdom in your conversations that reveals your deeper understanding of social dynamics in human interactions. Smoothness is lubricant to conversations; it holds them together and permits you to recover from mistakes and blunders you make whilst helping you have more maneuverability in the topics you discuss. One day soon I intend to write a book dedicated to charm, but for now here are a few hints:

SECRET 15

THE MOST INTERESTING TOPIC IS THE OTHER PERSON

I used to think that one of the very best conversational topics for people in their late twenties was to talk about anything retrograde; particularly the kids cartoon shows my generation grew up with. If you ever have that particular

nostalgic conversation with an enthusiastic bunch of people, I assure you that you'll find it goes on way into the night.

What makes that so? The older generation may not find that topic particularly appealing because they can't relate to it. And herein lies the answer: its not the actual topic that makes you want to talk about it at length, it's whether both people can connect to it and share their experiences easily.

Talking about the other person achieves this consistently: they're already an expert on the subject and you are eager to expand your knowledge on the matter too: a recipe for success!

Rather than interrogate your opposite number with 'a question after a question', talk about the other person elegantly by i) listening to what they say, and then, ii) making a statement based on what you heard.

For example, if they happen to mention that they went to the beach earlier in the day and played football, then you know they like going the beach and football. If you talk about either of these offers of conversation you'll be talking in their terms; rather than steering the conversation to places you went earlier in the day, or to sports you like to play. This simple difference is a powerful one because it exudes charm and allows the other person to indirectly reveal themselves to you because they are invited to so, rather than having to brag.

SECRET 16

HOW TO CHANGE SUBJECTS EFFORTLESSLY

If you don't change the topic of conversation as you talk then the exchange will either become very monotonous or burn

out. Conversations should naturally evolve when you expand upon new offers to seemingly create multiple topics that can be discussed one after another... or even simultaneously! A very elegant way to switch conversations quickly is to use a linking sentence to join two topics together.

Here are three linking sentences that I find useful:

It's just like when...

That reminds me...

By the way...

Linking sentences will allow you to smoothly move from one topic to another, even if those two topics have nothing in common. Provided you keep talking most people won't realize when you make a deliberate jump from one subject to another.

For example:

“Last night I was driving my car down the freeway and it was very icy so I needed to drive carefully...it's just like when you go on holiday and you're sat in your seat and it's really uncomfortable during takeoff. All of a sudden you have to take extra care not to spill your coffee and work out how to put a life jacket on as a baby cries behind you.”

What you'll find is that people may be initially aware that you've made a random jump; but if you brave it and keep talking they'll just go along with it and forget how you deliberately connected the two conversations together.

Deliberately jumping conversational topics is also very effective for storytelling. It allows you to leave your story completely unresolved by opening up a new thing to talk

about. Since all people have an inbuilt need for closure, they tend to want to listen more attentively and invest more of their time into the conversation so they can find out what you were originally going to say.

You might be talking about one subject that secures their attention and then deliberately choose to leave it unresolved. For example:

“I actually had the scariest job in high school and it was terrifying ...that reminds me, we must go and get something to eat! I know a great place and the food there is really wonderful at the moment ...by the way, when was the last time you had a proper Sunday roast?”

Your listeners will develop an innate urge to stick around so they can find a conclusion to what spiked their attention in the first place: in this case, your scary job at high school. This is very useful for getting people to seek rapport with you.

SECRET 17

TALK ABOUT THE WHITE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

If we're in a free flowing conversation we shouldn't be censoring our thoughts: raw dialogue should just be coming out to keep the vibe of the conversation alive.

A lot of us worry that we will say something dumb, or do something stupid when we talk. This type of unhelpful thinking made me a quiet, shy guy for years. The trouble is, we can't avoid the inevitable: at some point we will say something that could potentially get us a lousy reaction and make us feel awkward in some way.

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Poor conversationalists try to deal with this feeling by ignoring it in a veiled attempt to hide their mistake. This makes them feel and look like the least important person in the conversation. I recommend doing the opposite and drawing more attention to it: talk about the gaffe you made (the 'white elephant' that no one else wants to mention). Acting as if nothing happened puts you in a weak position where you are hoping for your counterpart to silently forgive you.

For example, perhaps you approach somebody to start a conversation and trip up: only to carry on walking normally. It's common to brush off a little mishap like this to maintain our sense of pride. When life deals me these sorts of cards I blow the event up and make it even bigger: I'll trip up again, and do a slapstick tumble and roll across the room. This reaction almost seems counter intuitive but it removes and improves on the original blunder and demonstrates that you are comfortable in your own skin.

If I do something dumb, like spit on somebody as I talk (tip: don't stand too close when we meet!) I'll immediately make this the focus of discussion: "Oh wow! I completely sprayed you just then as I talked to you; I expect you were after the news, not the weather!" That'll cause the other person to chuckle and lighten the mood of discomfort if I had ignored my blunder.

Sometimes I'll rescue a gaffe, like getting someone's name wrong, by using a theatre technique called 'the fourth wall.' This means I'll turn to an invisible, make-believe audience and narrate the scene aloud. Let's say I called a female worker by a wrong name:

"Yes Mum, I got these two black eyes when I got Jessica's name wrong and called her Samantha....yes

Mum, she did forgive me. After she broke my nose in two places and the bleeding eventually stopped.”

Similarly, if I tell a joke that falls flat, which happens a lot, I tend to confront any bemused or unimpressed faces with:

“...And on that bombshell, let’s move on!”

It doesn’t matter if you use a token line or you just roll your eyebrows, as long as you illustrate what the audience is already thinking, you will be good to continue. If I say something really bad in formal conversation, like mentioning The War to the Germans (after all, they were the runners-up), then my play is to apologize and acknowledge what they are most likely thinking, that I am “an idiot”. If you run yourself into the ground it makes it tricky for other to as well.

SECRET 18 **DON’T REVIVE DEAD TOPICS**

Have you ever been talking to somebody when the conversation stalled into silence and you tried to rekindle it by bringing up a previous topic again? Perhaps you were talking about the nice, sunny weather, and the conversation switched to the state of the roads. Suddenly it felt as if the topic had come to its natural conclusions so, to avoid a silence, you say: “...So the weather looks like it’s still holding up, that’s nice.”

It often feels awkward to revisit a previous topic because you now look like you’re either trying too hard to avoid an uncomfortable silence, or worse, impress them.

Having a conversation is like walking backwards into the unknown; we have no idea what's going to happen in the immediate future but we can look back and see the path we've already carved out. To keep a conversation feeling fresh, exciting and dynamic it is important you keep it moving forward into the unknown. Not back into the past where topics have been expanded upon and are now comfortable but stale.

Occasionally you may be talking with somebody about a subject only to be interrupted by a phone call, or some event going on nearby. Perhaps a stranger interjects to ask you for the time. Momentarily the conversation will get broken off. At this point, never bring your subject up again unless the other person is eager to get back to talking about it.

If they don't re-engage your topic, drop it -even if it was riveting stuff. They are telling you that they weren't really as hooked on your topic as you were. Poor conversationalists will go right back to a comfortable, worn-in subject the first chance they get, and it makes them look like they were waiting to feel important again. This shows they weren't too bothered by what their counterpart had to say.

The job of the conversation is to move onto different topics. Sometimes I'll have a great joke or observation I want to pitch in, only for the chatter to move onto something else. For example I might be talking about elephants and have a great gag lined up. Then a small disaster happens: As I'm about to throw my joke into the fray, the topic changes to package holidays. Adding "...two elephants fell off a cliff. Boom Boom." suddenly feels out of context. I've learnt that in these scenarios it is more socially savvy to ditch the cheesy gag, let the conversation flow and trust yourself to think of a better joke next time.

Moving forwards in a conversation indirectly says something about you as a person. Being capable of constantly introducing new topics, without difficulty or anxiety, implies to your listeners that you're confident. And if you're confident socially they'll feel more trust in you, because they'll know you'll look after them and not let the conversation do nosedive.

The irony of course is, as your partner begins to relax into the conversation, they'll be able to contribute more useful topics as well, leading to a great relationship being built!

SECRET 19 **BE WISE BEFORE THE EVENT**

People often ask me how I'm able to stream lots of funny observations and interesting topics out of thin air. I certainly wasn't born with that gift; I developed it over time and you can too.

Whenever I walk around, no matter what I'm doing, whether it's going shopping, wandering about in the street or on a car journey, I'm always quietly looking for those little things in life that make me smile. This could be something simple, like a puppy chasing its tail, or daft, like a small child coloring in a dinosaur. These sorts of things are always occurring but we often seem to miss them because we're much too busy focusing on all the other noise. When I start to consciously look for funny stuff, my awareness becomes tuned into finding it. This behavior helps me to get into the habit of developing lots of amusing interpretations of things in my head; I might not share all of them with the people I meet, but more often than not, some will pop up in future conversations. This happens when I can relate an amusing observation to the topic being discussed.

For example: I bought a new corkscrew earlier in the week: one of those nice swanky chrome ones. When I got it home I saw a label on the back of the packaging that read: "not designed for synthetic corks". I checked: every wine bottle I own has a synthetic cork. I found it amusing that the only thing that got screwed... was me! I expect that story won't win any awards at a comedy festival but it certainly allowed me to make a conversation I had about buying bottles of wine a lot more fun. Most of the time what makes something funny is the emotion behind the joke, rather than the joke itself. Chances are that if you find it rib-tickling funny, your opposite number will too. Regardless, my emotional vibe tends to be a lot happier when I'm looking for things to laugh about and this invariably rubs off on the conversations I have.

I also like to learn a few terrible jokes. I get a lot of enjoyment from telling them and this brightens my day a lot; just short gags that can be fired off quickly.

"So a mushroom walks into the bar and says to the bartender "Hey, could I get a beer please?"

The bartender shakes his head and says: "Sorry mate, we don't serve food here...."

The mushroom replies: "Why not? I'm a Fungi!"

From my experience it seems the cheesier the humor, the more accessible it is to everyone else. If a kid understands it, then the worst an adult will do is smile (and sometimes groan!) Polished gags are perfect for the stage, but if you're not a professional comedian, you'll have more success at tickling someone's emotions when the punch line sounds

like something you'd hear in a playground. Remember: the shorter the joke the less awkward you'll feel if it falls flat!

Not all conversations you have will be 'laugh-a-minute chuckle-fests,' and to prep for those it's good to be well read. I had an idea a while ago to buy a concise encyclopedia. Now the great thing about this is you can have the world at your fingertips in a little paperback that costs 10 bucks. Place your encyclopedia somewhere that you are going to spend a reasonable amount of time; on my desk, on my lounge coffee table...maybe even next to my toilet (shush!). I'll leaf through it when I'm bored and read up on a random topic: anything from Aristotle to Zappa. This helps build up my general knowledge without too much academic grunt work. I also keep up to date with hotly debated global affairs thanks to my subscription with National Geographic magazine (thanks Dad!)

Later on when I'm talking to somebody the topic of conversation might move onto an area that I've read about or maybe a reference emerges that I can relate to and talk about. You don't necessarily have to know every subject you talk about inside out, but you should have a general overview to get you started. From there you can ask questions and expand your knowledge further.

SECRET 20

HOW TO END A CONVERSATION WITHOUT BEING RUDE

Perhaps it seems a bit peculiar to have a part of this book dedicated to showing you how to finish up conversations; after all, the last 19 tips have all been based on keeping them going! Ending conversations elegantly is a skill in itself. I'd always find it a hassle to get out of a conversation in a nice way. The fear of doing this poorly often kept me trapped

talking, often when there are other people in the room that I'd like to meet.

Ready to end the conversation? You don't need an excuse. Say something positive and then give your parting comment. For example: "It's been a pleasure talking to you today. I need to speak with someone over there." Signal the end of the conversation by offering your hand to shake and say something like, "I really enjoyed meeting you." Handshakes are great because they are general social cues that subconsciously mark introductions and departures between people.

Always give a reason why you are ending your conversation; it makes your departure much more genuine. The easiest way to give a reason for anything is to use the word "because". For example, if I need to leave because I want to meet other people I'll say: "Sorry, I'm going to have to dart off in a bit because I have a few more people to see but it was a brilliant to meet you". I tend to cap conversations off with 'it's a pleasure to meet you', because there is something quite charming about leaving on a positive note. You never know when you're going to see that person next. That high-note also gives me a justification to collect that person's contact details. I'll whip out my phone and say: "What's the best way to stay in touch with you?"

Don't offer or accept new topics. For instance, if someone tells you that they've just taken their car in for a service at the garage, don't try and get the final word in. I think we all like to get the satisfaction of making a final parting shot. The trouble is this rekindles the conversation. Replying ""Oh really? I remember when my car went in for a service and it was so expensive" Now you have potentially opened up a conversation on 'cars', 'expenses' and 'money'.

When you are trying to leave a conversation, the best way to deal with new offers is simply to acknowledge them, but not expand further on them. In effect, blocking the emotional flow of chat. Hence, you might say “Oh? Good luck with that”, or you might say “Oh wow, that sounds interesting” then wait. You may have to go through a few cycles of this but eventually the conversation will gently lose steam because you are bringing nothing to the table and letting your counterpart do all the work... and you’ll be free to slink away!

In conclusion, you are not adding any new information but you are acknowledging them to make sure you take care of them on an emotional level, by showing that their ideas have value to you. Yet at the same time you are also presenting them a reason for leaving (use “because”), which implies that you are not leaving on their account –and then you make your exit.

SECRET 21 **TALK TO EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE**

Its great knowing you can have total conversational mastery, but there is a problem and it’s called “analysis paralysis”. This phenomenon occurs when you know what you need to do to improve your skills, but you have to make the effort to put it into practice. Sometimes that can feel like a really large jump: going out into the big wide world and trying this stuff out. For that reason, I want to make it a lot easier for you. I want to make it so you get to practice and try these techniques but you won’t have the initial stress of forcing yourself to do it. All I want you to do is follow this one principal, which took my skills from shy guy to social livewire:

‘If you pay somebody money, you’ve also bought the right to talk to them.’

The reality of this means that if you go to a cafe and buy a coffee then you’re going to get a free conversation thrown in too. If you buy a new jacket, guess what, you’re going to talk to the store clerk. Get the idea?

By doing this you’ll find that you’ll be able to practice your conversation skills as you go about your daily routine. I believe that you shouldn’t make a point to go out and practice these skills solely for the sake of it: instead you should develop them in an authentic and congruent manner by incorporating them into whatever your existing lifestyle is. If you buy groceries, chat with the person putting the transaction through for you. Even if it’s just asking them “Hi! How’s your day going today?” just to get a conversation started off and create an opportunity to connect with someone, where none existed before.

You’ll find that if you do this every time you shop you’ll start doing it when you’re not paying money, perhaps to train ticket inspectors or airport security staff. Eventually, you’ll feel comfortable enough to start a conversation with a stranger when you are sat next to them on a park bench or standing behind them in a queue. This is because you’ll be building up your conversational competence, which will in turn develop your confidence.

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory –Friedrich Engels

SECRET 22

THE NEXT STEP IN CONVERSATIONAL MASTERY

I know I promised you 21 secrets and here I am yammering on about secret 22 but here’s the deal: The secrets contained

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is this book will take you from socially inept all the way to the point where you have to beat off new friends with a stick and screen your calls to avoid the downpour of invitations to events and parties.

HOWEVER, it's only a fraction of what I have to teach you on the topic of conversation and charisma. I want you to become one of the rare masters of conversation who lights up the faces of everybody they meet within minutes. Since I realize that not everyone can come to London to do a one-on-one coaching session with me, I've created an amazing resource that you can access right now from anywhere in the world for free.

At my website, <http://www.YourCharismaCoach.com/> you'll find a ton of amazing free materials that you can use to take your conversations to the next level.

There are audio podcasts that you can download directly to your iPod or listen to right on your computer where you can hear me discussing many of my advanced conversational techniques.

You will also get full access to my video archives with taped demonstrations of many of the topics I discussed here and a lot of other exciting topics.

Go to <http://www.YourCharismaCoach.com/> right now, subscribe to the blog feed, leave me a comment on the blog, and enjoy the free materials.

Feel free to email me at Marcus@YourCharismaCoach.com with questions, comments, or dodgy ventures centered on moving between Nigerian bank accounts. >

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I wish you great success on your journey and look forward to hearing your success stories!

Sincerely,

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