THE ART OF SMALL TALK

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Agenda

• Small Talk Defined
• STAMER Quiz
• Small Talk Stack
• ENGAGE your Nonverbals
• Seven Deadly Sins
• Cheat Sheet

Small talk means having a little loose change in your pocket. Like quarters at a soda machine, dimes at a gum dispenser, or a few nickels at a toll booth, it’ll come in handy when you least expect it. When it comes to small talk, know when to jiggle it, spend it, or save it.  Adapted from Communicate with Confidence
(STAMER) Quiz

Small Talk Apprehension Measure in Everyday Relationships

1. I find it difficult to approach someone I don't know and introduce myself in a social situation.
   - EXTREMELY characteristic of me.
   - VERY characteristic of me.
   - MODERATELY characteristic of me.
   - SLIGHTLY characteristic of me.
   - NOT AT ALL characteristic of me.

2. I have difficulty entering into an on-going conversation.
   - EXTREMELY characteristic of me.
   - VERY characteristic of me.
   - MODERATELY characteristic of me.
   - SLIGHTLY characteristic of me.
   - NOT AT ALL characteristic of me.

3. I have difficulty remembering someone's name after being introduced.
   - EXTREMELY characteristic of me.
   - VERY characteristic of me.
   - MODERATELY characteristic of me.
   - SLIGHTLY characteristic of me.
   - NOT AT ALL characteristic of me.

4. I experience such symptoms such as a racing heart and sweaty palms when making small talk.
   - EXTREMELY characteristic of me.
   - VERY characteristic of me.
   - MODERATELY characteristic of me.
   - SLIGHTLY characteristic of me.
   - NOT AT ALL characteristic of me.

5. I never know what to say when making small talk.
   - EXTREMELY characteristic of me.
   - VERY characteristic of me.
   - MODERATELY characteristic of me.
   - SLIGHTLY characteristic of me.
   - NOT AT ALL characteristic of me.

6. Most people I observe are better at making small talk than I am.
   - EXTREMELY characteristic of me.
   - VERY characteristic of me.
   - MODERATELY characteristic of me.
   - SLIGHTLY characteristic of me.
   - NOT AT ALL characteristic of me.

7. My mind goes blank when someone asks me a question during a conversation.
   - EXTREMELY characteristic of me.
   - VERY characteristic of me.
   - MODERATELY characteristic of me.
   - SLIGHTLY characteristic of me.
   - NOT AT ALL characteristic of me.

8. My mouth becomes dry when I have to make small talk.
   - EXTREMELY characteristic of me.
   - VERY characteristic of me.
   - MODERATELY characteristic of me.
   - SLIGHTLY characteristic of me.
   - NOT AT ALL characteristic of me.
9. I have difficulty making small talk one-on-one with members of the opposite sex.
- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

10. Most people would not be interested in what I have to say when making small talk with me.
- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

11. I feel uncomfortable in social situations where I might have to make small talk with many people I don’t know.
- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

12. I have difficulty making small talk with individuals in position of authority.
- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

13. I don’t feel I have much to say when making small talk.
- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me

14. I worry about being evaluated negatively by others for what I say while making small talk.
- EXTREMELY characteristic of me
- VERY characteristic of me
- MODERATELY characteristic of me
- SLIGHTLY characteristic of me
- NOT AT ALL characteristic of me
Engage Formula

The Seven Deadly “Sins” of Small Talk

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
Additional SMALL TALK “Sins”

- Not preparing several topics that you're willing to bring up and discuss.
- Displaying closed body language that says, "I'm not interested in talking to you."
- Waiting for others to approach you.
- Not introducing yourself with a tag line.
- Not adding on "free information" when asked a yes/no or short-answer question.
- Asking several "closed-ended" questions instead of a few "open-ended" ones.
- Asking questions that are too personal, too early on.
- Arguing over minor details - even if you're certain you're right.
- Abruptly ending the conversation after a negative comment or a moment of silence.

“Everybody wants to feel like a somebody. People love to be appreciated, applauded and complimented...it is a basic drive for all of us; it’s only natural for people to respond to this...there is a rarity of applause and compliments in our everyday lives, not because we don’t deserve it, but because nobody dishes them out.”

Giblin, 2005
SMALL TALK CHEATSHEET

• Write a self-introduction, and practice it ahead of time.
• Keep up with the news—local, national, and sports—so you know what's going on in the world. It will give you more to talk about.
• Review the Small Talk Stack.
• Don't ask questions hoping that the other person will carry the conversation.
• Truly listen to what the other person is saying instead of planning what you are going to say next.
• Establish a comfortable connection with the other person by using ENGAGE.
• Contribute anecdotes that relate to the interests of the people you are chatting with. Don't redirect the spotlight to you.
• Stay in the moment, and talk about the event you are attending—the venue, the food, traffic, how you know the host, etc.
• Remember, most people are nice and really would like to talk to you.

“When you listen to people, you are allowing them to hear their favorite speaker...the more listening you do; the better you will be liked”

Les Giblin, “People Smart”, 2005

Resources