

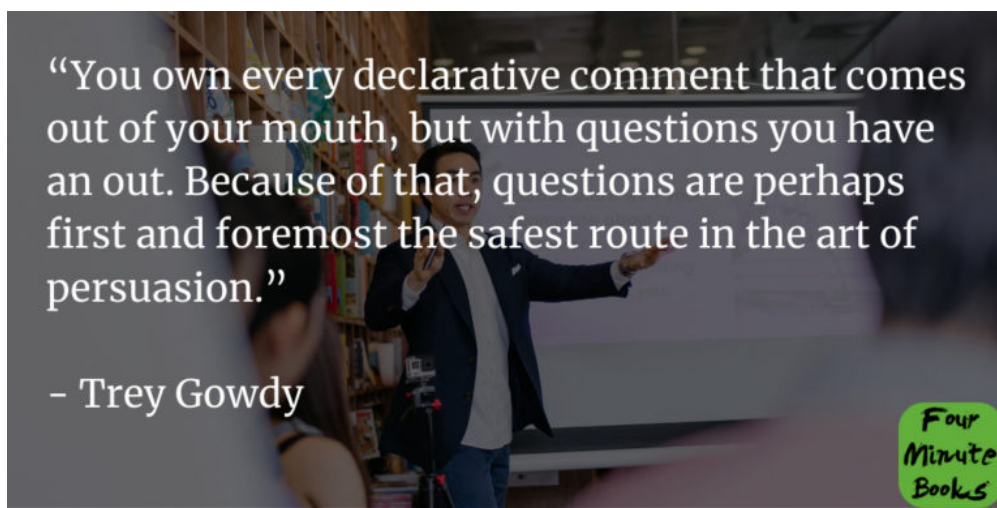
Doesn't Hurt To Ask Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Doesn't Hurt To Ask* explains how to become a master of persuasion by asking all of the right questions and teaches how intentional questions are the key to sharing your ideas, connecting with your audience, and convincing people of your way of thinking whether you're in the office or at home.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Convincing people to change their minds about anything is hard. Especially when there are strong convictions involved. Trey Gowdy is a former Congressman and Prosecutor, and he knows firsthand how difficult it can be to persuade people to see things the way you do.

In *Doesn't Hurt to Ask: Using the Power of Questions to Communicate, Connect, and Persuade*, Trey Gowdy uses his experience to teach the subtle art of persuasion through asking questions. He explains that a good question can help you effectively communicate your thoughts to your audience and win people over.

It doesn't just work in courtrooms or in Congress, either. No matter what setting you find yourself in, whether you're in the boardroom or at family dinner, you can learn how to nudge people in your direction by asking the right questions. Using these skills, he promises you can improve your argumentative power in every area of your life.

These are 3 of the best lessons the book teaches:

1. Asking questions is the key to the subtle art of persuasion.
2. You can strengthen your argument by measuring your words, repeating yourself, and repackaging your opponent's claims.

3. If you need to cut your losses in an argument, divert, deconstruct, double-down, and play the victim.

Ready to discover the art of persuasion? Let's get right into it!

Lesson 1: One of your most valuable tools for persuading someone else is learning how to ask good questions.

Contrary to popular belief, effective persuasion isn't just about being good at debating with your opponent. It is about listening, communicating, and sharing your beliefs in a way that is compelling. Have you ever actually changed your mind just because someone bombarded you with their opinions?

Questions are a great way to persuade others because they place the focus on the conversation with the other person and are good at avoiding defensive responses. The author himself only got into law after his friend's mother asked him a series of good questions that made him think.

His plan had always been to get into construction after high school. But one day his friend's mom asked what he was going to do, and when he told her, she asked a follow-up question. And then another one. And more after that. By the time he was done talking to her, he decided what he actually wanted to do was be a lawyer.

The funny thing is, his friend's mom didn't even give any of her own opinions in an effort to persuade him. What she did was let him persuade himself. That, Gowdy says, is the power of asking questions.

The author does clarify, however, that there is such a thing as a stupid question. For example, once during a robbery trial, Gowdy's witness described a suspect with a blue bag in his hand. Immediately after, the author asked, "Okay, what color was the blue bag?" The laughter that followed that day can back up the notion that there is such a thing as a dumb question.

Still, the author believes that a stupid question is better than a stupid assertion. Typically, someone would trust a person who is uninformed before a person who is misinformed.

Lesson 2: You can improve your persuasion skills when you measure, repeat, and repackage.

One time a friend asked the author, "Do you agree America is more respected worldwide now than under President Obama?" Instead of simply answering this question, he asked his friends for more explanation of what he was asking. He asked what "more respected" meant and how he defined "worldwide." His friend didn't have an answer to these questions.

He explains that far too often, people use vague or imprecise terms they can't really define when it comes down to it. This is why asking an opponent to clarify can sometimes be powerful enough to tear holes in their argument. However, they can also easily do the same to you.

This is where measuring your words comes in. Questions you ask should be both simple and precise. First off, avoid any generalizing word like everyone, never, or always. These lead the way to rebuttals like, "Right, so you think I never pick up after myself?"

Next, use repetition to drive your point home. People underestimate the power of repetition in rhetoric. **The more you repeat something, the more your audience will begin to understand its importance.**

On one occasion, the author was put to the task of questioning a man who was accused of murdering his wife. His strategy was that he asked the same question in different ways over and over. He asked, "What did she say after you stabbed her the first time? What did she say when you stabbed her the second time?"

By the time he was finished asking variations of this, the jury had heard "when you stabbed your wife" so many times that convincing them of his guilt was fairly easy.

Lastly, if you find yourself struggling to defeat your opponent's argument, try repackaging it. This is when you make an argument suddenly sound absurd by putting it in different words.

The author would use this strategy when he worked with domestic violence victims. If someone on the defense suggested that the woman should have known not to return to an abusive situation, he would twist this by asking, "So you're saying it's her fault she was abused?"

Lesson 3: If you are losing your argument, try to divert, deconstruct, double-down, or play the victim in response.

The author knows that even masters of persuasion can't always nail an argument. Sometimes the best thing to do is walk away. But he does have a few last-second strategies to mitigate the damage from a failed argument.

The first thing the author says you can do is to try to make a diversion. People dislike being interrupted, but if you can interrupt them with questions, you may be able to hinder their momentum and turn the conversation in another direction, all while staying focused on them.

Next, you can try to deconstruct. When your opponent is nailing their argument, you can challenge even the smallest of their assumptions to slow them down. Ask things like, "How can you know that?" or "How can you really be sure that's true?"

The third strategy is doubling down. **If one part of your argument is working particularly well, double down on that point until you can find a way to get out of the argument.**

If all of this fails, your last strategy to save yourself is to play the victim card. Sure, this doesn't seem very dignified. But it works for a simple reason— people are naturally more empathetic to victims.

For example, when former House Speaker Paul Ryan was attacked during a debate over the Affordable Care Act, Obama claimed Ryan didn't care about children. Ryan capitalized on this by playing the victim and highlighting the unfairness of Obama's attack.

Doesn't Hurt To Ask Review

I always love reading books about communication because they remind me of all the awesome people I know who are mind-bendingly good at it. *Doesn't Hurt To Ask* has to be one of my favorite books on this subject because of how detailed it is. I think everybody is going to benefit from this, whether they work in a career that requires persuasion or not!

Who would I recommend the Doesn't Hurt To Ask Summary to?

The 54-year-old with strong political beliefs that wants to be able to share them without feeling icky, the 35-year-old parents who are at a loss for how to persuade their kids to do the right things, and anyone that wants to be a better communicator in all walks of life.