**Small Talk Tips**

1. **Small Talk is Valuable**

* **Small talk** is often seen as unimportant, but it can be a powerful way to **connect, collaborate**, and set up future opportunities.
* Instead of viewing it as a "tennis match" (exchange of information), see it as a **collaborative effort** to keep the conversation going, like the game "hacky sack."

**2. Goal: Be Interested, Not Interesting**

* Shift focus from trying to be **fascinating** to being **present and engaged**.
* Showing genuine **interest** reduces anxiety and makes the conversation flow more naturally.

**3. Take Time to Respond**

* Don't rush to respond; **appropriate responses** are better than fast ones.
* **Paraphrasing** what others say helps you slow down and listen carefully. It also validates the other person's message and helps with clarity.

**4. Use the “Tell Me More” Strategy**

* When unsure what to say, asking **“Tell me more”** encourages the other person to continue, giving you time to formulate your response.
* This also deepens the conversation and shows curiosity.

**5. Mistakes Are Natural**

* Treat mistakes in conversations as a **“missed take”** (a chance for a redo), not a failure.
* **Concision** is key. Avoid going on too long—**"Tell the time, don't build the clock."**

**6. Structure Your Responses**

* Structure helps make spontaneous conversation clearer. A useful structure is the **What, So What, Now What** format:
  + **What**: the topic of conversation
  + **So what**: why it's important
  + **Now what**: what comes next or what action will follow.

**7. Initiating Conversations**

* Instead of using **generic openers** like “How are you?” try to comment on something **specific** in the environment or context to spark interest and curiosity.

**8. Exiting Small Talk Gracefully**

* Use the **White Flag Approach** to end a conversation smoothly. Signal the end by saying you need to leave soon and ask one last question to close the conversation politely.