

Title:

Conversation Starters

Word Count:

772

Summary:

Small talk is one of the most difficult areas for people socially. This article explains the ins and outs of starting a good conversation.

Keywords:

conversation, small talk, personality skills

Article Body:

Conversation Starters

In my many charisma courses that I teach, I am constantly amazed at the high quality of person that shows up to take the classes. The people are usually attractive, articulate and professional. I've had many doctors, lawyers, accountants, sales professionals, entrepreneurs and other professionals in the classes. The reasons they come are usually to feel more comfortable in something that some of us take for granted: The dreaded SMALL TALK.

I usually ask for a show of hands to find out who LIKES small talk. Two or three hands go up but usually, the people are shrinking away under a table when they are facing the very thought of it.

It always surprises me even still that there are all of these articulate, confident and knowledgeable people out there, who really just don't know what to say to start a conversation. The majority of them are extremely comfortable in their job or talking about their work, but when it comes to the getting to know people part, outside of work, they just freeze up.

There are some really good things to remember about small talk. First of all: it's necessary. Second, MANY people don't like it so it's worth YOU getting comfortable with it. And third, it really doesn't matter WHAT you talk about, it just has to remain SMALL. I'll explain later.

The small talk part of the conversation is really just to warm each other up. It's an opportunity to feel the person's mood out, their status, or your compatibility. You get a "feel" for a person and that's what small talk is

mostly about. You start thinking... "are they all about themselves? Or, do they care about me, the listener".

I usually get a few different types that come to class:

1. The conversation hog - who eats up all the time chatting about him or herself.
2. The interrogator - Who drills others but never volunteers any information about themselves.
3. The "Let's pretend I'm not even here" person - who fades into the background and lets everyone ELSE do the talking
4. And, the warm, delightful conversationalist who just doesn't have the confidence in themselves.

The last item, happens to be the bulk of the people. And it's something so important to know: That nearly EVERYONE feels uncomfortable even if they LOOK comfortable.

Social situations are nerve wracking for MANY people so the most important thing is that you TAKE CONTROL of the situation and be the one who LOOKS comfortable.

Your job is to make OTHERS comfortable. I like to say, to pretend it's a party that you're giving, and you're the host. So your job is to find out about others and make them glad they came to your party.

Start by asking people questions about the OBVIOUS. What is obvious at that minute? How about "so how do you know our host?" Or, "have you taken these classes before?" If you are at a networking event, you could state the obvious, "so you work in Human Resources? How long have you been at your present company?"

It really doesn't matter what you ask them. But, make sure if you lead in with a comment about the weather or something that you follow up with a question that they can answer.

Remember: WWWHW - Who, What, Where, When, How, and lastly Why? (Asking WHY questions can sound like you might be challenging the person so it's best to avoid if at all possible.)

Next, an easy formula to remember is FORM: Family, Occupation, Recreation and Message. (aka; their passion). You can ask about any of these things and people will light up because they are now talking about themselves.. their favorite topic!!!

Lastly, small talk is SMALL. Many people go off on tangents and start talking

about something more in depth than they should in a small talk environment. This is the time for BULLET POINTS.. not the whole story. For instance, if someone asks HOW you injured your leg, just give them the brief story, "I hurt it in kickboxing"; rather than a long winded story that will bore everyone to tears!

Conversation starters are really easy if you focus on getting to know the other person. If you focus on engaging them and making THEM feel comfortable, rather than worry about how you are appearing, you're bound to make a new contact, a new friend, and hopefully, have a good time in the process!

For more information contact: mary@marygardner.com or visit Mary at www.marygardner.com