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How to Talk to Anyone: 92 Little Tricks for Big Success in Relationships

Leil Lowndes
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This audio book can be used to improve social and communication skills on many levels-professionally, personally, and sexually. The author provides tips for becoming a better speaker and listener as well as a better interpreter of body language. Her approach is practical and her techniques are easily applied to everyday situations.

Lowndes begins her lessons with an illustration from her own life. During a casual lunch with an old girlfriend, the author noticed her friend was using what had once been her “quick and ready smile” more sparingly since she had taken over her father’s business. When Lowndes started asking questions, her friend explained a study that her father had read about the ways in which people in the business world view smiling. Studies have shown that women who are slower to smile are seen as more credible than women who smile immediately. Taking her father’s words to heart, Lowndes’s friend found she was taken more seriously, and her colleagues commented on her insights and intelligence at meetings. Impressed by her friend’s self-confidence, Lowndes added a segment on smiles to her lectures on communication.

Lowndes is also a firm believer in eye contact. In sections called “Sticky Eyes” and “Apoxy Eyes,” she calls eyes “personal grenades … that pack a powerful wallop.” Using studies that concluded that “more eye contact led to more positive feelings,” the author encourages her audiences to send the message, “I care about your attitudes.” In both business and personal relationships, people need to sense interest in what they have to say, and eye contact establishes instant intimacy.

To develop better conversational habits, the author recommends “mastering small talk.” She suggests: encouraging “too much too soon,” making small talk akin to making “comforting noises together” in the hope of finding common ground; “always wearing a … simple visual prop” to draw people’s attention; and eavesdropping on conversations until the opportunity presents itself to drop in a question or comment. She shows how to ask basic questions in more tactful ways, like substituting, “How do you spend most of your time?” for the standard, “What do you do?”

The author of four books, Lowndes has coached Fortune 500 executives and the United States Peace Corps on ways to develop better communication skills. Despite an occasional lapse into overused language, Lowndes uses a common-sense approach and easy-to-understand exercises. How to Talk to Anyone has a great deal to offer the listener or reader.

PAM KINGSBURY (September / October 2004)

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