

Don't Sweat the Small Talk

By JoJo Tabares

Your heart beats faster as you enter the room. You don't know anyone, and they all look like they are having a great time. You don't know what to do with your hands. It's a party or it's a networking mixer, but for you, it's an uncomfortable event filled with second-guessing and self-conscious behavior. You walk up to a small group, knowing you should say something to join in the conversation, but you don't know what to say.

Wanna learn some tips for turning a social outcast in to a social butterfly? Here are a few:

1. Make an attitude adjustment.

Change how you think of the event. Instead of thinking of it as an uncomfortable exercise, think of it as a wondrous opportunity to make interesting friends! Right there that will change your attitude, and miraculous things will happen when you are open to them.

2. Don't be a Gloomy Gus . . . and notify your face!

Walk in with a smile. Gloomy Guses don't attract fun; they only attract misery. Smiling is contagious. Soon your happy face will infect everyone you meet! Walk in with a smile on your face, and you will walk out smiling on the inside too!

3. Use the magic word.

So many people tell me that they just don't know what to say when making small talk at a party or business mixer. They want a magic word. Say the magic word and get instant connection. Well, I found it. No really! Here it is. Are you ready? It's . . . "Hi." I promise you this works. Just walk up confidently to a group, flash that big smile we were talking about earlier, and say "Hi." This simple act will make you appear confident even if your knees are knocking. Then sit back and listen to what the group is talking about. Being a great conversationalist doesn't mean you are constantly talking. A great communicator is always listening!

4. Listen for your cue.

I know it sounds like a theater direction, but it works! Wait until someone says something you can respond to. There! She said something you agree with; nod your head and say something like, "Exactly!". It sounds like you haven't really said anything, but in point of fact, you have been very articulate. You have communicated that you were listening and have aligned yourself with someone in the group. This communicates that you have something in common. Sharing something in common with someone is a basis upon which to build a relationship. Keep going ...

Oh! Did you hear that? He just said something you know something about. You can add something of value to the conversation. Say so! Now you have communicated that you are an asset to the conversation. Keep going. You are building rapport!

5. Compliments

Notice things about others, and pay them genuine compliments about specific things. Do you see that girl over there with the blue dress? It's a great color for her. Tell her so! Oh, that boy just told a story about how he took the time to help an elderly lady even though he was late. Let him know how you admire that in him! People love people who notice them—especially when it is specific and genuine. Spread a little well-deserved sunshine around!

6. Don't ask questions later.

People love to talk about themselves. Invite them to do so! You will be amazed at how letting others do most of the talking will make you appear as a great conversationalist.

Just a few communication tips will get you comfortable so you don't need to sweat the small talk!

Biographical Information

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JoJo Tabares holds a degree in speech communication, but it is her humorous approach to communication skills which has made her a highly sought-after Christian speaker and writer. Her articles appear in homeschool publications, such as Homeschool Enrichment Magazine and The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine, which also endorses her Say What You Mean curricula. You can also find JoJo on Web sites such as Crosswalk.com and Dr.Laura.com. For more information on communication FUNDamentals and Christian-based communication skills for the whole family, please visit <http://www.ArtofEloquence.com/>.