

THE 10 SIMPLE SECRETS OF BEING LIKED BY ALMOST EVERYBODY

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Are you likeable? Do you act in ways that draw people to you, facilitating good relationships? What makes people likeable? Most people assume they have to be witty, funny or brilliant. That is tough to do and the effort usually pushes people away.

In my 30 years as a therapist, I have found that incorporating the following ten behaviors into your day-to-day interactions will produce great results in the quality of your relationships and most likely in your own sense of comfort and confidence with others.

1. Listen! Learn to be an interested and attentive listener.

Since almost all people are attracted to those who are interested in them – and good listeners are rare and in great demand – this is the most important social skill you can develop. It feels great to have someone interested in you. To be a good listener, maintain eye contact rather than looking around the room. Stay on him. Do not bring the subject back to you after he pauses. Rather, let him continue and encourage him to talk more by asking follow-up questions like “Why?” or “How come?” or “Tell me more.” Avoid the social sin of interrupting so that you can say what you think or know.

2. Think! Does the listener care about what I am going to say?

How you slept last night, your aches and pains and a detailed description of your stamp collection may interest your mother but not others. However, if you are talking about what creates happiness in life or how you feel about the president, you are sharing common experiences and inviting further conversation. Observe other people’s reactions as you talk, and when you pick up that they are uninterested, cut it short.

3. Share your feelings as well as your thoughts.

People connect with you more if they know something about what makes you tick. To list everything you did today in minute detail is boring for the listener. If, on the other hand, you share some of your emotional reactions to your day, you’ll invite more conversation and be more interesting. For example, to say that you had a talk with your boss, lunch with your sister and then took a walk after work is not as interesting as, “My boss always wants me to be Ann Landers and give advice on her personal life. I think I was a good Ann Landers today, although not totally comfortable, and I rewarded myself by eating too much at lunch. After work I took a long walk in the park and something about the birds and the trees made me feel renewed.”

4. Show your curiosity.

It is tempting to interrupt or jump in on someone's conversation to show that you know that too and even more, but it is no fun to be on the receiving end of that behavior. Instead of being the jaded know-it-all, being curious and interested in what others have to say shows your own humility and wisdom. We can almost always learn from others, but learn little while we are doing the talking.

5. Have a pleasant speaking style.

It can be exhausting to listen to people who talk very rapidly. Also, it can give one a knot in one's stomach to listen to someone who speaks slowly and methodically. Fortunately, most of us are in the mid-range, displaying some spontaneity without being manic or tediously slow. Volume also counts. You may be so loud people tend to back away. If so, pay attention and turn down the volume. Finally, never mumble. Mumlbers speak quietly for fear of disapproval. Ironically, talking that way assures disapproval.

6. Avoid jokes and storytelling unless you are very good at it.

Most of us feel trapped when we hear someone say, "That reminds me of a story." That's because most people are not good storytellers. The same is true of telling jokes. When was the last time someone told a joke and you really belly laughed instead of laughed to be polite? If you are good at these things, go for it---just leave some airtime for others. However, if you aren't, but want to tell a story or joke anyway, keep it short.

7. Smile.

When you smile at someone you are saying you like interacting with them. A smile raises their spirits as well as your own. People like to be in the presence of sunny people. People who exhibit consistent glumness are going to have a tough time attracting others.

8. Be accepting.

Create an environment that allows others to feel safe sharing their thoughts and feelings. Avoid being judgmental even if you don't approve or agree. If you are judging others rather than understanding them, you are missing an opportunity to see things from a different perspective as well as to enrich a relationship.

9. Give honest compliments.

A compliment is a gift (and it doesn't cost anything). When you give a compliment people feel good and feel good about you, too. We are all at least a little insecure and can use praise. When you feel someone appreciates you, you are more likely to appreciate him or her. While you should avoid false compliments, everybody has positive qualities and achievements you can point out.

10. Say thank you to a compliment, no more.

How often have you given a compliment only to hear, “Thanks, but...” with an explanation of why the compliment isn’t deserved? In doing that, one has just rejected the gift of a compliment and turned off the gift giver. Learn to simply accept a compliment with a simple “thank you.”

RATE YOURSELF & THOSE CLOSE TO YOU

To calculate how likeable you are (or how nourishing the people in your relationships are), give a score of 0 to 10 on each skill, 0 for awful, to 10 for excellent. Add these scores together, *adding your listening score two more times (it counts three times as much as the others)*. A perfect score is 120.

95 - 120: You are a likeable person with very strong social skills.

70-94: Your social skills are average to above-average. It may not be a bad idea to review these periodically.

Below 70: It is probably time to work on your social skills. Remember, all these skills are learnable.

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