



MANAGING SMALL TALK

SMALL TALK IS A BIG DEAL IF PEOPLE AREN'T COMFORTABLE WITH IT. THESE TIPS CAN HELP.

To people who are good at initiating casual conversations, small talk is second nature. But for many of us, social situations find us feeling ill-equipped. The ability to meet and greet and make people comfortable makes a big difference. Here are some ways of handling small talk which could open doors.

Names come first. It might sound obvious, but it's rule number one: the simplest way to approach someone is to introduce yourself by name. Forget about coming up with a witty opener. Stick with: "Hi, I'm...". This is true even if you're pretty sure the other person knows who you are. Don't assume. Re-introduce yourself.

Your second step is to get the other person's name. Again, this may strike you as a no-brainer, but it's the little things which slip our minds when we're uncomfortable—which is why people can forget to offer their own names in response to an introduction. So if a prompt is necessary, go ahead: "And you are...?".

It's essential that you look the other person in the eye while talking. This doesn't mean staring, it means directly facing them, engaging their focus, and staying connected—not allowing your eyes to wander off mid-sentence or roam around the room when listening.

Also, a firm handshake should generally accompany an introduction for both men and women. Stay aware of your own body language, and pick up clues from theirs.

It's Not About You

Don't talk so much as listen. As much as you're able, let the other person do the talking by asking questions. Given encouragement, most people are quite willing to share information about themselves. Find out about their interests, likes, dislikes, and experiences. Ask questions which are open-ended eg. can't be answered "yes" or "no" and lead to other questions. When you start to tell the story about the time when you got in trouble as a kid—catch yourself. Keep your contribution short and sweet, and bring the conversation back to them.

Keep Things Light

Keeping things light and casual actually gives us more information about who someone is and how they live their lives than intense debates which are burdened by the weight of the world's problems. Talk about the weather, entertainment, books, current events, sports, hobbies, or what you love about your jobs. Stay positive, be yourself, and remember to smile.

Are there forbidden topics when it comes to small talk? As a general guide, avoid talking about religion, politics, marriage, divorce, or sex. If you find the conversation becoming emotionally charged during a strictly social interaction, change the subject.

Is That It?

Even if things are going well and you wish you could go on talking forever, let the other person decide how long the conversation lasts. Get signals from their body language, listen to their choice of words, and make a graceful exit. Remember that by definition, small talk is just that: a short chat.

Short chats often mark the beginning of a significant relationship. You never know who might become an important part of your life or what conversations will later seem pivotal. Becoming adept at that bothersome little thing called small talk can be an investment which truly pays off.

Source: Workplace Benefits. (Updated 2008). Making the most of small talk. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Benefits.

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To talk with a counselor or schedule an appointment, call **1-800-647-3327**. Appointments are available to accommodate different work schedules.

All calls are private and confidential.



PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR

HELP YOUR CHILD AVOID SPORTS-RELATED EYE INJURY

Eye injuries are the leading cause of blindness of children in the United States, and many of these injuries are sports-related. Ninety percent of sports-related injuries in children can be prevented with the use of proper protective eyewear. Making sure your young athlete gears up with the right protective eyewear may save your child's sight.

Types of protective eyewear include:

- Safety glasses
- Goggles
- Safety shields
- Eye guards specially designed to provide the correct protection for a certain activity.

Most protective eyewear lenses are made of polycarbonate, which is 10 times stronger than other plastics. Many eye care providers sell protective eyewear, as do sporting and athletic goods stores.

If your child wears prescription glasses, it is still possible to wear protective eyewear as well. Safety goggles can be worn over prescription eyewear and can often be purchased for as little as ten dollars. Also consider talking to your eye care provider about protective eyewear for your child. Your eye care provider can provide protective eyewear that fits your child's prescription, to be worn in place of goggles over glasses. He or she can help you select a correct fit and style for specific activities or sports.

"Children should use protective eyewear during sporting activities to avoid unnecessary eye injuries that can possibly result in permanent vision loss," said Paul A. Sieving, ND., Ph.D., director of the National Eye Institute, one of the National Institutes of Health.

At first, your child may resist wearing protective eyewear, saying that it isn't cool. But this doesn't have to be the case. Protective eyewear now comes in a variety of styles and colors that can even match team uniforms. Don't let your child step onto the field or court unless he or she is wearing the proper safety gear from head to toe, including protective eyewear.

Source: National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health & National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP). *Help kids gear up for the game*. Retrieved May 30, 2008, from the Healthy Vision 2010, Healthy Vision Month 2008 website at <http://www.healthyvision2010.org/hvm/pdfs/Adults-Article.pdf>

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SUMMER PET CARE

KEEPING OUR FURRY FRIENDS SAFE AND WELL

The Humane Society of the United States offers these tips for pet owners to keep their furry friends safe this summer:

Don't leave pets in parked cars for any period of time. Every summer, animals left in parked cars suffer brain damage and die from heatstroke.

It is very dangerous, and in some states illegal, to drive with a dog in the back of a pick-up truck. Dogs should ride either in the cab (in a crate or wearing a seat belt harness designed for dogs) or in a secured crate in the bed of the truck.

Summer is often a time when people fertilize their lawns and work in their gardens. But beware: Plant food, fertilizer, and insecticides can be fatal if your pet ingests them.

Make sure your pet is always wearing a collar and identification tag. If you are separated from your pet, an ID tag may very well be his or her ticket home.

Check with your veterinarian to see if your pets should be taking heartworm prevention medication. Heartworm disease, which is transmitted by mosquitoes, can be fatal in both dogs and cats.

Pets and pools can equal disaster. Prevent free access to pools and always supervise a pet in a pool.

Provide plenty of water and shade for your pets while they're enjoying the great outdoors so they can stay cool.

If you plan on traveling with your pet during the summer, take the time to prepare for your furry friends in advance. Many airlines have summer pet embargoes, and most trains and ships do not allow pets other than service animals.

On very hot days, limit exercise to early morning or evening hours. Keep in mind that asphalt gets very hot and can burn your pet's paws.

Use only flea and tick treatments recommended by your veterinarian. Some over-the-counter flea and tick products can be toxic, even when used according to instructions.

Pets can get sunburned too, and your pet may require sunscreen on his or her nose and ear tips. Pets with light-colored noses or light-colored fur on their ears are particularly vulnerable to sunburn and skin cancer.

Don't take your pets to crowded summer events such as concerts or fairs. The loud noises and crowds, combined with the heat, can be stressful and dangerous for pets. For your pet's well being, leave them at home. Be especially aware of these threats during holidays, such as the Fourth of July.

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OVERSPENDING AT THE PUMP?

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO HELP PUT THE BRAKES ON IT



High gas prices are something we are likely to be dealing with for quite some time. The forecast doesn't appear to include substantial price breaks at the pump any time soon. So our best bet is to look into ways we can make our valuable gallons go that much farther.

There are a number of things that American families can do to improve their fuel efficiency and help them save money. Taken together, these efficiencies can equal up to \$1.00 of savings per gallon, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Some of these steps are listed below.

Slow down.

- Each 5 miles per hour (mph) you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.15 per gallon for gas.
- Aggressive driving such as speeding, or rapid acceleration and braking, wastes gas.

Keep your car maintained and running smoothly.

- Get regular tune-ups.
- Clean air filters.
- Make sure that tires are properly inflated.
- Use the proper grade of oil.

Use your engine wisely.

- Avoid excessive idling.
- Use cruise control and overdrive gears.

Be smart about driving.

- Plan errands and do them together rather than making lots of separate trips.
- Use mass transit if it is available in your area.
- Telecommute if it is an option.
- Know where you're going—use a GPS or be

sure to have a map or directions. Getting lost is inefficient and burns extra fuel.

Carpool.

- Share rides to and from work with co-workers who live near you.
- If your child has extra-curricular activities, organize a carpool taking turns driving the kids to and from.
- If your child does not ride the bus, organize a carpool to and from school, or find out if there is a bus your child can ride.

Keep your car light.

- Clean out the back seat and trunk where "junk" can accumulate, and remove unnecessary items you may be toting around.
- If your car has a third-row seat that is rarely in use, consider taking it out. Store it in a safe place until you need it again.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy. (n.d.). How to beat high gasoline prices. Retrieved December 28, 2007, from <http://www.energy.gov>

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