

BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. E-NEWS

Mastering the Art of Conversation

When you talk, do people listen? Or do they shift uncomfortably and develop a glassy stare? Being a good conversationalist doesn't always come naturally. Some people have to work at knowing what to say — and what to avoid. To improve your skills, follow this advice:

- **Be Yourself.** If you want to be a more effective communicator, you first have to learn how to feel comfortable in your own skin. Conversation isn't a competitive sport and you don't need to strive to impress. Just relax and go with the flow.
- **Be Positive.** You don't have to be the life of the party, but you don't want to come across as the Grim Reaper, either. Yes, you need to be solemn when paying respects at a funeral and stern when disciplining your children; but otherwise, lighten up. Offer topics that are pleasant and interesting, such as hobbies, books, sports, or travel; avoid controversial subjects like politics and religion.
- **Be Inquisitive.** If you're the only one talking, it's not a conversation — it's a lecture. Ask open-ended questions to draw others into the discussion or change the subject to a topic that better suits your listeners.
- **Be Honest.** If someone brings up a topic with which you're unfamiliar, say so. No one expects you to be an expert in every area. It's better to admit your limitations and enjoy the opportunity to learn from others. You don't want to fake it and risk sounding foolish.
- **Be Confidential.** Don't try to pique interest by gossiping about coworkers or hinting about confidential workplace information. You may entertain your audience with insider knowledge, but you could damage your reputation in the process. Ψ



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This Month's Recipe





Bullies are scary – to parents, as well as kids – but there are effective ways to protect your child at school. The Bullying Research Network of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and the Federal Departments of Health and Human Services and Education offers this advice:

Understand What Bullying Is. It can happen anywhere and in many forms, including:

- Physical: hitting, punching, shoving
- Verbal: name-calling, teasing
- Social: leaving people out on purpose, spreading rumors, breaking up friendships
- Cyber: using the Internet, mobile phones, or other digital technologies to harm others

Learn to Listen. Kids who feel they can tell their parents everything are more likely to open up about bullying.

Nurture Talents. Kids engaging in extracurricular activities build strong support networks of friends and mentors who can help fend off bullying.

Watch for Symptoms. There are many signs to alert you; however, some may indicate other issues too:

- Complaining of frequent headaches, stomachaches, or unexplained illness
- Coming home with damaged or missing belongings, or reporting losing items often
- Being very hungry after school from not eating lunch
- Having unexplained injuries
- Being reluctant or refusing to attend school
- Having an unexplained drop in grades
- Losing interest in visiting or talking with friends or suddenly having fewer friends
- Having trouble sleeping or having frequent bad dreams

Half of all bullying incidents go unreported

Help your child by listening and watching for signs of harassment

Take Action. If your child is being bullied, urge him to tell you the details. Privately take notes to document the abuse. Meet with school authorities to develop an action plan and follow up frequently. If the bullying gets worse and you need additional help, consider the following:

- If your child's *teacher* is not keeping her safe from bullying, contact the principal or superintendent
- If the *school* is not keeping him safe from being bullied, contact the State Department of Education
- If your child is sick, stressed, not sleeping or is having other problems, call BHS at 800-245-1150 and talk with your Care Coordinator Ψ

September 4 - 10 is National Suicide Prevention Week

Suicide is the 11th leading cause of U.S. deaths, according to the American Association of Suicidology. Learn the warning signs, and possibly save a life, by visiting the AAS website at www.suicidology.org.

Take Charge of Your Next Performance Review

Do you dread your upcoming performance review like a patient being wheeled into surgery? It doesn't have to be a traumatic experience. Try taking an active, positive role in the process:

Before

Learn what to expect. If you're new to an organization, ask how employees are evaluated and what is covered in a formal review.

Document your achievements and efforts. Don't rely on your manager or your own memory to remember accomplishments from eight or nine months ago. Keep a workplace log to record resolutions, results, trainings, and anything else relevant to your evaluation.

Communicate throughout the year. Even if your supervisor doesn't meet and follow-up with you on a regular basis, keep him informed about what you're doing and ask questions designed to show your commitment to high-quality work.

During

Contribute to the discussion. Don't sit back and listen passively. Talk about your year, ask questions, and renew your commitment to learning new skills and improving your performance.

Brag (a little). Whether you're filling out forms or talking face-to-face, don't be shy about telling the boss what you've accomplished. Be prepared

with specific facts and details like: "In May, I completed the Smith project, which generated \$100,000 in revenue." Focus on results, not efforts, because trying to close a deal isn't as impressive as actually making the sale.

Don't get defensive. It's a manager's job to help you improve, so if she gives constructive criticism, stay calm and be objective. If you're confused about her perspective, ask for clarification about your performance, but don't turn it into an argument that you'll never win.

After

Take something of value away. No matter what happens during the review itself, spend some time after it's over thinking about the conversation. Celebrate any praises that you received, and consider suggestions or constructive criticism objectively. In the very least, you'll have a better idea of what your manager wants and how to succeed during the next performance review. Ψ



'Let's Do Lunch' Less Common These Days

When was the last time you took your entire lunch break — and actually left your desk? A survey from CareerBuilder reports that workers who are allotted an hour for lunch take, on average, only 20 to 40 minutes of that time. Eighteen percent of employees stay in their cubicle, office, or workspace to eat.

What could they do instead to feel fresh and productive the rest of the day? Try these activities:

- Eat outside on a park bench
- Take a walk outside
- Talk to a friend
- Take a quick nap
- Do some stretching exercises
- Play a quick, mentally challenging game Ψ



Take This Approach to Stop Nasty Rumors — Cold

It would be nice if we could be judged only on our actions. But thanks to the rumor mill, sometimes opinions are formed from things we didn't say or do. How should you respond to nasty — and potentially damaging — gossip? Take these steps:

- **Tell the Truth.** When someone makes you aware of the story that's circulating about you — and you can be sure someone will — immediately take that opportunity to set the record straight.
- **Approach the Source.** Make a point of finding out who's been spreading the rumor — or at least who shared it with your informer. Then go to that person, refute the story, and ask where it originated. Word will soon get around that you've issued a denial and you're anxious to know how the story got started, and that should persuade the gossips to bite their tongue.
- **Don't Participate.** We can't control what people will say, but if you want to discourage others from gossiping about you, the best strategy is not to gossip, either. Ψ



“Vicarious” Success

Success breeds more success, or so they say.

But a study reported in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* seems to suggest that watching other people succeed lowers motivation to strive for success on your own.

In an experiment, a group of test subjects watched videos of people completing a series of puzzles. Another group was shown videos where the puzzles were not solved and a third group watched no videos at all. Then the groups were asked to complete similar puzzles themselves.

Compared with the other groups, subjects who watched the puzzles get completed actually had the lowest rate of completion. Scientists call this “vicarious goal satiation,” explaining that watching *others* achieve goals can satisfy the inner desire to achieve and, which drains the motivation to accomplish goals on one's own.

The lesson: To prime yourself for success, focus on what you need to do and don't get distracted by others' efforts, successful or not. Ψ

Sweet Potato Fries

Ingredients:

3 med sweet potatoes cut into fries
 1 tbsp canola oil
 1 tbsp chili powder
 1/2 tsp cinnamon
 1/4 tsp sea salt

Prep time: < 15 minutes

Cook time: 40 minutes

Servings: 6

Nutrition Information Per Serving:

Cal: 110; Fat: 4g; Carbs: 18g; Protein: 2g; Fiber: 4g

Instructions:

- Preheat oven to 425°
- In a mixing bowl, combine sweet potatoes, oil, spices, and salt; Mix together until fries are evenly coated
- Spread fries out in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet
- Bake for 20 minutes or until crispy on one side
- Turn fries and cook for another 20 minutes or until golden brown

