

Synaplex Presentation – 10/19/2013 – Rabbi Ze'ev Smason, NHBZ

The Ten Commandments of How To Get Along With Others

1) All About Attitude

The parents of twin 12 year-olds were worried that their sons had developed extreme personalities — one was a insufferable pessimist, the other an incurable optimist. So, as their birthday approached, the parents decided to select birthday gifts most appropriate for each child..

Trying to brighten the outlook of the pessimist, mom and dad bought that son an expensive blue 10-speed road bike with all the bells and whistles. But instead of yelping with delight, the boy burst into tears. "What's the matter?" the parents asked, baffled. "Don't you like this new bike? "No," the boy said between tears, "I wanted a red bike!"

Next the parents presented a birthday gift to the optimist. Trying to dampen his out look, the parents presented him a six-foot box filled with horse manure. But instead of wrinkling his nose in disgust, the optimist emitted just the yelp of delight the parents had been hoping to hear from his brother, the pessimist. He took a running start and dove head-first into the box. "What do you think you're doing?!?" the parents asked. "With all this manure," the boy replied, beaming, "there must be a pony in here somewhere!"

The quality of our life -- and of our relationships -- depends almost entirely upon our attitude. Let's focus on two attitudes necessary to create the relationships we desire.

a) Accept Responsibility

You're completely responsible for everything you do, and you have no choice but to live with the consequences of your own words and actions. Your life is made up of choices you make. When the Torah states that man is created *b'tzelem Elokim* -- in the image of G-d -- it refers to our free will. We have the capacity to identify the difference between right and wrong and make choices in accordance with that recognition.

We should remember that we're just as responsible for our failures as our successes. Isn't it interesting how people will take complete credit for something that goes well for them, but when something goes wrong, they immediately begin to play the blame-game. It's a natural human trait to look to blame someone else when things go wrong.

"I haven't had a raise in years because my boss doesn't like me."
"I didn't pass the test because I didn't have enough time to study."
"I don't have enough money because the government takes it all for taxes."

These excuses bring to mind the 'original' excuse; that where Adam, when confronted by G-d for having eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, said, "That woman -- she is the one that gave me of the fruit of the tree, to eat."

Sound familiar? Every day you'll hear someone making statements like this. These are just examples of statements that human beings make in order to avoid or deflect blame and responsibility for their own

disappointments and failures. We are masters of *excuse-ology*. People find all kinds of ways to avoid responsibility -- blaming people, 'things', and G-d.

People who get what they want out of life take responsibility for everything they do and make positive choices to take them where they want to go. And we love being around people like that.

2) Be Positive

Negative people blame others and find fault with the efforts of those who are successful -- and as a result, don't get along very well with others. Usually, only other negative people will want to associate with them.

We call these people *kvetches* -- whiners who find something negative in every situation. If you want to get along with people, don't whine and complain. As we say in the Smason household, "No whine, just grape juice!" Synonyms for *kvetch* are: grumbler, grouch, complainer, wailer, objector, protester. Are you any of these? Do you want to be thought of any of these? Probably not. Whiners and complainers exude a victim-mentality -- life isn't fair. Whining is a destroyer of respect and a killer of relationships.

Instead, choose to be a person who sees life and situations as a cup that is half full. In difficult situations, accustom yourself to say *gam zu l'tova* -- this also is for the best. Isn't it a pleasure to be around people who see silver linings instead of dark clouds?

2) Benefit of the Doubt

Dad entered the room just as the argument was working its way into high gear. "See here, Moshe," Dad said, grabbing one of his children, "who started this?"

"Well," Moshe said, pointing to his little brother, "it's all Yaakov's fault."

Dad went to Yaakov to grab him, but he protested that he wasn't to blame. Dad turned back to Moshe, saying that Yaakov said it wasn't his fault. Moshe said:

"Dad, it WAS Yaakov's fault. He started it ...when he hit me back!"

We're taught in Ethics of the Fathers: "Accept a teacher upon yourself, acquire a friend for yourself, and judge everyone favorably" (1:6)

What is the connection between judging favorably, and having teachers and friends? Giving the benefit of the doubt is the grease that allows the wheels of our relationships to turn smoothly. Without it, we won't be able to keep our teachers or friends.

It's inevitable that in the course of our interactions with others that something will happen that rubs us the wrong way; someone not showing up on time, not returning a phone call, or a friend or relative in a cranky mood. Or, we may assume someone is guilty without compelling evidence. Have you ever found yourself wandering around the house, saying, "Who took my keys? Who moved my glasses?"

That's where the four ways of giving others the benefit of the doubt comes in.

1) Raise your issue of concern, and don't sweep it under the carpet. The Chofetz Chaim says that most difficulties in relationships are the result of unaddressed problems. By raising the issue your friend may apologize, which will take some or all of the 'sting' out of the offense they committed.

- 2) In raising the issue, you may find that there's another side to the story. Your friend's car may have broken down, or YOU may be the one who had the wrong time for the meeting.
- 3) Even if it's clear that your friend is in the wrong, giving the benefit of the doubt means understanding where he's coming from. Maybe your friend spoke harshly to you because he only got a few hours sleep, or has a high level of anxiety about an upcoming exam or test results.
- 4) Work on looking to see the good in people. (In the mishna in Ethics of the Fathers it says, 'kol adam' -- the whole person). Although others may have flaws, most people we know are basically good people. Your positive view of others will pay great dividends in how you get along with them.

Accept responsibility for your actions, and be positive. Life is all about attitude.

3) Control Your Temper

Gilbert Stuart is widely considered to be one of America's foremost portraitists. Throughout his career, Gilbert Stuart produced portraits of over 1,000 people, including the first six Presidents of the United States.

Stuart was convinced that he could look at a person's face and tell what kind of person they were. After painting a picture of George Washington, he was sure that Washington was a man with a fierce, savage temper. He revealed this opinion to a general, who passed it on to the Washingtons one night at dinner.

"I saw your portrait the other day, an excellent likeness," said the general. "But Stuart says that you have a tremendous temper."

"My word," interjected Mrs. Washington, "Mr. Stuart presumes quite a bit to make such a remark."

But the general continued, "However, my dear lady, Stuart added that the President had it under wonderful control."

At that, Washington smiled and said, "He's right."

Anger is a problem most people would admit to having to deal with from time to time. Though many wouldn't consider it a problem worth paying much attention to, Judaism teaches that anger in a serious way. Created in the image of G-d, we have the ability to make free-will choices and control our actions. A person who becomes angry, our rabbis say, is like someone who worships idols; in a moment of fury, one forgets G-d and engages in self-worship.

Anger in any situation is frightening, confusing, and blemishes or ruins relationships. When cooler heads prevail, an apology can be offered. However, with the damage done, the act of aggression is not usually soon forgotten. Those prone to frequent displays of anger may even be remembered long after they're gone, as 'an angry person.' While here, they'll be avoided or talked about behind their backs.

Why do people become angry?

- Stress: A problem in and of itself, and at first glance, a major cause of anger.
- Arrogance and ego: I'm the center of the Universe, and things have to go my way when, where, and how I say. If not, watch out!
- Desire for Honor: People don't treat me with the proper respect I deserve. They often interrupt and bother me.

-- Suffering: When I don't feel good, I have a low tolerance threshold, and do not suffer others easily.

Judaism states emphatically that we CAN control our temper.

-- Accept responsibility: Have you ever said about another person that they 'make you angry'? Anger is brought about by an internal process. We cause ourselves to become angry.

-- Stress: Figure out practical ways to lessen commitments and responsibilities and, develop your ability to deal with life's challenges.

-- The best cure for a short temper is a long walk.

-- Accustom yourself to say *gam zu l'tova*, this also is for the best.

The Talmud says that a person's true nature can be recognized by three identifying signs: Kos (strong drink) Kees (money) Ka'as (anger). On the surface, many people may seem polite and calm. However, in a stressful situation, you may see a different side of that person. If you want to get along with people remember that anger is the most pure form of wasted human energy, and do everything you can to eliminate it from your life.

4) Discuss, Don't Argue

A high school student asked his father to help him write an essay on how wars start.

"Well," the father began, let's imagine we got into an argument with Canada.

"That's ridiculous," his mother interrupted. "Why should we get into an argument with Canada?"

"That's beside the point," her husband said. "I was just using an example."

The mother said, "If you had an ounce of brains in your head, you wouldn't use such stupid examples.."

"Who do you think you're talking to?" shouted the father, "I want to teach my son how wars start."

Successful people are almost always those who have exceptional communication skills. Do you discuss? Do you really discuss? Or do you just listen until you have a chance to put in your two cents? Discussion has a lot more to do than the ability to emit vocal sounds in the form of words and sentences. Discussion has to do with a two-way exchange with a common goal of exchanging information and doubt resolution.

Some people don't really hear what their conversation partners are trying to convey. They don't care about the other person's feelings, ideas, or what the deeper meaning of their commentary might be. They 'hear', but don't 'listen'. They're like Charlie Brown in the Peanuts comic strip who only heard, "whah, whah, whah," from people that spoke to him. Their competitive nature and desire to set them straight on the 'true way of seeing things' leads to argumentation, and insensitive and self-centered responses.

Judaism says that a successful discussion is built around the maxim: "People of goodwill who reason together will reach a common conclusion." But why are good discussions, free of argumentative behavior, hard to find?

Perhaps it occurs because we don't know the difference between a discussion and an argument. In the words of Rabbi Noach Weinberg, z'l, to foster good discussions with friends and others, we should be a judge, not a lawyer. Being a judge means:

- I am willing to hear the other side.
- I want to know the truth.
- I will consider the evidence.
- I am willing to change, even if it's painful.

A lawyer, on the other hand, is an advocate. A lawyer isn't necessarily interested in finding the truth; his job is to advocate for his client as persuasively as possible. Like a lawyer, people often enter discussions with a closed mind. They listen thinking how they can disprove what is being stated rather than opening their minds to new ideas. Bad communicators try to rebut every point made.

In a discussion, it's OK to disagree, as long as you disagree in an agreeable way. Reflexive listening is an excellent tool to promote good discussions. Demonstrate you hear and accept what is being said, and what is felt. Acknowledge the other person's right to feelings. The schools of Hillel and Shammai are famous for their disputes in Jewish law. Jewish law today almost always agrees with the school of Hillel. The Talmud explains why:

..... *Hillel humbly mentioned the words of the other school before their own.*

Hillel was a master of the cordial, dispassionate, respectful discussion. If you want to keep your friends and get along better with others, learn how to discuss, and don't argue.

5) Exercise Patience

One Sunday morning at Hebrew school, the teacher was sharing with her class the virtues of patience.

She asked, "What is patience?"

One little girl raised her hand and said, "Patience is when you're sitting in shul, and the rabbi is giving his sermon. You're just sitting there, and he is talking. He keeps talking and you keep sitting there. That's patience.

If you want to get along with people, you have to be patient. A truly patient person is rare, indeed.

In the Torah, Moshe is described as the most humble man on the face of the earth. (Numbers 12:3). Rashi, the great French medieval rabbi, explains that Moshe's humility expressed itself as exceptional patience. Reb Simcha Zissel of Kelm said, "*Patience is the root of all good character traits and peace of mind.*"

How can two people of different habits and temperaments get along? Only by learning to be patient. What is patience? The Hebrew word for patience is *savlanut*. A *sabal* is a porter, one who carries a heavy load. Though the load may be exceedingly heavy, the *sabal* keeps carrying it, not casting it away. So too, one with *savlanut* (patience) may hear and see many things he doesn't like, yet continues to 'bear' his friends. More than that; sometimes, something deeply bothers us -- an improper request, an insult, an unfair complaint -- but the patient person bears it, like a heavy load. Becoming impatient, lashing out in anger, is similar to a porter who casts off his load. Our rabbis say that the short-tempered, impatient can't teach. (Ethics of the Fathers, 2:6).

It's interesting to note that the Hebrew word for marriage, *nisuin*, is related to the word *yeesa*, to lift, or to carry. Marriage is a relationship that, to be successful, requires an exceptional degree of patience.

Gracious people aren't moody, don't complain, and don't lose their charm and patience under stress or

pressure. They have no public image or 'public persona' to see through. Gracious people are always classy and never petty, taking the high road when difficulties arise. We love being near gracious people.

Patience is a trait that can be developed. Hall of Fame golfer Gary Player said that he consciously worked on strengthening his patience. Player would occasionally go for drive on the highway, looking for a noticeably slow-moving car -- and follow the car for miles in an attempt to break his impatience. We can certainly avoid many patience-trying situations. For example, when you travel always bring a good book to the airport, since you never know when you may have an extended delay.

An elderly man who had suffered a multiple hip fracture asked his doctor, "How long must I stay in bed?" The doctor said, "One day at a time." Benjamin Franklin once said, "*He that can have patience can have what he will.*" - including close relationships.

6) Focus! Be a Giver

Some years ago a 10 year-old boy entered a restaurant and sat at the counter. The waitress went over and put a glass of water in front of him. "How much is an ice cream sundae?" he asked. "Fifty cents," replied the waitress.

The little fellow pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied a number of coins clutched in it. "How much is a dish of plain ice cream?" he asked.

There were many people waiting at the counter, and the waitress was getting impatient. "Thirty-five cents," she said brusquely. Again he counted the coins. "I'll have the plain ice cream," he said. The waitress took his money, brought the ice cream, put it in front of him, and walked away. When she came back a few minutes later, the boy was gone. She stared at the empty dish and then swallowed hard at what she saw. There placed neatly beside the empty dish were two nickels and five pennies -- her tip.

In life, there are two categories of people: givers and takers. If you want to get along with people, think about how to become more of a giver. If you tend to be a person who doesn't get along with people, it is probably largely due to the fact that you tend to be a taker, and think more about yourself than those you aren't getting along with.

A man ('Joe') once applied for a job as a sales manager with a large international firm. Part of the application process was a multiple-choice exam to determine the mindset of the various candidates. In telling this story, Joe related that he could only remember one question on the exam: "What is the most important characteristic of a great sales manager?" There were ten possible answers, and the respondents had to rank them from one to ten in order of importance. Joe chose the answer that had to do with market knowledge and ability to stay in touch with client needs. The actual best answer was, "The desire to see others do well."

Joe didn't get the job, but said he never forgot that one question and its wonderful answer. Can you imagine a world where everyone has a constant, daily desire to see others do well? If you put others before yourself, you'll bring such a positive energy to each one of your relationships that you'll be in high demand as a friend.

The Hebrew word for love is *ahava* -- a word that has as its root the word *hav*. The word *hav* means 'to give.' The Torah therefore teaches us that love is created by giving. When we give, we love, and create the potential for others to love us. A related insight concerning love is a definition my teacher, Rabbi Noach Orloweck, would often share: Love is, '*What's important to you, is important to me.*' On my own and for myself, I might not have any interest in something. But because I love you, I'll make that 'something' important to me.

If everyone spent more time thinking about the hopes, needs and feelings of others, everyone would get along so much better. Minimized -- or disappeared -- would be argument, strife and dissension. Gone would be divorce, bullying and envy. Life would be wonderful if people were givers, rather than takers. Giving even through the warmth of a smile, a sincere compliment, and sharing of time.

People with no friends have very little desire to see anyone else doing well. They only think about their own existence. Sales managers who put themselves before their sales people tend not to have their support, and ultimately fail to produce good results. People who lose friends usually lose them because they stopped caring about their needs, choosing only to think about themselves. If you want to keep your friends, and make new ones, focusing on becoming a giver.

7) Gratitude

At the height of his popularity, Rudyard Kipling was one of the most widely read authors of all time. At one point it was estimated that each word he had in print was worth twenty-five shillings -- today, the equivalent of about \$100. . A group of students at Oxford University pooled their change and sent 25 shillings to Kipling. The accompanying letter read, "Send us your best word." Before long, the reply came. With great anticipation, the students opened the envelope from Kipling to find a single word printed on a piece of paper. It simply said, "Thanks."

Do you show your gratitude to people for what you receive each day? If not, you're missing out on multiple opportunities to getting along better with people. The dictionary describes gratitude as: "A feeling of being thankful to somebody for doing something." Synonyms are thankfulness and appreciation. Do you consistently show the people in your life that you appreciate the things they do that impact on your life in the smallest or greatest of ways?

"Honor your parents", the 5th Commandment, is one of the great mitzvot of the Torah. Our rabbis explain that the root of the Famous Fifth is the unpayable debt of gratitude due our parents for that most precious of gifts -- the gift of life. Gratitude is a spiritual muscle needing frequent and vigorous exercise. Judaism says that failure to acknowledge kindness isn't a lack of politeness, but a serious character defect. It indicates the beginning of personality deterioration. When it comes to taking revenge, bearing a grudge and harboring insults, we should have a very short memory. But if someone does a chesed for us -- even once -- we should have a memory like an elephant, and never forget.

It's been said that the two most important words in our language are 'thank you.' Everyone of us, no matter how difficult our position in life, has much to be thankful for. If we could each cultivate an 'attitude of gratitude', the world would be a much better place.

A lack of gratitude is a fundamental cause of problems with Shalom Bayis -- peace and harmony in the home. Most men have a false concept of marriage. And it started with Adam, who, when asked by G-d why he ate from the tree of knowledge, said, "The woman you gave me, it's HER fault." Many men believe that the job of a woman is to bring unending bliss to her husband by satisfying every whim and desire and at any time to make him happy and successful. These husbands live in fantasyland, and cause much unhappiness for their wives, their children, and themselves.

There is a lot of anonymous help involved in any business, in any project, and in any shul. Who answers the phone? Who ships out the order? Who rolls and prepares the Torah scrolls, who types the bulletins, and who volunteers to serve the pizza? Hakaros ha'Tov -- gratitude -- obligates us to be sure to thank these people somewhere along the way, even if they don't get any of the acclaim. Sadly, many people

only offer their thanks when prodded by another person or when forced by the need of political correctness. When they finally do offer a thank you, it comes across as forced.

The sign on a synagogue marquee read: "Shabbat Services will be held at 9 A.M. Mazel tov to the Goldbergs on their 50th anniversary. There will be no sermon. Let us thank Hashem for our blessings."

Whenever someone helps you in the present, feel a sense of gratitude and express it to that person. Recall the people who have done things for you in the past. Feel grateful for what they have done, and let them know how you feel. You'll deepen your connection with others.

8) Humor

One of the surest ways to get along with people is to make them laugh. It's no accident that some of the most admired and wealthy people in the world started out as comedians. People who have an ability to make other people laugh have a talent that is worth its weight in gold. Humor is the fastest route to the hearts of almost everyone on earth, and has a great value to society.

The Mishna (Ethics of the Fathers 6:6) speaks of humor, saying *b'miut schok* -- minimize laughter. Avoid using laughter in a negative way, but it certainly can and should be used in a positive sense.

People who are serious all the time are dull and forgettable. Funny people who smile a lot, on the other hand, are lovable and memorable. Their manner is attractive to others and their joy of life is infectious. Any shortcomings of a funny person are easily overlooked and forgiven because of their good nature.

Calvin Coolidge, known as 'Silent Cal', was famous both for his dry Yankee wit and his frugality with words. His wife, Grace Goodhue Coolidge, recounted that a young woman sitting next to Coolidge at a dinner party confided to him she had bet she could get at least three words of conversation from him. Without looking at her he quietly retorted, "You lose." Yet once, a man with a great sense of humor was brilliantly successful in cracking the stoic veneer of Silent Cal.

The famous American humorist Will Rogers was about to meet President Coolidge for the first time, and was told no one could ever get President Coolidge to smile. When they were introduced, Rogers looked at the president and said, "Sorry, I didn't catch your name." President Coolidge cracked up.

You can probably get through life without a sense of humor, but why would you want to? Not only is laughing healthy -- it lowers blood pressure, decreases stress hormones, provides a good workout for your abdominal muscles, and burns calories -- but laughter may be the best way of all to improve and maintain relationships. As long as it's not mean-spirited, laughter brings people together, and seldom tears them apart. Most humor is positive and even bad humor is forgivable.

There's a tremendous power to laughter.

The rabbis of the Talmud would begin their lectures with a joke. Why? A joke wipes the slate clean and gets people to focus. Humor can also be highly effective in arguments. In the middle of a silly fight, if you start laughing, it can wipe out bad feelings. Humor can banish gloom, depression and worry, and keep you cheerful and relaxed.

People would much rather associate with a funny person than a sad, depressed, angry or boring one. If you want to have more good relationships in your life -- or improve the relationships you do have -- work on your sense of humor and exercise it regularly with everyone you meet. Bring humor to every relationship.

9) I'm Sorry -- Apologize Sincerely

When was the last time you said you were sorryand meant it? Two of the most difficult words in the English language to express are: I'm sorry (three, if you count the contraction as two).

Why is it so difficult to apologize? It's painful to come face-to-face with our true self image -- that of someone who is flawed. The words 'I'm sorry' stick in the throat of an arrogant person. Ted Turner once said, "I once made a mistake in my life. I thought I was wrong, but I was mistaken." He was joking ...I hope!

How do you go about saying you're sorry? There are different ways to apologize. Some effective, some, remarkably meaningless.

Let's say you're waiting in line at the grocery store, and you stepped on someone's toes. You have to say *something*. What are your options?

1) You can say "Excuse me." If the other person is hopping around in pain, or just plain annoyed, this doesn't go very far. You're not saying you feel bad about what happened, and you're not taking responsibility for what you did. If you think about it, we often say "Excuse me" when we think the other person is responsible, as when we brush past someone blocking our way in a supermarket aisle.

2) You can say "I'm sorry." This is ambiguous and still admits no responsibility. What you might mean when you say "I'm sorry" is: I stepped on your toes because maybe your toes shouldn't have been there. All you're saying with "I'm sorry" is an emotional response: I wish it hadn't happened.

As an aside, whatever you do, don't say, "I'm sorry if I hurt you." We hear these type of apologies all the time from athletes, celebrities and politicians who say, "If anyone was offended, I'm sorry."

3) You can say "I apologize." **Now** you're admitting the fault was yours. You're saying, "I should have looked where I was stepping and I didn't."

But here's the best way to apologize.

4) You can say "Clumsy me. I should have been more careful. Please forgive me." That's even stronger. It states your awareness that the other person has experienced genuine distress for which you are to blame — you're acknowledging that you caused the other person pain (and maybe a bruise ...or worse) -- and that he or she has good reason to be angry with you.

The Chofetz Chaim, a great rabbi of the previous century, said that fractured relationships usually don't occur because of one big blow up between two people. Problems in relationships are created, he says, when we sweep our mistakes under the carpet without making them right. We say to ourselves, "Ah, it's water under the bridge. It's too late to say I'm sorry." And since we never got in the habit of apologizing, it keeps happening over and over again. And the dirty lump under the carpet keeps growing bigger and bigger.

If you want to get along with people, apologize when you know you're wrong. Apologies -- when sincere -- don't hurt anyone, and they're a great way to show off your integrity and courage. Once you accept the

fact that making mistakes, saying offensive things, and being wrong are all part of being human, you'll find apologizing much easier. Try it ...you'll like it ...and so will everyone around you.

10) Just Listen Well

In a 2010 survey conducted through the University of Minnesota, 886 divorcing Minneapolis-area parents of kids under 18 were asked to identify 'all the reasons' for their divorce. Whereas 'religious differences' (8.6%) and 'sexual problems' (24%) were among the least-identified problems, two items stood out as most frequently identified: 'growing apart' (55%) and 'unable to talk together' (52.7%). Of all the skills necessary to effectively communicate, *listening* is at or near the top of the list.

Our rabbis identify listening as a skill with multiple benefits. "...*there is nothing as good for the body as silence.*" (Ethics of the Fathers 1:7) Perhaps it is not coincidental that in the English language, *silence* and *listen* contain the same letters!

Being a good listener is a skill that needs to be consciously worked on. Very few people are naturally good listeners. Over the years we develop bad listening habits, and unless addressed, they remain with us and affect our relationships. Here are just a few of the common bad listening habits.

1) 'Allen, I like working with you, but you drive me crazy when you finish my sentences for me.'

Some find it difficult to patiently wait until someone speaking at a slow rate has finished what he or she is trying to say.

Many people reduce their chances of getting information -- and irritate others -- because of several bad listening techniques.

2) Are you one of those people who interrupts others before they are through talking so that you can express your own views? it interferes the thought process of the person talking to them. People give up talking to these type of people, saying, "What's the use? They're not interested in what I'm saying, anyway." Even if you've heard the question 20 times that day, no one likes to be interrupted.

3) Another habit of bad listeners: They get carried away with the details and don't hear the full story. Details may be inaccurate, while the full story is very accurate; a good listener learns to distinguish between them. Don't get lost in an unimportant point and totally miss the value of the ideas being presented. A good listener doesn't let that happen..

4) Another bad listening habit that most people have to work on is giving undivided attention to the person speaking. Here are some distractions: Taking or making phone calls, looking at what is going on behind or around the speaker, interjecting comments about about certain people passing by, and writing reading or texting during the conversation. These types of actions send a clear signal to the speaker: "I am rejecting what you have to say or what I feel that what you have to say is important." And ultimately, these distractions send the message of, "I think you are unimportant."

Let the person talking to you know that you're interested in what he or she is saying. If you're playing around with your pen or filing your nails, the person talking to you will get the impression that you really aren't interested in what he or she is saying. Good listeners send a non-verbal message that is loud and clear; I think what you have to say is important, and I think you're a person worth listening to. Who doesn't like being friends with an outstanding listener?