

The Fifth Great Step

~ Never Say I (Until Asked) ~

The most challenging part of your journey could easily be the fifth great step. You're about to discover why the word "I" is so critical to your future success and happiness. Self-revelation #1: You've openly admitted your most important, knowledgeable, and favorite conversational subject is yourself. That's right, "me, myself, and I" is your best and most exciting subject, and there's nothing wrong with that. After all, you are an expert on yourself and your own unique life experiences. You can talk about yourself all day and all night long. You are capable of non-stop talk.

You've also discovered that the possession of healthy ego gives you healthy self-image, self-pride, self-trust, self-love, self-control, and ultimately, healthy self-image.

THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

Fact: when you have a healthy ego you no longer have to talk about yourself—you know exactly who you are—you are comfortable with yourself. Healthy ego gives you total peace of mind.

When you continually talk about yourself you do not have a healthy ego, you suffer from low self-esteem. You don't have a clue who you are—you feel terribly alone—you're always depressed—happiness is short-lived—your life is in chaos.

The only way to improve your life and gain self-esteem, begin to feel good about yourself—figure out who you really are—is to stop talking about yourself and start listening to others.

You will quickly realize, the less you say "I" (talk about yourself) the higher your self-esteem rises. Without "I" in every sentence, you become a better person.

Starting today, deal with people by not saying

"I" during conversations. It takes tremendous concentration, personal stamina, and commitment. Beads of sweat will form on your forehead—your idle tongue will twitch—your eyes will water—your lips will quiver—your brain will blow all fuses—but you must not, under any circumstances, say "I".

By now you must be muttering to yourself, "Do I have to go the rest of MY life without talking about MY all-time favorite subject—ME?" The answer is, "Of course not!" You'll have plenty of opportunities to talk about your favorite subject, yourself. For example:

YOU MAY SAY "I" WHEN:

- Another person asks you a question.
- You're complimenting or thanking someone.
- You're relating to another person's story.
- You're invited as a guest speaker or teach class.
- You're asked to give a business presentation.

NEVER SAY "I KNOW"

Quite often during conversations, you matter-of-factly blurt out, "I know!" while the other person is talking. Three reasons you consciously or unconsciously interject "I know" is: (1) to let the other person know you're intelligent, (2) perhaps you're already aware of the answer to the problem, or (3) you're insulted the subject was brought up in the first place.

Admittedly, if you really listen to the popular interjection "I know!" it often comes off as defensive, spiteful, or oversensitive. Even if you do know what's being explained, it is always best to remain silent and not attempt to prove you already know what the speaker knows, or let them know you're just as smart.

By remaining silent, you allow the speaker the glory of the moment. They respect you much

more for your attentive listening, not for your defensive-sounding, interruptive “I Know!”

Next, you will continue your journey down the Open Road and discover success through functional conversation—high self-esteem talk.

HIGH SELF-ESTEEM TALK

Happiness and self-confidence depend on your ability to communicate and talk effectively, to express your ideas, desires, ambitions, goals, fears and disappointments with emotional honesty. Talk is critical for maintaining a healthy ego. Talk is important, not vocabulary. You do not have to be a living dictionary, walking encyclopedia, or literary genius. The most important thing to remember is, when you’re asked to talk, you make the most of the opportunity, not by blurting out “I” or “I know” every other word, but by carefully listening and waiting for the correct moment to reply.

The best way to master high self-esteem talk is to build a bridge of words between yourself and the person, or persons, you’re talking to. A bridge of words takes time to build. A bridge of words opens up communication lines between yourself and the rest of society.

BUILD A BRIDGE OF WORDS

- 1. Begin Talking With Casual Conversation**
- 2. Get People Talking About Themselves**
- 3. Agree Most Of The Time**
- 4. Form A Human Relations Bond**
- 5. Never Outshine The Other Person**

1. Begin Talking With Casual Conversation

Casual conversation works with total strangers as well as with people you’ve known all your life. Casual conversation is, “What a great day!” or “Where did you get those shoes?” or “I hear you just bought a new computer!” These seemingly simple statements get the conversation going so you can get into deeper conversation. It creates a comfort zone.

The first rule: don’t try too hard, just relax. You must be yourself as you start the wheels rolling. Worrying about sounding stupid, boring,

unintelligent or silly is your worst enemy. Trying to sound brilliant may immediately turn the other person off.

Warm up slowly—go easy. By being sincere and positive, other people open up like books, strangers feel they’ve known you for years, and everyone becomes comfortable around you.

2. Get People Talking About Themselves

Always ask questions concerning the other person’s favorite subject, the one thing they’re an absolute expert on—themselves. If you really think about it, people never run out of self-information; that is, stories about themselves.

Your success depends on your ability to focus and concentrate on the other person’s story and not think of yourself—to remain silent. Why? Since most people you talk to suffer from low self-esteem, you seldom get the chance to mention what a wonderful person you are because they seldom ask. You’re lucky to get a word in edgewise.

Your job is to “bite your tongue” and listen. The reward for such heroism? High self-image of course! Remember, you’ll always feel better about yourself at the end of any conversation when you realize you didn’t need to talk about yourself.

Silence is golden. The magic is listening.

3. Agree Most Of The Time

Maintain the other person’s ego at all costs. Even when they give the wrong score to the ball game, or mispronounce a word, or make an incorrect statement—let it go. Ask yourself, “Will it really make any difference if I correct and possibly embarrass them, or am I putting them in their place to make myself look and feel superior?”

The only time to politely but firmly disagree is when the statement could lead to physical harm such as, “The gun’s not loaded!” “Smoking cigarettes is good for you!” or possible emotional stress such as, “Taxes aren’t due until June 15th!”

When you feel it’s absolutely necessary to

correct another person, positive criticism is the most effective way to deal with the other person and maintain their self-respect, especially their respect for you. Your ability to agree with others lets them know you're on their side. You establish you're not out to get them—you're not the enemy—you're on their team.

4. Form A Human Relations Bond

There are specific times during a conversation when you may say "I" or briefly mention yourself when the statement ties-in or directly relates to the speaker's subject. For example, when someone exclaims, "Our family always vacationed at Disneyland," you may add, "Really! So did our family!"

By relating to the other person's story, it allows you the opportunity to tell the person a little about yourself, and more importantly, it forms a human relations bond.

A human relations bond enables others to feel important because you share their same interests, goals, or backgrounds. Anything that makes you "be like" the other person helps them to immediately like you. Keep your statement very brief, a few words. Never use conversation as a launching pad for rude interruptions.

5. Never Outshine The Other Person

Because you constantly seek praise and recognition you are always anxious to impress others with your own importance. You might think, "I can't wait to impress them with my knowledge!" or "I'll blow them away with my wonderful personality!" "I'll knock 'em dead!" or "They're really going to love this story!" However, based on everything you've learned thus far, the only way to effectively impress the other person is to let them know you are impressed by them.

The secret to your success is your ability to get the other person talking about their all-time favorite subject—theirself. Whether you've just met the person for the first time, or have known the person for years, you must allow the other person center stage. By making them

the star of the show, you experience personal growth beyond your wildest dreams, both emotionally and socially.

High self-esteem talk makes a complete stranger feel like they've known you for years. More importantly, the people you've known for years feel they've met a brand new person. For indeed, they have. What's truly amazing is: high self-esteem talk involves more listening than talking. What a concept!

LOW SELF-ESTEEM CONVERSATION

Low self-esteem conversations occur every day of your life—at home, at school, at work, at play, and in personal relationships—everywhere you go. Like all low self-esteem behaviors, you learn the language of the lowly as children and young adults. It's just a matter of time before you become experts in the use of low self-esteem conversation (shock talk), by watching your peers, role models, and media heroes.

Sad but true, the majority of television, radio, videos, books, music, and movies reinforce bad-taste communication techniques. Everywhere you turn you're exposed to dysfunctional discussions—low self-esteem conversations—unacceptable talk. Here are real-life examples:

The Interruption

A friend tells you about a wonderful experience she's just had and before the words are barely out of her mouth, you interrupt with "I know!" as you begin describing a similar experience that's just happened to you. "I... blah-blah-blah!" blares from your mouth as you completely forget what your friend just said. You might as well announce, "I really don't care about you or your story, I'm more important—my story is much more exciting—so be quiet and listen to me!"

The Bragging Contest

Your friends gather to chat socially. Moby, beaming with pride, begins the conversation by announcing the incredibly huge fish he

caught over the weekend. With the words barely out of his mouth, Moby is rudely interrupted by Ms. Doozie, bragging that “once upon a vacation” the fish she caught was much, much bigger. No sooner does Ms. Doozie begin telling her sensational story when Hocus, loud and belligerently boisterous, brags, “I hold the world’s record for the largest fish ever caught!”

You and the remaining group of frustrated and bewildered participants attempt to interrupt with your own experiences, while others walk away due to insults or disinterest. This “let’s outdo each other bragging contest” has frustrated everyone, but Moby and Ms. Doozie pretend not to show it, while the bigmouth Hocus basks in his own glory, beaming with a false sense of being the most important.

Round Robin Put Down

You’re standing by the coffee machine at work, anxiously awaiting today’s rumors, hearsays, and organizational tabloid-tidbits when Rodanna, a co-worker, hardly gets “good morning” out of her mouth as she begins gossiping about fellow employees. It’s normal to gossip about others so you join in, and besides, it makes you feel good.

As the two of you “rip apart” the staff, Vulcan, your boss, approaches you and loudly criticizes your job performance in front of everyone, then abruptly storms away. Two more co-workers, Ghora and Bogie, rush to your aid. Soon the low “self-esteem chant” begins. Ghora is making racist remarks about fellow workers, Bogie is bitching and complaining about his paycheck, Rodanna is making fun of the boss behind his back, and you are putting down, bad-mouthing, and making fun of everyone in the organization. It’s a full-fledged “round robin put down”.

The Body Slam

School has just let out. Your circle of close friends, your all-important peer group, gather in the hall. Your two best buddies, Jinx and Razz, notice that Trogg is wearing new furry boots.

Jinx points at the boots and sarcastically yells, “Nice boots—for a pussy!” While the entire group breaks into hysterical laughter and points, Razz adds, “Man, I wouldn’t be caught dead in those things!” Trogg, trying to be “cool” and remain part of the group, struggles to crack a smile.

But Trogg is deeply hurt for he’s received the ultimate put down by his friends—a vicious “body slam.” In other words, the ego-crushing, low self-esteem put down has the same effect on Trogg as picking him up and slamming him to the ground.

Stunned, Trogg timidly lowers his head. Jinx and Razz jeeringly exclaim, “Just kidding!” as the duo quickly scans the schoolyard for another victim to body slam.

With one swift, sarcastic, just-kidding remark, Trogg’s ego and fragile self-image has been shattered, while the entire group has falsely elevated themselves—made themselves feel bigger and better at the expense of another individual—a friend.

MAGIC CIRCLE CONVERSATION

Now that you’ve discovered what high self-esteem talk and low self-esteem conversation sound like, it’s time you discover the perfect form of human conversation between two or more persons—the magic circle conversation.

Perfect conversation? Magic circle? What’s this all about? Since you’ve been exposed to non-functional conversation all your life, you must forget the past and open your mind. Let’s explore deeper. A magic circle conversation (a functional conversation) between yourself and another functional person sounds like this:

- *You begin the functional conversation with a warm and friendly greeting.*
- *The other person immediately asks about you (your favorite subject).*
- *You finish discussing your topic and immediately turn your attention back to them (their favorite subject).*
- *They talk about themselves, or a personal*

experience, and immediately turn the spotlight back on you. You talk about yourself.

• *And so on, and so on, and so on—a magic circle of give and take.*

Every magic circle conversation has high self-esteem dialogue, the dynamic exchange of functional communication. During a magic circle conversation you experience fair exchange—give and take—all parties win. Everyone benefits.

There are no rude interruptions, no sudden interjections, no yawning or rolling of eyes, just functional conversation. You maintain their ego and they maintain your ego. How simple. This magic circle stuff isn't so difficult, or is it?

Let's think now, when was the last time you overheard a magic circle conversation? Was it at home? How about at work? Maybe during school? Could it have been on television or at the movies, or perhaps in a book? Well?

You have to admit, you might never have initiated, been involved in, overheard, or witnessed a true fair-exchange magic circle conversation. Needless to say, when you attempt your first magic circle conversation do not get too upset when the other person breaks the magic circle and fails to ask about you. Remember, that person doesn't know any better. They do not know what you know, for they've yet to take their first step—their search for a higher self-image.

Overlooking other peoples inability to carry on a functional discussion—magic circle conversation—becomes a daily experience for you. You must be prepared to show patience.

The chances of finding someone capable of a magic circle conversation is very remote when you first begin your journey. Your adventure might seem lonely at first, but things will soon change.

In concluding your fifth great step, your fifth great adventure, you discover less is better. Less talk (more listening) results in more friends, sound relationships, a better marriage, a more productive career—a purposeful lifestyle. You

realize that talking about yourself, especially your overuse and abuse of the ever-popular "I" word, is the last thing other people want to hear (low self-esteem people, that is). Less talk becomes your personal challenge, requiring total dedication and perseverance.

Now that you've put to practice never saying I (until asked), high self-esteem talk, and magic circle conversations, you have earned the fifth great treasure—self-happiness.

You no longer suffer from self-denial, from living a lie. Your thoughts are clear and purposeful. It's time to continue your self-image odyssey by preparing for the sixth great step—Eliminate Put Downs.