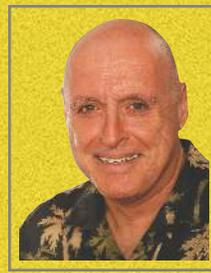


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



789 Are You Committing Conversational No-Nos?

Do your preferred conversation styles put you at a disadvantage when you're in a group of people? I'm Jerry Roberts, sometimes it's what we say; sometimes it's how we say it; and sometimes it's what we're doing when others are talking. It'll all become clear, next on The Extra Point.

You're in a group of people and having a good time, and then HE walks in. You groan because you know what's coming. Those all too familiar conversational habits that you find distasteful are about to happen, because he locks eyes with you. You brace yourself.

1. He can't wait to pitch you on something. He's always in selling mode. He's involved in the latest network marketing opportunity, or has some kind of hot deal. However the conversation starts, it's not long before he gets to, "Hey, have you heard about XYZ? It's amazing and everybody is jumping in!"

If that's not working, how this? "Jennifer, I'm involved with an organization that's made a big difference in my life. Would it be okay if I send you a video on what I'm doing?" A more subtle approach might succeed, and doesn't get you labelled as "the pitcher."

2. She monopolizes conversations with all the great things that are in her life. You make the mistake of asking, "How's it going," and the avalanche begins. "My job is going great, the company is expanding, and my boss is looking to me for big things. George got a big promotion at work, he bought me a new *thingamabob* for my birthday (he's such a great husband), and we bought that big house over on the cliff line, you know the one that everybody wants. The first weekend we were in there we were digging in the back yard and discovered gold. Oh, and don't even get me started on the kids. Johnny and Mary both have straight A's AGAIN. And the dog only goes on the paper. But, you know, things are

hard. Oh hey, how about you?"

How will you feel if the other person then said, "Oh, about the same. Nothing spectacular." One way to avoid this is to simply respond with, "I do have some things going on, but first tell me about you. I want to know what's going on in your life." After they tell you, you'll know what to say about yours. In this case, maybe less is more.

3. They name-drop all the time. "You know, I was with the governor last night, and she was asking me my opinion of how to solve this important problem. She's always calling me for one thing or another." If it's not a politician, it's a big business person, or somebody known in the social circles.

After we're out of our teens, most people are less impressed with who you're hanging out with. Bottom line, most don't care.

4. No matter what you say, they've got a better story. This is known as "one-upping," and it's a habit that should be broken. You end your story and he says, "Oh, that's nothing, let me tell you what happened to me!" I have heard these exact words and seen the expression on faces of people who are in the presence of the one-upper.

I don't think the people who regularly do this are aware of how this can make them look. It's a conversation, not a competition. If somebody else has a good story, you don't have to top it. Just enjoy it.

Many people fall prey to this temptation, to tell a bigger story. It grabs the spotlight from the other person and shines it on us. They may not call us on doing this, but it can be a big negative. If you're a one-upper, sometimes biting your tongue is a better strategy.

(Con't.)

5. They talk about others behind their backs, and not in a good way. This is name-dropping in a negative sense. Here's the key that most people know. If you're trashing somebody to me, how do I know that when you're with them, you're not trashing me? It's never a good look and — honestly — nobody really cares.

If we talk about somebody behind their back, it should always be in positive terms. Always.

6. They think they're funny and they're not. Their jokes fall flat, their sarcastic comments get old after a while, and they don't seem to notice the blank stares or "mercy laughs" they get.

Humor is tough. Timing is critical. I've been in the public eye for over four decades and have had thousands of opportunities to use humor on the radio, as an emcee, commentaries like these, and in training work. Even now, something I think is funny may not work. If you're not sure how your stuff is coming across, ask a few people who will tell you the truth. The best humor is natural and not forced.

You want to be great at making conversation. A good start is not to do any of these things.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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