

Welcome to the Challenge!

This is your Action Guide for implementing the Empathic Awareness, Listening, Speaking, and Dialogue Skills detailed in my book:

4 Essential Keys to Effective Communication

in Love, Life, Work—Anywhere!

***A How-To Guide for Practicing the Empathic Listening, Speaking,
and Dialogue Skills to Achieve Relationship Success with the
Important People in Your Life***

Starting today or tomorrow, or a day very soon, begin your 12-day journey to implement the following plan of practicing one or two communication skill steps each day, thus growing in competence and confidence as you do. The Goal is to steadily improve your empathic awareness, listening, speaking and dialogue skills to become a more effective communicator in building strong relationships with the important people in your life.

Habits Become Behavior

Now, to be clear, you won't magically become perfect in using these skills in 12 days. Behavior modification doesn't occur that quickly. Building new habits takes deliberate, consistent practice. But you can make meaningful strides as you consciously put these skills into practice, in the moment, one day at a time. As James Clear writes in his article *How Long Does It Actually Take to Form a New Habit? (Backed by Science)*: "At the end of the day, how long it takes to form a particular habit doesn't really matter that much. Whether it takes 50 days or 500 days, you have to put in the work either way...The only way to get to Day 500 is to start with Day 1. So, forget about the number and focus on doing the work."

Or as the Nike commercial says,

"Just do it!"

Here's How It Works

- 1) **Print out this Action Guide** and keep it with you, open and readily available.
- 2) **Read aloud to yourself the particular day's instructions** in the morning as you start that day, then practice doing that skill with the people you communicate with throughout that day. You may use the other skills as well, but make that skill your primary focus that day to drill it into yourself. It's that simple! *(Although it will take your focus and intentionality to do. When you get off track at times, get back into focus and remind yourself to practice the skill when the situation arises).*
- 3) **To maximize effectiveness, read the instructions several times during the day**, and ideally memorize the bolded sentences to keep them fresh in your mind as you go through the day.
- 4) **Helpful Day-Time Reminder Tips:**
 - Keep the skill step(s) of each day handy and visible to you throughout that day.
 - Have a small sticky note on your computer screen that says "Skill Practice".
 - You can set the alarm on your cell phone for certain times of the day.
 - These kinds of reminders are important in building new habits.
- 5) **At the end of the day, sit down and do an honest self-evaluation** of how well, or not, you practiced that skill effectively during the day, and what you might have done better. Review in your mind the individual people and interactions you had throughout the course of the day. Pat yourself on the back if you did a good job using the skill, or give yourself encouraging words if you didn't. Even a small improvement is a step forward. Then write down your reflections and any lessons learned during that day.
- 6) **Repeat this format for the next day's instructions**, and on and on for the full 12 days. Consistency will be important – don't skip a day. **Do all 12 days!**
- 7) **Be patient with yourself.** You will probably start Day 1 full of enthusiasm and within a very short time realize you had forgotten to practice the skill. Don't be discouraged. That's normal in trying to learn a new skill, make a new habit.

- 8) **Keep At It!** When you realize you haven't been practicing the skill, simply pause, review the skill step for that day, and start practicing it one interaction at a time. You'll have to do this often over the course of each day of the challenge. Again, you're shaping your thinking and awareness of incorporating these skills into your daily life. This is very likely brand new for you. But stay with it. You'll get better at it day by day.
- 9) **IMPORTANT:** Have a fresh and open mind during this 12-Day Challenge, *especially* with the familiar people in your life. Otherwise, it will be easy for you to slide into your normal communication style with those people—with your spouse or partner, your child(ren), co-workers—people you see and interact with all the time. Be different this time! Be pro-active and think, *These are important people in my life. I care about them and my relationship with them. I won't be the same old person communicating in the same old way. Instead, I will practice these skills with a fresh and open mind with each of them.* Make that commitment to yourself, then do it! And if any of them ask you why you're behaving differently tell them, "I'm learning and practicing new communication skills. I'm trying to improve how I interact with you and others. I want to be better at it." Trust me, they will probably be impressed that you're making the effort to do so.

Think:

"One day at a time, I will make these skills mine."

Have a Great 12 Days!

Congratulations!

You completed the
12-Day Communication Challenge!

That's a big accomplishment! I hope you learned a lot from this experience and your communication skills improved. Now, continue what you started.

Becoming a skilled communicator is a life-long journey. The key is Learning and Understanding what to do, coupled with Commitment and Practice actually doing it, and getting better at it one day at a time.

Repeat this 12-Day Communication Challenge in the future. You can also change it up and practice just one of the skills, such as Empathic Listening, for several days in a row to try to get stronger in using that particular skill. The point is to mindfully and steadily be developing and growing your communication skills on a daily basis, and as you do your Empathy and ability to Listen, Speak and Dialogue well with others will continue to grow and improve!

If you had a positive experience reading the book and doing this challenge, please tell your friends and suggest they buy and read the book and try the challenge themselves.

+++++

Lastly, it was my pleasure sharing these skills and this challenge with you.

I wish you all the best in using these skills to make great relationships with the important people in your life.

~ Bento

www.bentoleal.com