

CB005 - How To Improve Your Conversations

Hello there. Welcome back to Confidence Bytes. My name is Stuart Elliott and I'm your host for this exciting show. Now today I want to talk to you about two things. The first one is I want you to start thinking about confidence as a habit.

The second part is to start building our ability to have good conversations. Now, this has been very, very difficult for me in the past because I've always been the shy, party wallflower. Every party you'd go to, you'd see me propping up the wall, drink in hand, desperately hoping that somebody would come talk to me, because I was too shy to go out and talk to somebody. I didn't know what to say.

So this is why I want to help you to get over the problem I had.

Now, let's go back to confidence.

Confidence is a habit...

And you know habits are formed. So it makes sense to form good, confidence habits, doesn't it?

Now, what do I mean by that?

Well, in the other show, I reminded you about putting an elastic band on your wrist or something like that, or you could have it on your – if you wanted to be crazy, you could put it on your ear or something, but, you know having a reminder, a little device that every time you see it, it reminds you to think about being confident. And I talked about having the “I am good” sheet, the Success Diary, the “I can” pages in your pocket. And every time, you know, you set your alarm and every time your alarm went off, you got them out of your pocket you looked at them, and you'd smile: “Yeeees! Im so confident, I'm so good!” and then you put them back in your pocket, set the alarm, and go off.

Well the elastic band was the same type of device. What it is, every time you see it, it reminds you, triggers your mind to take them out, look at them, smile at yourself, feel good about yourself, and go about your day more confident. And if you have this on your wrist and you look at it, and you note it every – you know, you pull your things out – every time you note it, and you do this every day for two or three weeks, you'll be surprised how quickly this becomes a habit, how quickly your thinking that you are a good person, and your understanding that you can do so many things, and your success diary proved that to you.



And you use that with the confidence triangle, I introduced in the last show, to just keep doing more and more and more, and this will become a habit. You'll start getting the habit of feeling good about yourself.

Now, most of us have got the habit of feeling bad about ourselves.

And we need to replace that, we need to get rid of that, just kick it out the window and feel good. And over time, it will be cemented into you.

Now, here's the thing, how effective do you think that will be? Probably at this moment, you're a little bit dubious, but let me tell you this with a story, a true story. One of my mentors, Igor Ledochowski, told a story about a webathon where there was a guy on the webathon – sorry, telethon, telethon, it a few years ago back in the UK – there was this guy on this telethon and he was doing pushups for about a day. 24 hours without a break.

And everybody was stunned about how fit and how strong he was. And he tells the story that he wasn't always like that.

He used to be the original couch potato, and one day, he decided he needed to do something, so he bought a pair of training shoes, and he put them by the door, the front door.

And every time he passed them, he looked at them, but he didn't put them on, and he didn't go out, he didn't do any running. He just looked at them. And then one day, he said, "Okay, I'll try them on." So he put them on, and he still didn't go out and do training.

But he did this a little bit, a little bit, a little bit, and then one day, he went out in the garden and then he started doing a little bit of training, and eventually, this became a habit, and he just did it over, and over, and over, and became this super fit person.

And it's the same with you, and your 'I can', 'I am good', and your 'Success Diary', and your little elastic band, or whatever devices you want to just jog your memory every time to get them out. You do this regularly, a little bit, by little bit, by little bit, you will change your feelings about yourself, and you'll make those feelings your good confidence habits.

So remember that: "Confidence Is A Habit", and it makes sense to have good confidence habits, doesn't it?



Okay, so, let's move on to conversations, and earlier on, I told you how I was the original party wallflower, and I didn't know what to say, I wish somebody would've helped me when I was younger. You see, a good conversation is more about you listening to the other person, and asking one or two questions, and letting them do all the work.

That's it. It's that simple.

And you know how easy is it to have, you know, to ask a question.

Well, let's have a look:

“My name is Stuart, how are you?”

“No, My name's Mary.”

“Mary, what do you do for a living?”

There's the first question. Mary answers, tells me what she's doing for a living.

“Oh that's interesting. How long have you been doing that?”

So I just asked two simple questions, and she's giving me most of the conversation. Now, by listening and being aware of what she's saying, and how her emotions change as she's saying it, I can pick up on what it is that's important to her and ask her a simple question.

And here's the thing, she will give me all the conversation, all the questions. I just have to listen, show interest, and it's important – it's not a police interrogation, it's not, “Why did you do that? How did you do that?”

It's genuine interest. “That's interesting. What's it like being a doctor? How many people do you see every day? Do you find this very tiring?”

Simple things... You just ask simple questions, but you preface it with interest, with curiosity, with genuine concern about the other person, and they will pick up on that.

Let me give you a good example of this. The other week, one of my clients phoned me, and she said that she hates the people in her office because they're always bitchy towards her, they're always talking about things which are not interesting, most of them are young mothers or young parents, and they're always talking about their



children. Now, she doesn't have any children, she's not married, and she really doesn't have any interest, at this moment, in being married or having children.

So, she doesn't know how to talk to them, and if they talk about their children, she sort of doesn't know what to say, so they think she's aloof and not interested, and they become bitchy behind her back.

So I said to her, "Maybe you're not interested in children, but what about how their energy changes when they talk about their children? Do they feel proud? Do they feel happy? Do they feel angry? Do they feel frustrated at times? Look at the energy behind what they're saying, and then ask them genuine questions about that."

So, you know, think about it, your friend comes in, or your colleague comes into work, and you talk to them, and you say, "Morning," and you say,

"How are your children today?"

"Oh no, this one..."

"Oh, your children were so naughty. What did they do?"

And you have concern about that, and you echo back your empathy, and then they will start listening and expanding and telling you all the things you need, and maybe this child went and broke six plates in the morning, or did something very similar.

And you say, "My, that's terrible."

But you say it with genuine concern. "What did you do next? Did you tell him to clean up? Does he have to pay for them with his pocket money?" Or whatever. And you show concern and empathy, and they will build a conversation for you. They will give you everything you need.

You don't have to be interested in the topic, per say, you're interested in more how they perceive the topic and how their energy comes across. So, she thought this was a great idea and she's going to try this.

And during the course of our conversation, she let drop that she started learning the Zither. And the Zither is a long box, erm, it's a Chinese instrument. It's a long box, maybe about two meters long, and about 200 deep, and it's got lots of strings on it, and people play it by plucking the strings, and, "Dong. Dong."



But, it's not my kind of instrument. It doesn't – the sound is nice, but it's just not my type of thing, and I'm not really interested in the zither, but when she told me, I said to her,

“Okay,” I said, “I didn't know you played the zither. How long have you been playing?”

And she started saying she started to do this, she's been doing this for two years now, but she's starting to get better, and she's becoming more confident about it, so she wants to play more.

So I said, “Do you have a zither?”

“No, I go to a shop. There's a music shop and there's a woman I've got to know there, and she's really very friendly, very kind, and she's teaching me.”

And we started having this long conversation about my client, Jo having lessons from this woman, how they're both very busy, so they can't always have a regular lesson, but they make communication by phone.

And Jo is now going on about the shop getting bigger and getting busy, so the woman is expanding the shop, and the shop is now about 2000 square meters.

And this conversation just got bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and all the time, Jo was getting more and more animated, she was getting more relaxed, more happy to tell me all about this thing that's really important to her.

And after about ten minutes, I stopped Jo, and said, “Okay, Jo, how do you feel right now?”

And she looked at me and she said – well, we were on the phone, so I couldn't see her, but you could hear her voice change. She's smiling, and she said, “I feel so happy. I feel so light. I feel so excited.”

I said, “Why do you think that is?”

And she said, “Because you're showing you care.”

And I said, “Well what did I do? I only asked you a couple of questions.”



And that's the point. I only asked a couple of questions about topics she had told me were interesting and important to her. I was focused on her energy. She was getting more excited, I was giving her feedback noises:

“That's great”, “Mmm,” “Interesting...”

All these types of acknowledgements that I'm listening and I'm concerned, just like, she said:

“The shop's getting bigger.”

“That's interesting. How big is the shop? How many people? How long do you play?”

But I was prefacing it with a comment to show that I was interested. I wasn't making it into an interrogation. And in reality, in that conversation, I only asked about three to four questions. I didn't do any work, I just listened, and I was aware of how she was changing, how her energy was growing, and she was getting excited by the conversation.

So I said to her afterwards, I said, “Okay, so you feel much more excited because I seemed to be an interested person who was showing genuine concern, and listening to you, and giving you the chance to talk about something important to you. How can you apply that with your colleagues at work, the ones you say their conversation is boring?”

And this really got her thinking because all I had done was echo, in a practical way, what I told her.

Work with the energy, work with the interest of the other person. They will provide the topic, or the topics, or the questions for you to ask.

Your job is to listen with genuine interest to them. You may not be interested in the topic as I say, but you have the interest in how they change their energy. Then, as you listen, you acknowledge that you're listening, especially if you're on the phone and they can't see you, and if you got a question, preface it, if you can, with a nice acknowledgement:

“Oh that's interesting.”, “Oh that's fantastic.”, “Wow, that sounds great!”, “Tell me about this part of it.”



And just make it genuine, and I tell you, you will have the best conversations you have ever had.

So, it's a very simple technique. It will take you practice. It will take you a little bit of time, you don't have to go whole hog, just think about a conversation you would normally have for 30 seconds or a minute, and then you feel tongue-tied. Can you double it to two minutes? I'm pretty sure you can. Can you double it to three, or make it three minutes? I'm pretty sure you can do that. In fact, why don't you have a competition with yourself?

Or you could tweet me on '@StuartDoubleC' and let me know how long you're getting your conversations to go for. And remember, it's not about you talking, it's about you listening and getting the other person to talk to you, because people love to talk about themselves.

If they have pets, they love to talk about their pets. If they have children, they love to talk about their children. If they have hobbies, or cars, or other toys, they love to talk about those things because it's exciting to them.

So all you have to do is focus on those things, focus on their excitement, acknowledge them, and then just bring it into the conversation with a couple of well-chosen questions.

So, today has been very useful.

You understand now that confidence is a habit, and habits are formed, so you can form good confidence habits.

And you understand that it's easy to have a conversation. It's going to take a little time to practice, and there will be mistakes along the way, but don't worry about that because you're just getting better and better and better. Go out and practice.

And in the next show, I'm going to give you more tips about how to make your conversations easier, and how to make them more interesting. So stay tuned, drop me a line, or drop me a message at '@StuartDoubleC' on Twitter. Let me know how you're going.

Tell me if you're getting a one minute, a two minute, a three minute, a four minute, or how long the conversation is, and how you felt, and how the other person felt about it. Practice it, go away, start making this a habit along with your confidence habit. It's going to be the most beneficial thing you do.



So, thanks for watching. It's been great talking to you. Go out and get more confident every single day.

Ciao.

