

**Excerpt**

**People Skills 101**

How to Have More Friends, Fewer Conflicts, and  
Better Relationships

by Kerry C. O'Hallaron

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## Author's Foreword



I was born shy.

Have you ever had a baby smile at you, play with your finger, and giggle at the silly sounds you make? If so, that baby wasn't me. At best, you would have gotten a polite wave from me and then I would have gone back to playing with my stuffed animals. People were just not my thing back then!

From my earliest memory, I *wanted* to be a part of the conversation. I just didn't know what to say. It was a little like an affliction – I was “that shy kid who doesn't say much.” But like most kids I didn't let my “affliction” hold me down. I grew up pretty much like other kids - friends, school, fun – just more socially awkward, and shy around all but my close friends.

I was also born an introvert. An introvert is a person who tends to feel drained after socializing and regains energy by spending time alone. I've always liked most people, in spite of the shyness, but "people time" tends to wear me out while it tends to energize an extrovert.

People often assume that shyness and introversion are the same thing. They're not, but I think of them as "cousins." Look at it this way. An outgoing extrovert loves to socialize, and feels recharged after doing so. A shy person has only a moderate interest in socializing, and doesn't know what to say when he does socialize. In addition, if he's also an introvert, he feels physically and emotionally drained afterwards.

Yikes! Welcome to my world!

So this little story, which happened to me in 1993, should sound about right for the person I've described above (me).

*There I was, St. Louis, Missouri, in the insurance office where I worked as a client service executive. I had a somewhat complex job, delivering the risk management consulting services that our salespeople had committed to our largest corporate clients. It was complex, yes; but there was only one real requirement of the job. I was to manage the relationships – that is, keep clients happy and satisfied – so*

*that they did not leave our company for a competitor.*

*That's it! That was the job. Don't lose customers. It was more about relationship skills than it was about technical insurance skills – probably not the best fit for a guy born a shy introvert and who depended on the income from the job to help support three young kids.*

*And there I was, facing the fact that I had just lost the biggest account in the office!*

*Our largest client had “fired” us because they felt that a competitor, whom we knew was no better than us, could do a better job for them.*

*In other words, at least according to our bosses, I had failed to do my only job – keeping the customer convinced that we were their best option.*

*I had a meeting with the boss, to have a “conversation” about the loss. Have you had such a conversation with a boss? The feeling transcends fear. Whether you agree with the boss or not, you know that your life is going to change profoundly – probably in the form of looking for a new job.*

*The boss invited me to come into his office and sit down. I walked in, and to my surprise, his boss was sitting next to him, and our Human Resources officer was sitting on the other side. Their faces were grim. This could not be good.*

*“Kerry,” said Joe, my boss, “I think you know why we’re here.”*

*I nodded, forcing a little smile, and mentally preparing my résumé so that I could send it out to competitors.*

*“Frankly,” said Joe, “I’m disappointed in you. We trusted you with our largest account. We gave you access to all of our people and resources.*

*Your only job was to keep the account. And you lost it. I believe the reason you lost it is because we underestimated your people skills, **which are about the worst we’ve ever seen.**”*

*My jaw started to drop, and my forced smile suddenly got smaller. As did my ego. He was being a bit more direct than I would have preferred.*

*“I’ll get right to the point. We have no option but to...”*

*My heart raced. My face flushed. The axe was about to fall. The meeting would end, and I'd walk to my desk, pack my things, and leave both unemployed and shamed.*

*I knew I could find another job. But it could take six to twelve months, might require moving from our home town, and our meager savings and my wife's income simply would not sustain us that long. I'm sure the fear showed on my face.*

*He continued, "We have no option but to demote you into a role that does not involve dealing with clients, effective immediately. We thought you had the necessary skills to interact with people that are required by this job. You don't, and there's no place to learn them. I'm sorry, but this is our decision."*

*Now, I'm blessed with the ability to be a really quick thinker when necessary, and right now that was necessary. In a few nanoseconds my brain said to me, "Let's review. On one hand, I worked hard to get this particular position and now it's gone, maybe forever. What little ego I have left just got bruised beyond belief. I no longer have any real credibility at work.*

*But on the other hand, I keep my employment and my income – all of it; my*

*family will never know just how damaging this is to my pride (unless I one day write a training program about it); my mortgage continues getting paid and my kids get to continue to eat. It's a shallow victory, but it's a victory."*

*Deferring to my always-correct brain, I did what was necessary to protect the job that I had somehow just retained. I apologized sincerely for letting the company down, promised I would live up to expectations in the new role, thanked them for giving me a second chance, smiled genuinely, shook their hands with as much enthusiasm as I could muster under the circumstances, and exited the meeting.*

*Two very important thoughts played through my mind as I left Joe's office:*

- 1. He said there's no place to learn people skills. Really? For a guy who was born a painfully shy introvert, I had actually learned them modestly well – at least well enough to get a job that required decent people skills. And this guy is telling me there is no place to get better at them? Where did I learn what I had learned to get to this point, when I started a shy introvert pretty much afraid of my own shadow?!!!*



- 2. For a guy who allegedly has no people skills, I did an awfully good job working the room and convincing them they had not made a mistake in keeping me around. The painfully shy “me” from childhood could never have pulled that off!*

*I wasn't angry. I was grateful that they hadn't fired me. Part of me just wondered if there might have been another approach, one which helped me further master the skills they felt I needed.*

*In any case, relieved at the situation, I made two promises to myself. First, I would continue to protect my income so that I could help feed my family. That was paramount. Second, I had almost succeeded at my job as a client service executive. I truly liked it, and I would go to the ends of the earth to learn the necessary people skills to get it back.*

*I had come miles from my days as a tongue-tied kid, and I learned almost enough to be successful at the job. I very quietly thought, “Don't tell me, boss, that there is no place to learn people skills. I'll find a place to learn them, or I'll create one!”*

This little story has a great ending. This training is not about me or my story, so I'm not going to share

the epilogue here. You'll see it elsewhere in the training, and I promise you'll like it.

Over time, while learning those additional people skills, I did realize that my now former boss Joe had been right – there really was no place to go that formally teaches such skills. Maybe the world just assumes that you either have them or you don't.

But everywhere I looked – school, online classes (which came about somewhat after my story took place, because “online” didn't exist back then), seminars, corporate training – they simply didn't offer a core foundation of human interaction skills.

Let me ask you, have you had any formal education? I mean, did you go to school (or home school)? Of course you did! Almost all of us went to grade school and at least some high school. Most of us completed high school. Many went on to undergraduate studies in college. If we graduated, some went on to post-graduate studies.

If you're reading this training, you probably have some level of formal education.

So do me a favor. Think back to each level of formal education that you took. Do you remember reading, writing, and arithmetic in grade school? Maybe history and sociology in high school? How about English literature and philosophy in college? “Advanced Whatever” in graduate school? Great memories, right?

Now tell me, what was the name of that class that taught you basic social interaction – people skills?

Was it called “People Skills 101?” (Had such a class existed, that would have been an apt name, wouldn’t it?) Or was it “The Fundamentals of Human Interaction?” Probably not. Such a class didn’t actually exist, did it? It doesn’t exist now, does it? Not in school, not in corporate training, not online – it really doesn’t exist!

Kids can learn how to bully in school, because it’s easy to learn negative behavior and at least a few people will flock to them if they do it. People seem to know almost instinctively how to be nasty online, and if they do it just right, they’ll get some “followers.” There seems to be a natural desire for people to want to move others towards themselves, and in a sad way being mean to individuals or groups can draw others towards you.

But I don’t believe any of us know *instinctively* how to forge real friendships, how to get almost anyone to like us, how to overcome shyness (even some extroverts are a bit shy, by the way), or how to manage just about any interaction to avoid needless conflict. We don’t know how to do these things instinctively, and if we don’t learn them through associations with others who know them, and we don’t learn them in classes that don’t exist, then we go through life socially challenged.

Back in that insurance office in 1993, I made it my mission after my unfortunate experience to *learn* the things that my boss told me I couldn't learn. At the time, I didn't think of it as my mission to *teach* them. I just wanted to become more comfortable in my interactions, to know how to manage people's perceptions of me, to know how to *manage* social and business situations rather than being frightened of them.

In short, I wanted to *go to* the class called People Skills 101. I had to create that class for myself because I couldn't find anyone else in the world who was teaching it – and for that exact reason I'm here to share what I've learned with you! Whether you're shy, an introvert, both, *or a bubbly, outgoing extrovert*, there is something here for you.

I'm really glad you're here. What you learn in this training may not change your life, at least immediately. It *will* teach you how to skillfully but sincerely understand and manage the way others see you; and how to change your interactions from what they are to what you want them to be. If you let it, it will, as the title promises, teach you how to be more likeable, have fewer conflicts, and enjoy greatly improved relationships.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy. I promise you will be amazed at the elegant simplicity of what you are about to learn, and you'll be excited at the results when you put it all to use.

Kerry O'Hallaron  
Tampa, Florida (USA)  
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# PART ONE

**CAN YOU REALLY  
GET PEOPLE TO  
LIKE YOU?**

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# 1

## How to INSTANTLY Become More Likeable

*“Share your smile with the world. It’s a symbol of  
friendship and peace.”*

(Christie Brinkley, American model, actress, and  
businesswoman, 1954- )

*Legend has it that “Connie” (her real name  
– she’d be pleased to know that I’m sharing  
her story) came out of the womb with a  
smile on her face.*

*I wasn’t on this earth at the time, so I don’t  
know that for sure. I only knew her for the  
last two thirds of her many years. So let me  
share what I do know about her.*

*She was born in the Midwest United States,  
of hard-working middle-class parents who  
were not far removed from European  
immigrants. She had a happy childhood. In  
the middle of World War II, as a young  
adult, she married Don. They were together  
nearly sixty years – by all accounts a very  
happy union.*

*Connie, along with Don, raised six children. That alone was a herculean effort. Somehow, she managed to keep smiling through it all.*

*In the early 1970's, as the children were progressing through their education, she entered the work force – during a time when many women could only get jobs as secretaries. Being a secretary, though, was not for Connie. Her exceptional work ethic and winning smile earned her the job of city clerk in her home town. She worked there until retirement, at which point she (showing her captivating smile as always) was featured in the local newspaper for being a one-of-a-kind woman.*

*She loved retirement, enjoying her relationships with Don, her children and grandchildren, and old friends. She lived the good life until the late 1990's, when tragedy struck in the form of a massive stroke. Not one to give up easily, Connie survived the stroke well – except that it became difficult to verbalize what she was thinking. She thought clearly but spoke with great difficulty – often barely able to get a message across.*

*Previously, she had always communicated with a smile and a friendly word. Now she*



*just had the smile, as many of her words did not make sense except to those closest to her.*

*If that bothered her, you'd never know it. Whenever someone came to visit her, her eyes lit up and her smile warmed the room. The smile projected a clear message: "Hi. I'm really glad to see you. I'm glad you are in my life. I'm glad you are here." Her speech was challenged, but her communication was just a little different than yours and mine.*

*When Don died in 2004, she moved to a nice senior living facility, where her smile alone was enough to befriend residents and staff alike. She had constant visitors from her large extended family, friends, and residents, in spite of the speech challenge. Connie made life good.*

*I got to spend some time with her just a week before her death in 2014. We both seemed to know her time was coming – but she refused to give up that radiant smile even then. We spent time enjoying the beautiful surroundings of the home, looking at the flowers and listening to the birds. I talked; she smiled.*

*A week later, as she departed this world, she left behind a gift to everyone who knew her – now including you. She entrusted that*

*wonderful, powerful smile to each of us, asking us to both keep it and share it with others, and make the world a little brighter place in the process.*

(Rest in peace Connie O'Hallaron, a/k/a Mom, 1920-2014.)

Look around you, and you will see the effect a smile can have on people. A warm smile can strengthen a relationship. A smile from a physician in a hospital emergency room can instantly ease the patient's fears. A smile in a job interview can put the candidate at ease. A sincere smile in a store may turn a "looker" into a customer.

The examples are endless. But Connie taught us best how powerful a genuine smile is, particularly in her later years. She realized that, because of her very limited speech, her primary way to communicate was through facial expressions. She knew, and she taught those of us who knew and loved her (it was impossible to know her without loving her), that the expression on *her* face had a powerful effect on the person she was sharing that expression with.

She knew that if she smiled that warm smile, it would make the person feel good, loved, wanted, happy – often all at the same time. She also knew that if she frowned, or otherwise showed anger or displeasure, she could immediately have a powerful

*negative* impact on that person. She could ruin that person's day, or their morning, or at a very minimum their mood for a short term, just with a frown.

She realized, either intuitively or consciously (or both), that what she *projected* would have a powerful effect on the person she projected it to – and that she greatly influenced whether that effect would be positive or negative. I'm not sure she ever actually wanted that kind of responsibility – but she was well prepared to handle it. She simply chose to have a positive impact on the lives of everyone she touched, every time she touched them!

I'd like to propose a little two-step exercise for you. The first step simply involves “people watching.”

Over the next few days, go about your work, family life, etc. doing things exactly as you've done in the past. However, pay close attention to the people you encounter. Watch for people who smile at you. I'm asking you to take a few days, because you may not encounter very many people who smile. But there will be some.

Watch carefully. Pay attention to the circumstances. Was it someone in the elevator, where most people try desperately to get to their floors without making eye contact? Was it someone in traffic? Was it a clerk at a store? Was it your spouse / significant other, child, or parent?

Now, as they smile at you, try to associate a meaning with the smile. In other words, try to imagine their smile is a form of communication, and guess what they are “saying.” What is the message that the person with the smile is conveying?

It may be, “Hi, how are you? Good to see you.” It may be, “Thanks for coming into our store/restaurant/place of business.” It may simply be a subconscious expression such as, “I’m friendly. Are you?” Or in a relationship, it may mean, “I’m really glad you’re here!” (My own beautiful wife realized the power of her smile over forty years ago when we first met, and she continues to use it daily to reinforce our relationship.)

OK, now it’s time to move on to part 2 of the exercise. In part 2, you do the exact same thing as in part 1, except as frequently as possible, make eye contact and smile at the other person. This may come easily to you, or it may not. But please try it. Do it several times a day for a few days.

And by the way, when you smile, do what Connie did and convey a message with your smile. The message should be appropriate to the person you’re smiling at. If it’s your boss, it should be along the lines of, “Hi, boss. It’s really good to see you.” If it’s a stranger, it should be along the lines of “Hi. How are you?” If it’s your significant other, you can use your own imagination, depending on the circumstances and his/her mood.

Here's an easy trick: as you are smiling, *think* the message you are trying to project. If it's your boss, think, "Hi, boss. It's really good to see you." Warning: this really works. So don't smile at the boss while you are thinking, "Hi boss. You're an idiot and I could do your job with my eyes closed!" Most people can "feel" when the message is incongruent. In other words, most people can sense an insincere smile.

So smile, think of the message you want to project, and watch closely when you do this. Watch their reactions, and try to imagine how they feel. You should see, as Connie did, that a simple, warm, genuine smile changes the entire trajectory of a person's day, and maybe even of their whole life.

OK, one more homework assignment. But this one is simple. Think back to the last time you saw a baby smile. I'm told that after about six or eight weeks, many babies develop a "social smile." In other words, after that age they really mean it – it's not just "gas" or some involuntary reaction.

So think of the last time you saw a baby smile who was at least six or eight weeks old. If it's ever happened, even once, I'm sure you remember it. The experience was almost priceless, wasn't it? It's hard to describe. It's the same as any other person smiling, but so incredibly pure.

With a baby, there's no possibility of a fake "politician" smile. It's hard to know what the baby's

message is, because the baby doesn't know a language yet that he/she can express with a smile. You get to assign your own message to the baby's smile – but it's almost certainly a positive message.

The baby might be saying, “OOH. You're that nice person that feeds me. I like you.” Or, “You're that nice lady that smells good and kisses me all over.” You don't know exactly what the message is. All you know is, that smile warms your heart. Doesn't it?

So how is it that so many of us intuitively know the power of a smile at eight weeks of age, and then proceed to forget it as we grow up?!

Connie's smile would have melted your heart if you knew her. In fact, if you let it, just about every sincere smile you encounter will soften your disposition, improve your mood, make you feel better – and make you *like* the person who is doing the smiling. What if you were to simply turn things around, be on the giving end of a warm, sincere smile, and watch and feel the powerful effect it has on the other person? Try it. You'll like it.

It takes less than a few seconds to smile. There are 86,400 seconds in every day. Make a commitment to invest just a few of them every day in giving genuine, warm, sincere smiles.

At the end of each section, we'll propose a GoldenRule (see below). Each GoldenRule in this training will have some positive effect on your life

and your relationships with others. They are all important and valuable. However, not one of them will have more of an impact than this one!

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### **GoldenRule #1**

*Smile like you genuinely mean it! Do it warmly and sincerely. It will move the world towards you in a small but unmistakable and irreversible way.*