

How to Win Friends and Influence People Book Report: Guiding Principles to Improve Your
Communication

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Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* consists of four main sections, each containing several principles that help achieve the section's overarching goal. Carnegie teaches readers techniques on how to handle other people, how to make people like you, how to "win" people to your way of thinking, and how to offer change without offending others, possibly resulting in resentment. Carnegie's primary is sharing his guide to communicating. Many of the principles are similar, and they can be summed into four main points for the most part.

1. Listen more than you speak.
2. Genuinely care about what the other person has to say.
3. Follow the golden rule of doing unto others as you would like done unto yourself.
4. Critically think about what you are going to say before you say it. In other words, take time to think about what you are going to say and take the approach you believe fits best.

Carnegie wants readers and students to think about the other person much more than themselves. No one wants to hear about what you had for lunch yesterday, but they would love to share what they had for lunch yesterday.

Every one of the principles shared by Carnegie could significantly impact my life. I find myself applying his principles as I'm texting with a friend, even while writing this paper. I'm holding a conversation online for much longer than I typically do, especially when it's just text. I've always thought of myself as being much more of a listener, but in reality, I was only a listener by force, not by choice, which is what I'm realizing may have been the cause of many of my social problems growing up. I am a very talkative person and love to share my ideas and thoughts and run a conversation, but in reality, you should choose few words and focus on learning more from others than sharing with others and butting in to relate an idea to yourself.

Lately, I've spent an increasing amount of time focusing on letting others speak more than myself. As I previously mentioned, I always thought of myself as a great listener, but in all actuality, that was just an excuse for my poor communication skills. My problem was I always stated my views and never asked for other people's opinions or thoughts. Carnegie's principle of giving honest and sincere appreciation is something that I felt I always have strived towards achieving in every relationship and conversation. However, as I look back again, I realize I have hardly ever made it clear to the other person I am genuinely interested in what they have to share. I do often ask questions, but they lack the richness and encourage simple responses. If I were more honest and expressed my sincere appreciation, it may just lead to a more fulfilling life.

Beginning in a friendly way is a principle that I often use in my life. The principle of beginning in a friendly way seems so instinctual because it is something that my parents drilled into me from a young age. My mother always taught me before asking for something that you must court the other person in a sense. The concept seems so simple, but it works more often than not. The reason relates too many of the other principles, but in a general sense, people want to be complimented, they want to know you care about them and what they're doing, and they don't want to be criticized. By starting with something friendly, you are already winning someone to your side. If I have the time, I always try and have a genuine friendly conversation with someone before bringing up my main point. I try not to have arterial motives. In most cases, it is clear that I'm talking to that specific person for a particular reason, but it certainly does not hurt to warm up to someone or compliment someone before you want to win them to your way of thinking. If you were anything like me, you used this all the time as a kid, perhaps not very well, but it still worked. I remember any time I asked my parents for something, I almost always

would have to give the reasoning. One of the best ways to convince them to my idea was to start with a friendly conversation and occasionally a compliment. However, those often seemed odd with family members when I was younger. Beginning with that drop of honey is always a good idea no matter the circumstance, as honey always makes things sweeter.

I feel I have always smiled. Principle two in the second section of the book encourages us to smile. Since I was very young, I've continuously been told how nice it is that I'm always smiling. Sure, I have my bad days like everyone else. Still, I've developed a mindset of everything happening for a reason and, more recently, have been able to shift my perspective more often to make myself happier. A smile goes a long way. The person on the receiving end of a smile instantly feels better (in most cases). As Carnegie states, "It costs nothing, but creates much. It enriches those who receive, without impoverishing those who give" (p. 198). Smiling has never cost me, and in most cases, it just makes me feel better. Smiles are an integral part of my life as cheesy as that sounds. We must remind ourselves to smile as it is one of the few actions we can take to make others feel better without even putting effort in. After all, they say that it takes fewer muscles to smile than it does to frown, so why not smile? A good smile gets you a long way in life, and my smile is in no way perfect. Spending thousands of dollars to fix my teeth is not something I enjoy, but my smile is one of the most integral parts of my personality. Carnegie mentions an example where the following is stated, "You can be assured, I am still answering my phone with a smile" (p.195). A smile should be genuine so much so that someone on the other end of a telephone call can tell you are happy to talk with them. Actions speak louder than words was not just a random phrase someone mad up. Non-verbal actions are just as if not more important than verbal actions in meaningful communication.

Admitting that you were wrong is also a great thing to do. I'm not perfect, and I know that. At my work, I have built a high level of trust with my bosses because I'm honest and admit my wrongdoings. After sharing many examples of how this works in the real world Carnegie says, "Any fool can try to defend his or her mistakes—and most fools do—but it raises one above the herd and gives one a feeling of nobility and exultation to admit one's mistakes" (p.236). This reasoning is precisely why my bosses trust me and why this week, they hired me as a full-time employee, even without a degree. I work in an IT office, and many technical issues can and do occur on a daily basis. We are bound to make mistakes, but I have always been honest and straight forward about when I screw up, and I apologize and start coming up with ways to correct my mistakes before my bosses even have a chance to respond. It is not that others in my office don't admit to errors either, but it is my eagerness to continually share the positives and the negatives that has allowed me to excel in my job.

Overall, I would consider Carnegie's book is a masterpiece. While I believed I already did many of these things, Carnegie laid out the specifics and gave real-world examples, which helped me identify my communication pitfalls. This book should be a mandatory read for everyone going into a professional workspace. This book will help you in your professional life and in your everyday personal conversations. Carnegie likes to focus on the business side of things, but additionally, all of his principles apply to personal communication as well. I used the example earlier of chatting with my friend, and when I applied the principles, I found myself having one of the best conversations I had had in a long time. While I was not voicing my opinions and thoughts as often, I walked away feeling better and as if I got more out of the conversation than the other parties. Learning how to communicate is essential for everyone, not just communication majors. A guidebook like this was something that I would have never

thought of before. Even as someone who considers themselves to be a decent communicator, I found myself discovering how to communicate in an even more appropriate manner.

Additionally, while reading, I reflected on how I currently am using each principle and how I could use each to improve my life those around me.

As I continue to grow, I hope to apply more of the principles discussed in this book as I believe they will help strengthen even my most strained relationships. Having a different mindset and shifting your perspective can make a world of change, and that's what this book is all about in the end. Carnegie wants us to change the way we think about communicate and to shift our perspectives so that we will have more fulfilling and rewarding lives.