

CONNECTION MAGIC: 6 Simple Ways to Be More Memorable and Likable With action steps for fast results

Bonus section: How to tell when you're getting better at connecting with others

by Elizabeth H. Cottrell

"So, besides the impermanence of all things, there remains in my heart a steadiness about the power of connection. Once the heart is touched, something remains."

Meg Riley in the blog, [Inspired Faith, Effective Action](#)

Do you find yourself worrying about any of the following?

"I'm at a standstill in my career and keep getting passed over for advancement."

"My children don't care what I think and never listen to me."

"My friends don't seem to want to do things with me."

"No one ever seems to care about my ideas."

"No one ever goes out of their way to help me."

"I'm not getting business referrals from customers."

"I feel like I'm running in place and not getting anywhere."

If any of these sounds familiar, maybe you've never really learned how to connect with others, even though you may be having conversations with them. You may feel you're just not born to be good at interacting with others...that there's nothing you can do about it. The good news is that even if you're not a natural "People Person," you absolutely can teach yourself to be a better Connector. Leadership expert John C. Maxwell, in his book [Everyone Communicates, Few Connect: What the Most Effective People Do Differently](#), assures us: "The ability to connect with others is a major determining factor in reaching your full potential. It's no secret! Connecting is a skill you can learn and apply in your personal, professional, and family relationships."

There's no question about it: being an effective Connector—someone who helps other and whom others like to help—can resonate in wonderful ways throughout your personal and business life.

So where do you start? I'd suggest these simple ideas that will get you moving in the right direction to becoming better at connecting with others and being perceived as someone worth knowing and helping:

1. Develop a Connection Mindset: *Decide* right now that you want to be someone who is regarded as warm, sincere, and helpful.

Action Steps:

- Stop thinking about what YOU need and start focusing on the needs of others. This can be hard if you're going through a rough patch of problems, but make up your mind to give it a serious try.
- As you interact with others, think about whether there is something you can do for them...and do it as soon as possible.
- Once a day, first thing in the morning or right before you go to bed, write down at least three things for which you're grateful. Gratitude and thinking of others go hand-in-hand, and an attitude of thankfulness will be like a magnet to connect you with others.

2. Look in the mirror and ask yourself, "Am I the kind of person with whom others would want to connect or spend time?"

- Are you sour or depressed when you answer the phone or greet someone you see on the street?
- When someone (other than your doctor) says, "How are you?" do you give a litany of gory details? Very few people are *really* interested in your gastrointestinal distress symptoms.
- Do you neglect your appearance and your personal hygiene?
- Are you negative about anything anyone else says or suggests, especially when they're trying to help you?
- Do you find yourself complaining about things more than being happy about things?
- Do you whine a lot about things in general or a few pet peeves in particular?
- Do you constantly bicker with your spouse or significant other when you're around other people?

If the answer to any of these is "Yes," don't despair; that means you've already identified a place to start. The action steps for each of these are self-evident. Bottom line: Make people glad they saw or heard from you instead of exhausted or frustrated.

3. Work on your personal greeting technique to convey warmth and sincerity.

Credit for these tips goes straight to my father, Jim Herbert. He taught all five of his children these important tips when we met or greeted someone.

Action Steps:

- Look people in the eye when you're greeting someone and having a person-to-person conversation. This is body language that makes them feel you care.

- When you shake hands, make your handshake firm (but not bone-crushing!), whether you're greeting a man or a woman. Women don't appreciate a "fishy" handshake any more than men! For extra warmth, put your other hand briefly over the two hands grasped in a handshake. This adds intimacy and sincerity to help convey your pleasure at being with the other person.
- Call people by name when you greet them. We all feel more special when someone has remembered our name and uses it.

4. Really listen any time you have conversations with others.

You can't help someone if you don't know anything about them, and the best way to find out is to listen. My friends Chuck and Susan Sheridan are masters at this. They will ask you about something you told them months earlier, making you realize that not only were they listening, but they cared enough to ask you about it again.

Action Steps:

- Resist the urge to multitask when you're having a conversation, even on the telephone. Don't check your Smartphone or read an article or play solitaire on your computer. If you do, you're not really listening.
- Start carrying a pocket notebook or use a PDA to record key points after every important conversation. What was their name or who were they talking about? What were the main things they told you (that might be good to know later)? I use [JOTT](#) to send myself reminders about this kind of thing.
- Let the other person know you're listening by repeating things back to them and nodding your head. This also ensures that you have understood them correctly and will remember what they're saying. Examples:
 - “Mary, you must be so proud of your daughter for being promoted to manager.”
 - “Jerry, I had no idea you had relatives on the west coast.”
 - “John, so you're finally launching your own business?”
- Ask questions in response to what the other person has said. This will affirm your interest and help you understand their situation better. For instance:
 - “John, do you think your revenues are down because fewer people are buying or because everyone is spending less money when they do buy?”
 - “Sally, are you more worried about being able to find someone to fix that roof leak or is it the cost that's worrying you?”
- Follow up substantive conversations with an email or personal note or letter, especially if you've promised information, referrals, or follow-up. Put it on your calendar or to-do list if you need a memory jogger.

5. When you read something good about someone in the paper, cut it out and send it to them with a short note. If you see an article or information that you think would help someone, send it to them or tell them about it.

The same concept goes for anything you've learned somewhere else (radio, meeting, seminar, etc.) that might help someone else. My friend, Elaine Shaw, is terrific at this. Out of the blue, she'll send an interesting article or refer a client.

Action Steps:

- Send articles by mail or email. People love getting newspaper clippings about themselves, their families, or their business. It adds extra good will to a note or comment of congratulations.
- Tell business associates about events you think might help them. Your local caterer might really appreciate your letting them know about the bridal fair you just read about in the paper.
- Let your customers know you're concerned about them. Your client with asthma might like to know about the free Respiratory Health evaluation at the upcoming Health Fair in your town.
- Let people know you're interested in helping them, even when it won't put money in your pocket. Your prospect with a son in Austin, Texas, might be thrilled to learn of an air fare special you read about in the paper.
- Put people together who can help each other. The local arts nonprofit group would be so grateful for information about the Foundation you heard about on the radio that is seeking grant applications in the arts.

6. Write notes to people for both personal and professional reasons.

This is becoming a lost art because of email and other electronic devices, so when someone receives a personal, handwritten note, it really stands out.

Action Steps:

- Write thank you notes for gifts received or if someone has done something nice for you.
- Write thank you notes for referrals.
- Write notes to tell someone about something you think they'd find interesting or helpful.
- Write notes of condolence to friends and acquaintances.
- Write notes to congratulate people or businesses on their accomplishments.

BONUS SECTION: How to tell when you're getting better at connecting

You'll know you're getting better at making connections when you start to have people call and ask for your opinion, ask if you'll serve on a board, ask if you know where they can find something or some information, or just ask you out for more social events. This

means you're perceived as being someone helpful and knowledgeable and good company. The following are examples of comments you may start hearing from people when you're making meaningful connections:

"Thank you for the beautiful note you wrote when my husband died."

"Thank you for sending me the article about my child's achievement in school."

"Thank you for sharing that book that you knew I'd be interested in."

"You were so thoughtful to remember my birthday (or the anniversary of my wife's death, etc.)."

"Thank you for asking about the results of my lab tests."

"Thank you for asking if our house was still on the market."

"Thank you for the note of encouragement you sent after I lost my job."

"Thank you for introducing me to someone who might need my services."

"Thank you for sending my nonprofit the link to a potential grant source for their new project."

"Thank you for calling to check on me after the snowstorm."

Start doing at least one thing every day to improve your connection skills, and pretty soon, you'll be a Connection Specialist too! And miracle of miracles, you'll find that the old adage "What goes around comes around" is really true when people start doing nice things for you too!

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Explore Heartspoken.com for more tips and resources on how to strengthen life's essential connections: with Self, with Others, with Nature, and with God. You'll find wonderful and empowering products, services and links to a growing number of expert Connection Messengers.

Elizabeth H. Cottrell, owner of [RiverwoodWriter, LLC](http://RiverwoodWriter.LLC), harnesses the power of words for small business and personal clients to meet a wide range of connection/communication needs. She loves helping people find their own voice through customized writing, ghost-writing, and self-publishing projects such as local and family history books and personal or family writings. RiverwoodWriter also offers quality printed personal and business stationery from Carlson Craft and Navitor.

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