

CHAPTER IV

MAKE SOMEONE'S DAY!



This magnificent people skill is a potent *MakeFeelGood*. But needless to say, it doesn't mean what Clint Eastwood, in the classic movie, *Dirty Harry*, wanted the bad guy to do for him, that is, let Harry shoot him. Rather, it means that you make someone's day, by giving her or him a sincere compliment.

Typically, here's what can happen:

After telling some nice lady how lovely her hair or dress looks, she gleefully blurts out: "*Oh, you sweet thing, you've made my day.*" Indeed, we're all pleasantly familiar with that type of delightful reaction.

But we're not familiar enough. That's simply because we just don't compliment as much as we should.

And it's such an easy way to make someone feel good. So, why don't we do it more often? What holds us back?

Well, justified or not, reasons do exist. And if you learn about some of them, hopefully, this will help you quell the hesitation, reluctance that plagues most of us.

Envy

Some don't compliment because they're envious. Jarrod doesn't tell Bruce what a nice looking suit he's wearing. His own suit is nowhere near as attractive or stylish. And by not complimenting Bruce, Jarrod

subliminally feels he's de-emphasizing Bruce's suit. But, of course, that's not reality.

On the other hand, if he says something nice about it, in his mind, he's giving it even more attention. And that's the last thing he wants.

Of course, Jarrod's delusional thinking doesn't make much sense. But that's what the emotion envy can do to a person.

Jealousy

Another emotion that keeps people from complimenting is jealousy. Because it's more intense than envy, it can be more harmful. Here's a typical situation that many of us encounter:

The Kellys have just purchased new living room furniture. It's expensive, beautiful, and extraordinarily matches the decor of their home.

Objectively, someone could go on and on about how outstanding the new furniture is; but not Beth, the Kellys' "good" friend.

After just a glimpse at the new suite, Beth says: "*Gee, new furniture. How nice.*" That's it. That's all she says about it.

Or, blatantly, she ignores it altogether.

Obviously, Beth is green with jealousy. And it goes without saying, her failure to give adequate due to something the Kellys are so proud of miffs them. They'd like to tell her to get lost.

Low Self-Esteem

Another reason some people don't compliment is that their self-esteem is at low ebb. They fail to express admiration, because to do so lowers their opinions of themselves.

The patterns that follow are typical:

Mason is a public relations writer for a school. The institution has been initiating a new learning project that has triggered opposition from newspaper columnists. But in his press releases, thus far, Mason has failed to counteract adequately what detractors are writing.

But Alexis, an impartial third party, who "doesn't have a horse in the race," does exactly that. In a letter-to-the-editor article, which the paper publishes, she cogently defends the school's project. Her piece is well written, organized, and most important, persuasive.

So, Mason writes Alexis. On behalf of the school, he thanks her. But nary a word does he pen about how well written her piece is, and what a darn good writer she is.

Now what do such omissions say? Well, from them you can infer that Mason knows Alexis did what he could not. And that he knows she's a better writer than he.

To him, complimenting her writing would be admitting that. And his opinion of himself as a writer would suffer. So, that's Mason's subliminal rationalization for not extolling Alexis' writing skills. His low self-esteem is the key.

This is but another example of how self-image is such a critical factor in how we react to each other.

Bruised Egos

Now, here's another. It's somewhat different but still involves an ego-problem: Pierre is a person of French descent, born in America. His parents were born and raised in France. And just before Pierre was born, they moved to Maine. They speak little or no English.

So, in Pierre's home only French is spoken. Thus, it's Pierre's first language. But starting at age five, when he went to kindergarten, he had to learn English. So, he's not just fluent in each language, he is bilingual. That is, he's equally proficient in French and English.

Anyway, Pierre, now in his 20s, while surfing the internet, has become an internet-buddy of Jarrett, a Californian. By email, texting, and video conferencing, they regularly communicate in French.

As to how Jarrett became fluent in the language, ten years before, he fell in love with it and took it up as a hobby. He attended a few classes, but he mostly learned French by reading, listening to cassettes, and devoting hours and hours in study.

In that relatively brief time, Jarrett has achieved a remarkable degree of fluency in the language for someone with no French roots. With amazing clarity, he writes, reads, and speaks it really well.

By now, you have guessed the scenario. In his communications with Jarrett, Pierre never compliments him on his proficiency in French. Not a word does he say about it. He does, however, commend Jarrett about other things.

Does this mean that he doesn't admire Jarrett's French? No. It only means that Pierre's ego is bruised by Jarrett's accomplishment. He says to himself, *"Here I've been raised with French, and this guy can express and write it better. And he uses better grammar. Geez!"*

So, that's Pierre's thinking. And it's why Jarrett gets no compliments from him.

Now, here's still another pattern:

Bradley has just bought a brand-spanking-new Mustang convertible.

He can hardly wait for his buddy, Thad, to see it this afternoon. So, to knock Thad in the kisser with the car, Bradley parks it right in front of his house.

Thad shows up and gives the Mustang a cursory glance. He then says to Bradley: "*Nice, but I think Chrysler makes the best convertibles.*

That's what I am going to buy." And dogmatically he adds, "*They're better built.*"

So, as you've no doubt concluded, Thad's the type that can always buy better and smarter than you. He's a "*I-can-do-anything-better-than-you*" or "*Whatever-you've-got-I've-got-better,*" person.

And often this type will bitingly tell you: "*Oh, by the way, you got screwed. You paid way too much!*"

That last one is a killer! Few things can make you feel worse just after you've bought something, than hearing you paid too much.

This gives you "buyers' blues." But it happens and happens, because there are zillions of persons like Thad out there.

Examples could go on and on. You probably could add a few. But by now, no doubt you see their common thread, a self-worth problem.

By commenting positively on your possession or talent, in such persons' minds they put themselves down. Compliments remind them that they don't have what you have. And that bothers them.

Facts Don't Change!

Such "Thads" and their ilk are deluding themselves. They believe that by giving short shrift to, depreciating, or ignoring things, they strip them of impact, reality.

That is, Jarrod puts Bruce's old suit back on him, and Beth takes away the Kellys' new furniture. Alexis' writing does not outshine Mason's. As it should be, Pierre's French is better than Jarrett's. And Bradley doesn't have a snazzy Mustang that shows-up Thad's 10-year jalopy that's constantly giving him problems.

Thus, such are the irrational motivations of persons who fail to compliment because of their inability to accept reality. What reality?

There will always be someone who will outdo them, possess better things, have more talent, or surpass them in some way. We all have to accept that reality.

It's life! So be it!

The Unobservant

Now, some people don't compliment when they should, because they don't always notice things. For example, there's the husband who fails to note his wife's new haircut. "*Maybe he doesn't like it*", she thinks.

Not true! He's just not alert, perceptive.

He's being just like a lot of us are at times, including this writer. We need to work on this problem.

The remedy: You constantly have to be alert for new things about persons with whom you have frequent contacts. You must notice their new clothes, hairstyles, and the new things that they've done: "*You put up some new pictures.*" Or, "*Hey, Bobbie, that new juniper you planted in the front, really makes a difference.*" "*Wow, Honey, you cleaned up the garage and got rid of all the clutter. Geez, you even put up new shelves and hangers.*"

Then, go into detail about how much you like those new things.

The point: "Ya gotta" be observant!

An Understandable Reason

Now the above patterns show unacceptable, even zany reasons why persons don't compliment.

But some people don't do it for a far more acceptable reason. They are just plain shy.

Indeed, many persons are that way. They're not jealous, envious, or worried about their self-esteem. And they do notice good things. But they just have a hard time getting themselves to compliment.

If You Like Something, SAY SO!

Now, if you find yourself thinking how attractive something is, why not say so? Yes, say it! And watch the magic of a face lighting up. Watch for and see an ear-to-ear grin. Disarm even an ornery person with a timely, heartfelt expression of approval, commendation.

And remember, compliments can be about things as incredibly simple, as an infectious smile. So, as you look at and admire one, instantly tell its owner how attractive it is. *Do not keep* such nice thoughts to yourself. *Express them!*

Details Show Sincerity

Absolutely, that's exactly what details can do. They add spice to compliments by embellishing them. And most importantly, they reinforce what you're saying by adding earnestness and enhancing your believability.

For example, if you like your neighbor's new car, tell her why you do. Detail your likes. The color is a knockout, or you marvel at the quality of the interior. This way your neighbor will believe you, and not think you're just buttering her up.

Be Careful

Sometimes, what seems like a compliment is not. It can convey two messages, one complimentary and the other derogatory. It could remind the person of a depressing reality about himself or herself. It's a good example of that French word, *double entendre*. It's something that can be taken two ways, one of which is usually bad or negative, sometimes indecent.

And often the negative portion will transcend the complimentary part. Here are some examples:

- *For your age, you look great.*
- *You put college grads to shame.*
- *Despite your size, you're attractive.*
- *No matter your weight, your face is pretty.*
- *As a dropout, you've done a lot.*
- *You sure make the best of yourself!*
- *I don't care what they say, I think you do a decent job.*

So, steer clear of "compliments" that have negative aspects to them. They could torpedo the good you're trying to accomplish.

Finally, as we say and will say over and over here, when you tell people nice things about them or the things they have, you give them

a compelling reason to have warm feelings for you.

So, if for any reason you don't compliment, as you should, you're missing the boat to enrich your relationships and contacts with a fundamental common sense-people skill.

So, fight to overcome whatever holds you back from giving people deserved compliments.

Just do it!