

THE BIG IDEAS

#1 Optimizing Req

You've gotta really want it.

Principle #1

Quit criticizing.

1st Impression

Easiest way to make a good one.

The Golden Rule

A goldmine of them.

Make a Mistake?

Admit it quickly and emphatically!

People You Meet

What's awesome about them?!

How to Win Friends and Influence People

BY DALE CARNEGIE · SIMON & SCHUSTER © 2009 · 320 PAGES

“Compared to what we ought to be, said the famous Professor William James of Harvard, ‘compared to what we ought to be, we are only half awake. We are making use of only a small part of our physical and mental resources. Stating the thing broadly, the human individual thus lives far within his limits. He possesses powers of various sorts which he habitually fails to use.’

Those powers which you ‘habitually fail to use’! The sole purpose of this book is to help you discover, develop, and profit by those dormant and unused assets.

‘Education,’ said Dr. John G. Hibben, former president of Princeton University, ‘is the ability to meet life’s situations.’

If by the time you have finished reading the first three chapters of this book—if you aren’t then a little better equipped to meet life’s situations, then I shall consider this book to be a total failure so far as you are concerned. For ‘the great aim of education,’ said Herbert Spencer, ‘is not knowledge but action.’

And this is an action book.”

~ Dale Carnegie from *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

Dale Carnegie wrote this book in 1937.

The publisher originally only printed 5,000 copies. It was an immediate best seller and went on to sell over 30 million copies. (I read the 80th Anniversary edition. Get a copy [here!](#))

This is Note #477. Although I loved Carnegie’s [How to Stop Worrying and Start Living](#), for whatever reason I was turned off by the title of this book and kinda refused to read it until now. I’ve always had a very strong allergy to the idea of “networking” and trying to “win friends” and/or “influence people” so this one always seemed a little cheesy to me.

As I was preparing for Connection 101, I realized it was time to give it a shot. And, I’m glad I did!

Carnegie writes with a fun, super-energized and equally practical style. The book is packed with Big Ideas on how to Optimize our relationships and, perhaps in the process, win some more friends and influence some people as better humans and leaders. :)

I’m excited to share a few of my favorite Ideas we can apply to our lives today so let’s jump straight in!

ONE INDISPENSABLE REQUIREMENT FOR OPTIMIZING

“If you wish to get the most out of this book, there is one indispensable requirement, one essential infinitely more important than any rule or technique. Unless you have this one fundamental requisite, a thousand rules on how to study will avail little. And if you do have this cardinal endowment, then you can achieve wonders without reading any suggestions for getting the most out of a book.

*“ Learning is an active process.
We learn by doing. So, if
you desire to master the
principles you are studying
in this book, do something
about them. If you don’t you
will forget them quickly. Only
knowledge that is used sticks
in your mind.”*

~ Dale Carnegie

"The world is full of people who are grabbing and self-seeking. So the rare individual who unselfishly tries to serve others has an enormous advantage. He has little competition."

~ Dale Carnegie

What is this magic requirement? Just this: a deep, driving desire to learn, a vigorous determination to increase your ability to deal with people.

How can you develop such an urge? By constantly reminding yourself how important these principles are to you. Picture to yourself how their mastery will aid you in leading a richer, fuller, happier, and more fulfilling life. Say to yourself over and over: 'My popularity, my happiness and sense of worth depend to no small extent upon my skill in dealing with people.'

That's from the Preface: "Nine Suggestions on How to Get the Most Out of This Book."

Magic tip #1? You've gotta have, as Napoleon Hill (a contemporary of Carnegie) would say, a "burning desire." You need to have a "deep, driving desire to learn," and a "vigorous determination" to Optimize your ability to deal with people.

Of course, the same rules apply to getting the most out of ANYTHING in our lives. We've gotta REALLY want it. Flip the switch to "ON." Get to the 212/451 degrees required to ignite your activation energy. Etc.

Modern science agrees. Dust off that mental tattoo of our Motivation equation. Motivation (aka your sustained commitment to achieving something) equals Value x Expectancy divided by Impulsivity x Delay. You've gotta really want it and expect you can have it then you need to keep your energy focused and set micro-wins in pursuit of that goal.

(Pop quiz: Do you have that for your life? Awesome.)

Tip #6 in this section? Carnegie tells us that *"Learning is an active process. We learn by doing. So, if you desire to master the principles you are studying in this book, do something about them. Apply these rules at every opportunity. If you don't, you will forget them quickly. Only knowledge that is used sticks in your mind."*

Amen to that. Just what we talk about in [Learning 101](#).

Let's get fired up to learn how to Optimize. Then move from theory to practice by finding ways to apply these Ideas to our lives... TODAY!

PRINCIPLE #1: QUIT CRITICIZING

"If there is any one secret of success," said Henry Ford, 'it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own.'"

~ Dale Carnegie

"Do you know someone you would like to change and regulate and improve? Good! That is fine. I am all in favor of it. But why not begin with yourself? From a purely selfish standpoint, that is a lot more profitable than trying to improve others—yes, and a lot less dangerous. 'Don't complain about the snow on your neighbor's roof,' said Confucius, 'when your own doorstep is unclean.'"

Welcome to the first section: "Fundamental Techniques in Handling People," chapter 1: "If You Want to Gather Honey, Don't Kick Over the Beehive."

Q: Can you guess the #1 Principle in How to Win Friends and Influence People?

(Take a guess...)

A: "Don't criticize, condemn or complain." <— That's the fastest way to kick over the beehive.

Carnegie is a great storyteller. He tells us about the evolution of relationship exemplars like Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin. Earlier in their lives, both of those guys were pretty good at publicly pointing out people's faults.

Lincoln was so good at ripping into people that he nearly got killed in a duel as a young man as a result of a scathing lampoon in a local paper. *"That was the most lurid personal incident in Lincoln's life. It taught him an invaluable lesson in the art of dealing with people. Never again did he write an insulting letter. Never again did he ridicule anyone. And from that time on, he almost never criticized anybody for anything."*

"You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."

~ Dale Carnegie

Then Carnegie tells: *"Benjamin Franklin, tactless in his youth, became so diplomatic, so adroit at handling people, that he was made American Ambassador to France. The secret to his success? 'I will speak ill of no man,' he said, '... and speak all the good I know of everybody.'*

Any fool can criticize, condemn and complain—and most fools do. But it takes character and self-control to be understanding and forgiving."

So, if we want to Optimize our relationships, we need to remember Principle #1: *"Don't criticize, condemn or complain."*

What should we do instead? Work on ourselves!!

Another American hero, Thomas Jefferson, shares a great idea from the ultimate moral exemplar, Jesus, in [The Jefferson Bible](#): *"Matthew 7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerst not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite! First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."*

Will Bowen wrote a whole book about this called [A Complaint Free World](#). Basic idea: See if you can go 21 days without ANY complaining, criticizing and gossiping. I still haven't succeeded in that challenge. Time to give it another try!

Back to Carnegie for the final words on this idea: *"Instead of condemning people, let's try to understand them. Let's try to figure out why they do what they do. That's a lot more profitable and intriguing than criticism; and it breeds sympathy, tolerance and kindness. 'To know all is to forgive all.'*

As Dr Johnson said: 'God himself, sir, does not propose to judge man until the end of his days.' Why should you and I?"

THE EASIEST WAY TO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

"You don't feel like smiling? Then what? Two things. First, force yourself to smile. If you are alone, force yourself to whistle or hum a tune or sing. Act as if you were already happy, and that will tend to make you happy. Here is the way the psychologist and philosopher William James put it:

'Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling which is not.

Thus, the sovereign voluntary path to cheerfulness, if our cheerfulness be lost, is to sit up cheerfully and to act and speak as if cheerfulness were already there."

That's from a chapter on "A Simple Way to Make a Good First Impression."

How? SMILE!

Don't feel like it? Do it anyway! (Laughing.) And watch the "feelings" follow that simple behavior. And... Watch your relationships improve. Smiles are contagious boomerangs. Give one and you're likely to get one back right away.

I'm reminded of a Will Bowen gem from [A Complaint Free World](#). He tells us: *"Complaining should happen infrequently; criticism and gossip, never... Most of the complaining we do is just a lot of 'ear pollution' detrimental to our happiness and well-being."*

Guess what? Your grumpy frown is "eye pollution."

Lighten up! SMILE!

"Actions speak louder than words, and a smile says, 'I like you. You make me happy. I am glad to see you.'"

~ Dale Carnegie

"You must have a good time meeting people if you expect them to have a good time meeting you."

~ Dale Carnegie

That William James line makes me think of Richard Wiseman's *The As If Principle*. Carnegie wrote this in 1937—decades after William James made that comment but decades before science unequivocally proved his insightful wisdom to be correct.

As Wiseman (best name ever) puts it: *"The notion of behavior causing emotion suggests that people should be able to create any feeling they desire simply by acting as if they are experiencing that emotion. Or as James famously put it, 'If you want a quality, act as if you already have it.' I refer to this simple but powerful proposition as the As If principle.*

This aspect of James's theory energized him more than any other. In one public talk, he described the potential power of the idea as 'bottled lightning' and enthusiastically noted, 'The sovereign voluntary path to cheerfulness . . . is to sit up cheerfully, to look round cheerfully, and to act and speak as if cheerfulness were already there. . . . To wrestle with a bad feeling only pins our attention on it, and keeps it still fastened in the mind.'"

Plus, science says: *"The message from the As If principle and the fun factory is clear: rather than trying to cheer yourself up by thinking happy thoughts, it is far quicker and more effective to simply behave as if you are having a good time. Smile, put a spring in your step, hold your head up high, use happy talk, dance, laugh, sing, or do whatever else you enjoy. Or, to put it another way, if you want to be happy and you know it, clap your hands."*

Remember: Want to make a great first (and second and thirtieth!) impression?

S M I L E!!

(Now a good time to practice? :)

P.S.: Don't forget: Acting as if? That's BOTTLED LIGHTNING.

GOLDMINE OF GOLDEN RULES

"Philosophers have been speculating on the rules of human relationships for thousands of years, and out of all that speculation, there has evolved only one important precept. It is not new. It is as old as history. Zoroaster taught it to his followers in Persia twenty-five hundred years ago. Confucius preached it in China twenty-four centuries ago. Lao-tse, the founder of Taoism, taught it to his disciples in the Valley of the Han. Buddha preached it on the bank of the Holy Ganges five hundred years before Christ. The sacred books of Hinduism taught it a thousand years before that. Jesus taught it among the stony hills of Judea nineteen centuries ago. Jesus summed it in one thought: 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.'

"Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest sound and most important sound in any language."

~ Dale Carnegie

You want the approval of those with whom you come in contact. You want recognition of your true worth. You want a feeling that you are important in your little world. You don't want to listen to cheap, insincere flattery, but you do crave sincere appreciation. You want your friends and associates to be, as Charles Schwab put it, 'hearty in approbation and lavish in their praise.' All of us want that.

So let's obey the Golden Rule, and give unto others what we would have others give unto us.

How? When? Where? The answer is: All the time, everywhere."

You want the ultimate how-to formula for having great relationships? Easy day: Flip open your Handbook to the Golden Rule. Follow that as your guide. Let's walk through all the wisdom teachers and traditions Carnegie just mentioned as we mine our goldmine of golden rules:

Zoroaster says: *"Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others."*

Confucius says: *"Is there a single word which can be a guide to conduct throughout one's life? The Master said, 'It is perhaps the word 'shu.' Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire."*

"It is an old and true maxim that 'a drop of honey catches more flies than a gallon of gall.' So with me, if you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend. Therein is a drop of honey that catches his heart; which, say what you will, is the great high road to reason."

~ Abraham Lincoln

Lao-tse says: "To those who are good to me, I am good; and to those who are not good to me, I am also good; and thus all get to receive good."

Buddha says: "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself."

Hinduism says: "This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain."

What do YOU say? Fantastic. Live it.

P.S. Whenever I share the Golden Rule I also like to share Tal Ben-Shahar's Platinum Rule: "Do not do unto yourself what you would not do unto others."

MAKE A MISTAKE? ADMIT IT QUICKLY AND EMPHATICALLY!

"The policeman, being human, wanted a feeling of importance; so when I began to condemn myself, the only way he could nourish his self-esteem was to take the magnanimous attitude of showing mercy.

But suppose if I had tried to defend myself—well, did you ever argue with a policeman?

But instead of breaking lances with him, I admitted that he was absolutely right and I was absolutely wrong; I admitted quickly, openly, and with enthusiasm. The affair terminated graciously in my taking his side and his taking my side. Lord Chesterfield himself could hardly have been more gracious than this mounted policeman, who, only a week previously, had threatened to have the law on me.

If we are going to be rebuked anyhow, isn't it far better to beat the other person to it and do it ourselves? Isn't it much easier to listen to self-criticism than to bear condemnation from alien lips?

Say about yourself all the derogatory things you know the other person is thinking or wants to say or intends to say—and say them before that person has a chance to say them. The chances are a hundred to one that a generous, forgiving attitude will be taken and your mistakes will be minimized just as the mounted policeman did with me and Rex."

Meet Rex, Dale's little Boston bulldog. Rex didn't like going through the park with a leash. So, Dale let him run off the leash. Then a mounted policeman found them and rudely threatened to put them in front of a judge.

Dale complied and put little Rex on a leash. For a few days. :)

Then, lo and behold, the next time Dale's out with Rex he's off the leash and who do they meet? That same surly policeman. Only this time Dale apologizes profusely. "I was in for it. I knew it. So I didn't wait until the policeman started talking. I beat him to it. I said: 'Officer, you caught me red-handed. I'm guilty. I have no alibis. No excuses. You warned me last week that if I brought the dog out here again without a muzzle you would fine me.'"

Now, the policeman who was so rude and domineering the first time says, "Well, now..." and proceeds to say it's not that big of a deal. (Hah!)

I actually put this one to good use yesterday. Alexandra and I had a little argument in the morning. I, ahem, may have violated Principle #1 and criticized her about something trivial. (Laughing. Oops. It happens! #needswork)

So... I finish the book and come downstairs later that day and say, "I violate pretty much every rule Carnegie has in that book!" (Laughing again.) To which Alexandra playfully replies, "You should have read it ten years ago!" We both laugh (and, thankfully, I resist the urge to say *she* should read it as well!) and then she says, "Well, what about me?! I say I'm all about Zero Waste and I've been terrible at trying to work on that!"

"If you are wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically."

~ Dale Carnegie

"The reason why rivers and seas receive the homage of a hundred mountain streams is that they keep below them. Thus they are able to reign over all the mountain streams. So the sage, wishing to be above men, putteth himself below them; wishing to be before them, he putteth himself behind them. Thus, though his place be above men, they not feel his weight; though his place be before them, they do not count it an injury."

~ Lao-tse

Moral of the story: Have the humility to admit when you're wrong. Take responsibility for your mistakes and weaknesses rather than trying to ignore or defend them. Try it and see the magic!

P.S. I'm reminded of Epictetus's line in [The Enchiridion](#): "If a man has reported to you, that a certain person speaks ill of you, do not make any defense to what has been told you: but reply, The man did not know the rest of my faults, for he would not have mentioned these only."

WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE YOU MEET TODAY?

"Emerson said: 'Every man I meet is my superior in some way. In that, I learn of him.'

If that was true of Emerson, isn't it likely to be a thousand times more true of you and me? Let's cease thinking of our accomplishments, our wants. Let's try to figure out the other person's good points. Then forget flattery. Give honest, sincere appreciation. Be 'heartly in your approbation and lavish in your praise,' and people will cherish your words and treasure them and repeat them over a lifetime—repeat them years after you have forgotten them."

That's another core principle: Give honest and sincere appreciation. I love making it a game to see qualities that are awesome in EVERYONE I meet. Then share it with them.

Other Principles we might want to keep in mind today: "The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it." "Show respect for the other person's opinions. Never say, 'You're wrong.'" "Become genuinely interested in other people." "Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves." "Try honestly to see things from the other person's view." And, "Make the other person feel important—and do it sincerely."

Although we probably haven't met (yet!), I'm honored to be a part of your life as we Optimize our lives together and consider you a virtual friend. Thank you for your support. Let's do this!! :)

B

Brian Johnson,
Heroic Philosopher CEO

If you liked this Note, you'll probably like...

[How to Stop Worrying and Start Living](#)

[The As If Principle](#)

[As a Man Thinketh](#)

[Think and Grow Rich](#)

[The Enchiridion](#)

[The Jefferson Bible](#)

[The Bhagavad Gita](#)

[The Dhammapada](#)

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at heroic.us.