

# What You Say Gives You Away<sup>1</sup>

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In many of my past timely tips, I've stressed the importance of how you think and what you believe. Your thinking—in other words, your self-talk—influences the way you see people and the choices you make in dealing with them.

On the other side of the coin, do you realize that what you say—the words you use—are a window to your thinking and feeling?

Consider this situation. A man sits down at a table in a restaurant. He looks at the menu. When the waiter comes to his table, the man places his order. The waiter moves on and the man sits and waits.

After a time, the man becomes aware that he is thirsty and notices that the waiter did not bring him a glass of water. At about the same time, he sees the waiter coming by his table, weighed down by a heavy tray of food, on his way to another customer.

As the waiter passes his table, the man looks up at the waiter and says softly: "Waiter... ah... ah... when you get a chance... ah... would you mind bringing me a glass of water please... when you get a chance?" The waiter nods his head, replies "Certainly, sir" and moves on.



Now consider the same situation with a different man. As the waiter passes *his* table, *this* man simply says: "Waiter... bring me a glass of water, please." Again the waiter nods his head, replies "Certainly, sir" and moves on.

Notice the difference between the two men? The first man was very tentative. Very apologetic. He almost seemed unsure of himself. You might guess that he saw how busy the waiter was and felt uncomfortable asking him for something—he didn't want to be the "bad guy." Or maybe he was just plain uncomfortable being assertive.

The second man, on the other hand, was politely direct. Not at all apologetic. He seemed confident—sure of himself. You might guess that he was not at all uncomfortable asking the waiter for something. After all, that's the waiter's job. This man was not worried about being the "bad guy." He had no difficulty being assertive.

<sup>1</sup> From: <http://arniedahlke.com/timelytips.htm> —Please take a moment to look at Arnie's site: [www.arniedahlke.com](http://www.arniedahlke.com)

See how the words you use and the manner in which you say things are a window to the way you think and feel? And the interesting thing is, most of us aren't even aware of this process!

Consider another example. A woman is at home, talking to her husband on the phone at his work. She asks him, "Could you please pick up a gallon of milk on your way home?" On the surface, this seems simple and straight-forward.

But think about it for a moment. Why did she insert the words *Could you*? She might have asked: "Please pick up a gallon of milk on the way home"—the same request without the two words. So why did she add those two words? To make herself less intrusive. Less uneasy. More of a nice person.

Or how about the student who says to her professor, "This may be a dumb question, but..." and then proceeds to ask the question. Why didn't she simply ask the question without the introductory words? Because she was worried that the professor might think her question was dumb and therefore that she was dumb. So she got this out on the table to clear the air before she asked her question.



This connection between the words we choose to use and the way we think and feel is very important in every aspect of our lives. In our personal lives. In our friendships. In the way we relate to fellow workers and supervisors. In the way we relate to our customers. We send messages out to others about ourselves—about our confidence, our biases, our fears.

Certainly you want your customers to see you as confident and comfortable with your job expertise. The more comfortable and confident you are with yourself, the more safe and secure your customers will feel about what you are offering to do for them.



This doesn't mean that you swing to the other extreme and become arrogant and aggressive (which is different from being assertive) as you command: "Hey! Waiter! Bring me a glass of water!!!"

You can be polite without being apologetic. You can be assertive without being aggressive. You can be confident without being arrogant.

Start studying the choices you make about words when you interact with people. Notice how your choices reflect your inner self. Challenge the way you habitually say things—try some new ways—ways that are free of tentativeness, less self-effacing.

The magic of all this is that you can actually increase your self-confidence and improve the way you feel about yourself by changing the words you use. When you constantly speak as if you feel comfortable and confident, you eventually *will* feel comfortable and confident. You are, in essence, re-programming yourself.

It really works. Try it.

**REMEMBER:**

WHAT YOU SAY GIVES YOU AWAY