

**How you can**

**TALK**

**to anyone**

**in every situation**

**EMMA SARGENT & TIM FEARON**

# **How You Can Talk to Anyone in Every Situation**

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*It's what you make it*

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Tokyo • Seoul • Taipei • New Delhi • Cape Town • Madrid • Mexico City • Amsterdam • Munich • Paris • Milan

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Website: www.pearsoned.co.uk

First published in Great Britain in 2011

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ISBN: 978-0-273-73571-7

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Sargent, Emma.

How you can talk to anyone in every situation / Emma Sargent and Tim Fearon.  
p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-273-73571-7 (pbk.)

1. Interpersonal communication. 2. Conversation. I. Fearon, Tim. II. Title.

BF637.C45S265 2011

153.6--dc22

2010037867

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

14 13 12 11 10

Typeset in 9.5/13pt Iowan Old StyleBT by 30

Printed in Great Britain by Henry Ling Ltd, at the Dorset Press, Dorchester, Dorset

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# About the authors

## **Tim Fearon**

Tim's career has encompassed acting – he trained at RADA – coaching, training, conference presenting and writing.

He has formed two companies, worked with young people with significant learning difficulties, served on the board of a PLC and worked across the world with companies both large and small. And, boy, has he met a few people! Most of them absolutely brilliant – he can only think of one that he never wants to work with again.

He is a master practitioner and certified trainer of NLP as well as being a qualified hypnotherapist.

## **Emma Sargent**

Emma balances being a parent of two with running a 'business-building for entrepreneurs' business. She has a reputation as an extremely knowledgeable, effective and inspirational speaker and works all over the world. People particularly enjoy her no-nonsense, yet warm, approach to personal and business development; she cuts through the fluff to give practical 'how to' solutions. She is less concerned with theory and more with what works.

Emma is also the author of *Brilliant Parent*. She has a psychology degree and is a certified trainer of NLP.

For the last eight years Tim and Emma have been running The Extraordinary Coaching Company. They live in the New Forest with their children, Thomas and Hannah.

You can find out about The Extraordinary Coaching Company at [www.FindingTheHiddenMoney.com](http://www.FindingTheHiddenMoney.com)



# Introduction

Almost all of us will experience times and situations where our confidence escapes us and we feel anxious about what to do or say.

Some of us are a bit nervous in all situations that involve people we don't know very well, others feel confident talking to one or two new faces say, but inwardly fall to pieces when faced with a large room full of strangers.

Whatever your current feelings, if you would like to feel comfortable and confident with people in any situation, you're in the right place.

This book is here to help you to become more socially confident, to enable you to engage in conversation with anyone you choose, to overcome some of the barriers that may be in the way of you being the best you can be when you are around other people and to equip you with strategies, skills and techniques to handle most social situations.

We have filled this book with practical ideas and exercises. The first two chapters give you the foundations for becoming socially confident. Chapters 3 and 4 will ensure that you are physically set up to create a really good first impression and equip you with the strategies and techniques that will allow you to enter any conversation and build fast and effective rapport with the people you meet.

In Chapters 5 and 6 we give you a whole heap of great ideas for handling issues at work and for tackling the 'difficult situations' that we all find ourselves in at one time or another. In Chapter 7,

we give you all you need to know when NOT talking is the order of the day and in Chapter 8 you'll find all you need to do and say when you really want to shine!

As you read this book, we would like you to bear one thing in mind. The strategies and techniques we offer you can be used across many contexts, so think of them as being incredibly useful tools for you to take out and use whenever the need arises.

Some of the things we suggest may at first seem strange and even uncomfortable and that's only to be expected. Anything new that requires you to make a change in thinking and behaviour is pretty well bound to feel odd to start with.

If you want instant proof, try this. Cross your arms. Now uncross them and cross them the other way, so if you had your left arm on top initially, now put your right arm on top and vice versa. How does it feel? Unless you do this regularly, it'll feel a little bit strange, maybe even uncomfortable. Do it a few times more and the strangeness will go. And so it is with the 'stuff' in this book. Our only hope is that you will try things out and keep at it.

We know these techniques work. We use them ourselves and we have introduced hundreds of people to them over many years with great success.

As with any new learning, there will be those who read this book, put it aside, do little or nothing and then wonder why the techniques didn't work and nothing changed. There will be others, and our sincere hope is that you are one of them, who trust our word, take up the challenge, put them into practice and keep using them.

For you the world may become a very different one, a world filled with opportunity, enhanced relationships and the greatest gift of all; choice. The ability to choose who you talk to, when you want to and to regard every conversation as an opportunity to learn even more about this wonderful collection of beings we call the human race.



**Chapter**



# The secrets of talking to anyone with confidence

We're all unique, thank heavens. How dull if we were all the same. But we do have one thing in common. We're all communicating, all the time. We're built to communicate and connect. But some of us really don't enjoy it and think we're not very good at it. And sometimes, because we don't enjoy it and think we're not very good at it, we go out of our way to avoid it.

## What stops people talking to anyone in every situation with confidence?

When we've asked this question of the people we work with we've had a whole range of responses:

'I don't have anything to say.'

'I can't do small talk.'

'I stumble over my words.'

'I don't think people like me.'

'I'll say something stupid.'

'Standing up in public just scares the wits out of me.'

'No one would be interested in what I have to say.'

'I'm just not a very interesting person.'

'I dry up when people ask me questions.'

'I hate it when people look at me.'

'I don't like being around people.'

'I can't speak up with lots of people about.' ('Lots' is different for different people – pick any number you care to think of.)

When we've asked what particular situations these people find most difficult, the most common seem to be:

- meeting strangers
- dealing with people in authority – doctors, teachers, lawyers, the boss
- parties
- networking events
- social 'dos'
- making a complaint
- meetings at work
- presentations
- dealing with a difficult person/situation
- any situation when there is more than one other person present.

For some people it's a minor inconvenience, for some it's a debilitating limitation on their ability to enjoy life and for others it restricts significantly their ability to gain promotion and advance their careers. Social situations – and by social situations we mean ANYWHERE that people gather – become the bane of their lives.

So what are some of the reasons for steering clear of these situations? Well, it can be a variety of things:

- thinking that you're not interesting enough and that everyone else is better at it than you
- lack of confidence/self-esteem; sometimes triggered by a negative experience in the past
- not knowing what to do or how to do it; engage in conversation, build rapport, speak with confidence, ask questions, etc.
- anxiety/fear – worrying about what you THINK might happen.

Whichever of these most accurately reflects your own experience, this book is packed with things to help you, so let's start the ball rolling by giving you some things to think about in relation to the issues we've outlined and a couple of really powerful

strategies that you can start to implement right away. We'll go into all of these in more detail later on, but we want to get you started quickly, on the basis that you probably want to do that too.

## Thinking makes it happen

There's overwhelming evidence available to indicate that we get what we focus on. So, for example, if you focus on how anxious or worried you are about a situation, you tend to find that when it occurs – guess what? – you are anxious and worried!

One of the first things to do is to recognise yourself what it is that stops you speaking to anyone in any situation with confidence. If it's a matter of not knowing what to do or how to do it, the solution lies in all the strategies, tools and techniques contained in this book. Get hold of them, commit yourself to them, practise them and you will quickly find how effectively they work. You will also find that they are not 'rocket science' and do not require a degree in psychology (pewh!) to implement them. They simply require application.

If it's a matter of thinking you're not good enough or a lack of confidence, then the techniques will work just as well for you, coupled with some different ways of thinking about things.

The same is true of anxiety/fear.

### **Catherine's story**

Catherine hated it when all eyes turned on her in meetings because that made her tongue-tied and so she used never to say anything. She would get anxious before meetings, just in case anyone asked her a question and she had to respond. So we asked her, 'How do you know when to decide to become nervous?'

The question really threw her, because up to that moment she had not realised that she had any choice in the matter. She had thought that 'the nerves just take over'. But as she considered the question – we just kept asking it until she came up with an

answer! – she realised that there was a moment when, as she looked at her diary for the day and saw the word ‘meeting’ she started to feel nervous.

And we have found this time and time again; that for anyone who suffers from a nervous or anxious reaction to a particular situation, there will be some kind of ‘trigger’ that starts the process. And it will always be something they see or hear. For Catherine it was seeing the word ‘meeting’ in her diary. And once she realised this, she also realised that she had a choice as to what she felt in that moment and decided to feel something different. How did she do that? She did the things we are going to share with you in the next chapters of this book.

And she started by doing the exercise below which you can do just before you go to any event about which you feel less than confident.

### Exercise

**What do you think? – Reality checker**

**Just before you go out**, get hold of a piece of paper and a pen and divide the paper into four columns like this:

<b>What I am thinking right now</b>	<b>Is it true?</b>	<b>Is it false?</b>	<b>Don't know</b>

In the first column write down all the things you are thinking about the situation you are going into. For example, if you are going to a party where there will be some people you have never met:

‘No one will want to talk to me.’

‘I’m going to have an awful time.’

‘They didn’t really want to invite me.’

‘They’ll all get into groups and I won’t have anyone to talk to.’

These are **only examples** – pick your own!

Then, using the next three columns, put a tick in the column that best describes your statement.

**True:** You have absolutely rock-solid proof for this thought or way of thinking.

**False:** You have incontrovertible proof that this statement is untrue.

**Don’t know:** You don’t know! You have no certain proof that it is either true or false.

You may well discover that you have less to be worried about than you thought!

We do realise that these feelings of fear and anxiety are real. We are not pretending that they just vanish overnight. What we are saying is that there is always another, and more positive, way of looking at things. There are ways of thinking that can transform our experience and there are strategies and techniques that, when applied, can make a huge difference to our ability to connect with people.

## The path to social confidence

You may look at superconfident people and wonder how on earth they could be like that – and wonder what you would have to change about yourself to be that way. Would there be a

danger you might start to come across as arrogant? Would you still be yourself? Would it be possible for you anyway?

The difference between someone who is socially confident and someone who is not can be distilled down into four key areas:

- know how to think
- know what you want
- know how to be confident
- know what to do.

We're going to give you an overview of these in the rest of this chapter, followed by a whole set of really powerful ways of tackling the first two – know how to think and know what you want – in Chapter 2. The rest of the book is packed with all that you need to help you to know how to be confident and know what to do.

It's going to be a great journey! We hope you enjoy it.

## **Know how to think – the power of beliefs**

We all have a set of beliefs that act as filters to our experiences and influence our thoughts and behaviours. Socially confident people will have a different set of beliefs about meeting new people than less confident people.

The good news is that we have much more control over our beliefs and how they affect how we think and what we do than we realise. At its simplest, if we change our beliefs, we will change our behaviour.

So, what are beliefs? They are thoughts which we consider to be true and form our reality. Every experience we have is filtered through our beliefs; we pay attention to information that supports our beliefs and disregard information that does not support our beliefs. As our beliefs act as filters, our thoughts are affected by them, and so they influence our physiology, our state and our behaviour. Our beliefs have a major impact on our

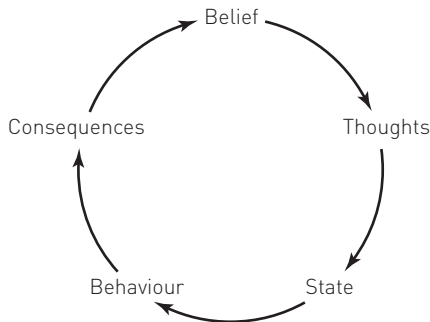
life. Change the unhelpful ones and you will be able to totally change how you approach and feel about social situations.

However, our beliefs are firmly rooted and remain remarkably consistent over time. This is because we are constantly, but unconsciously, looking for evidence that they are true for us. The **Belief Cycle** (Figure 1.1) demonstrates the impact that our beliefs have on our behaviour.

For example, we have worked with a lot of adults who believe that they are no good at standing up in front of a group of people to present something. Here's what is likely to happen when they are asked to make a presentation:

- **Belief:** 'I am no good at presenting.'
- **Thoughts:** 'Oh no. I wish someone else could do this for me. I hate it. It's going to be awful.'
- **State:** Nervous, anxious and butterflies in stomach.
- **Behaviour:** If you are nervous while presenting, you are likely to avoid eye contact, speak quickly and haltingly, breathe rapidly, and display a lack of engagement with your audience and lack of confidence in your message.
- **Consequences:** The audience will be disengaged and there will be a perception of you as lacking confidence and lacking conviction in your message.

As a result, your belief that you are no good at presenting will be reinforced.



**Figure 1.1** The Belief Cycle

The consequences of our behaviour therefore reinforce our beliefs, proving to us that we were right to have that belief in the first place. Here is a further example:

### **Richard's story**

Richard believes that anyone in the service industry is out to rip him off. At some point of course that must have happened for him to form that belief in the first place, or he may have learned it from a parent or adult who was influential to him.

However, continuing to have those thoughts about everybody he meets in the service industry causes him lots of problems. Whenever he has an interaction with someone in a shop, restaurant, garage or anywhere else, he is already thinking badly of the person in front of him. His whole mind and body are set up to protect him from being ripped off. So guess what happens? He gives out lots of unconscious signals about not trusting them and they respond by doing the absolute minimum for him in terms of service. At worst, they find themselves in a position where they *feel like ripping him off*.

If you believe you are bad at something you will pay attention to examples that prove that you are right, and dismiss examples that show you are good at it. We all know someone who is determined that they are not good at something in spite of overwhelming evidence that they are. 'You don't have to be very good to get to Grade 8 on the flute', a friend said recently, having got to Grade 8. Oh really?

Some people's beliefs are so strongly entrenched, that other people get sucked into them. We know someone who absolutely believes that other people will not do what she wants them to do for her. All her attention goes into thinking that they won't deliver their promises. Because of her behaviour, we found ourselves in a position recently with her where we felt like not doing what we had agreed to do for her!

Whatever you believe, either positively or negatively, you will be proved right.