How to Start a Great Conversation
Anytime Anywhere - Even with a Complete Stranger

By

Peter Murphy

All rights reserved. You cannot give this ebook away free or sell it. You do not have resale rights to this ebook. This ebook may not be reproduced in any format without the expressed written permission of Peter Murphy. All violators will be prosecuted.

While attempts have been made to verify information contained in this publication, neither the author nor the publisher assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions, interpretation or usage of the subject matter herein.

This publication contains the opinions and ideas of its author and is intended for informational purposes only. The author and publisher shall in no event be held liable for any loss or other damages incurred from the usage of this publication.

This publication is designed to provide accurate information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is offered with the understanding that the author and publisher are not engaged in rendering medical or psychological service. This publication is not intended to be a substitute for therapy or professional advice. Use this information at your own risk.

(C) Copyright 2003 by Peter Murphy Peter@workwealth.com
**Introduction**

Starting a conversation with someone you have never met before can be stressful and difficult unless you have the right mind-set. In this report you will learn a straightforward and effective approach you can start using today.

Before I learned the distinctions I will reveal in this report I really disliked meeting new people so much that I simply avoided situations where I would be forced to talk to strangers. Obviously this attitude was not very clever since it limited my life to situations and people I was already familiar with. As a result I missed out on new experiences, making new friends and visiting places I was keen to see.

I changed the hard way. I had to take a job I didn’t want because I joined the workforce after graduating from college during a recession. As a result I started working as a sales person for a nationwide retailer of household electrical appliances. I was afraid of dealing with new people and there I was facing the public day in and day out with nowhere to hide!

I learned how to do small talk, I discovered how to handle a wide variety of people and little by little I found it easier and easier to approach complete strangers and to engage them in lively conversations.

You have it easy! In this report I will share the simple way to transform your ability to start a conversation with new people. You will be learning the key distinctions used by gifted communicators and you will also learn some clever ways to ensure you always have something to say.

One word of warning! This material works only if you take it and use it in your life. While reading this report will be interesting, it is the application of these strategies that will expand your sense of possibility from this day forward.

You have no idea how much you are limiting your life until you grasp the concepts and tactics in this report and start talking to people with greater confidence and ease.

Your success and happiness depends massively on your ability to interact with other people – develop the rare ability to start a great conversation with anyone you meet and you will achieve all your goals more quickly. Why? Because who you know is more important than what you know!

There are two steps to discovering how to start a great conversation with anyone anywhere even with a complete stranger. The first step is to control your
emotional state and the second step is to learn and apply the key distinctions that great conversationalists rely on whenever they want to talk to someone new.

Ready? Let’s start with step 1.

**Step1 - Control Your Emotional State**

First impressions count and that means you must present yourself at your very best in the opening minutes when you approach someone to initiate a new conversation.

If you can feel confident, positive and with no sense of needing approval then other people will take you at face value and respond accordingly. People are very sensitive to nonverbal cues especially when meeting strangers so you need to be free of nerves, uncertainty and any fears of rejection.

You can prepare in four ways using the material in How To Communicate With Unstoppable Confidence in 20 Days Or Less:

1 **Anchor Smiling Talkative Confidence** (lesson five)

If you feel nervous when you approach a stranger you are likely to stumble over your words, go blank or say the wrong thing. Why? Because the way you behave in any situation depends on your emotional state.

For this reason you need to know how to go from feeling nervous and shy to feeling confident with a big smile on your face. This is remarkably easy once you know how to do it.

Refer back to the relevant section of the book if you do not already have an anchor set up and anchor smiling talkative confidence. I have explained in great detail how to anchor emotional states in lesson five so there is no reason to repeat it here. **I cannot over emphasise how important this step is.**

2 **Advanced Mental Rehearsal** (lesson one)

The Confidence Super Charger (lesson one) is a very powerful technique that you need to master. I highly recommend that you use it every day. When you use it to prepare for meeting new people pay special attention to the sound of your voice – make it resonant, loud and full. And feel the confidence and dynamic energy in your body that represents the proactive you.
You can use this technique to role-play and prepare for dealing with difficult people. Consider different scenarios and see yourself handling whatever happens with confidence and skill. Be ready for rude people, unresponsive people, boring people and those who do not want to talk to you.

The time to figure out how to deal with difficult people is not when it happens and you are standing there feeling stuck. Instead you can mentally rehearse different ways to handle awkward situations.

If you use your imagination and see yourself totally unruffled by whatever comes your way, later on in the heat of the moment this conditioning will kick in. You will revert to the level of your training when the pressure is on so make sure your mental preparation is thorough.

Let me give you an example. I perform extremely well in job interviews because I have a secret weapon – The Confidence Super Charger. When I walk into the interview room the days of preparation and conditioning kick in and I am charming, confident and totally relaxed.

Whereas without this extensive preparation my mouth would be dry, I would feel extremely tense and I would come across as sincere but frightened.

I spend up to 45 minutes a day for several days using this conditioning process to prepare for big occasions. If you are serious about getting results you will soon discover that the more energy you put into developing yourself with these peak performance skills the faster you will become confident and comfortable meeting strangers.

I spent thousands of dollars and many years learning what I am revealing to you in these pages. I know many people with good intentions who made the same investment and somehow never got around to using the material. Don’t make the same mistake! Start using this life changing material today instead of accumulating a library of interesting books!

3 Let Go of Wanting Approval (lesson fifteen)

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to meeting new people is the worry that you will be rejected or ignored. We all want to be liked and even the prospect of not being accepted by others can be very stressful. It is this craving for approval from people we don’t even know that keeps us from approaching people.

Once you let go of needing or wanting approval its like a huge weight has been lifted from your shoulders. Refer back to lesson fifteen in the book to refresh your memory.
The irony is that once you do not want approval you are very likely to get it. When you feel approval for yourself other people tend to pick up on it and reflect it back to you.

Prepare for a social event by thinking ahead and releasing your need for approval. Think about the people who will be there and then one by one let go of needing their approval.

Later on when you are at the venue you can quietly let go of wanting approval while you are talking to new people.

After you have let go of wanting the approval of someone there will be little or nothing stopping you from reaching out your hand and introducing yourself. You will now have a wonderful carefree sense of not minding if this stranger likes you or not.

**4 Eliminate Fear** (conversation fear report)

Fear is that immobilizing force that stops you taking action. If you had no fear there is nothing you would not attempt to do. In the context of meeting new people we typically fear looking foolish, saying the wrong thing, not knowing what to say and awkward silences.

Refer back to the conversation fear report and work through every fear that stops you from approaching strangers you want to talk to. In that report I go into great detail and show you three different ways to eliminate your fears.

Once you have completed these four elements you will be in complete charge of your mental and emotional state – meeting new people will no longer be stressful or difficult.

The only way you can fail to get results is if you do not use these strategies – thousands of people already do and are making their lives even better than they ever imagined possible. It’s your turn now.

Now that you know how to be at your personal best when meeting new people we need to discover what to say when you open your mouth to talk!

*Do not read the next section until you have taken action and applied the material in this section. Step 1 forms the basis for the successful implementation of the strategies and tactics in step 2. If you attempt to use the material in step 2 without having already applied the strategies in step 1 you will have limited success.*
Step 2 - 15 Great Distinctions to Make Your Conversations Sing

1 Small Talk has a Special Purpose

Small talk can be difficult when you want to start a conversation with a stranger because you know nothing about the other person and you may not even like making small talk in the first place.

If you find small talk boring, pointless and hard work it’s because you are looking at it in the wrong way. Small talk is like fishing – you keep throwing your line out until something bites! Eventually you will find a common topic of interest and the conversation will take care of itself.

However you will need to explore a few different topics and ideas until you strike gold. If you expect to make a connection with a complete stranger by picking the perfect topic at the first attempt you will be frustrated again and again.

The very best conversationalists are flexible. They keep fishing for something to talk about that will engage the other person and they keep trying different angles until something works.

Instead of having one topic in mind you ought to be so well prepared with so many things to talk about that you will never run out of something to say.

Where will you find something to talk about?

The Internet presents unlimited opportunities for finding interesting things to discuss. Go to your favorite search engine and find sites with unusual, weird and wacky news. Bookmark these sites and check in often to read the latest news.

The good thing about these strange news stories is that they are so unusual they are easy to remember and other people will usually find them interesting as well.

Obviously when talking to people you don’t know its best to steer clear of any stories that might offend or embarrass the person you are talking to.

It’s also a good idea to stay up to date on mainstream news. Doing so will keep you well informed with lots of material for lively conversation.

Finally, small talk requires a little persistence to find that golden topic of common interest that will spark a good conversation. If you can start the ball rolling a few times you will be surprised to discover that the person you are talking to is just as keen as you are to find something to talk about.
2 Compliments are a Valuable Currency in any Conversation

We all want to feel good about ourselves so look for ways to pay people compliments. Pay attention to their appearance, the knowledge and expertise they display and other positive qualities they reveal.

Be sincere and honest when you compliment someone and you will make them feel great about talking to you and getting to know you better. When you let someone know you appreciate his finer qualities you are paving the way for a meaningful rapport based dialogue.

When we meet new people we often feel shy about paying compliments even though it is a great way to break the ice. Pay attention to how people dress and you will find several possibilities.

- I really like your tie, where did you get it?
- Your hair looks great, it really suits you!
- That jacket fits you really well, how do you stay so trim?

I like to pay a compliment and follow up with a question straight away, that way you don't end up with an awkward silence.

If the other person feels shy about receiving the compliment you have a new topic of discussion – compliments, feeling embarrassed etc.

3 Making People Feel Good Makes a Lot of Sense

If you keep in mind one key goal - make the other person feel good, the conversation itself will become secondary. Approach new people with this goal and you will look for ways to talk to them about what interests them, you will keep the tone positive and you will put their needs before your own.

You can make someone feel good by giving them your complete attention, by being a great listener and by being genuinely interested in their opinions. In How to Communicate with Unstoppable Confidence in 20 Days or Less I covered how to do this in lesson 20.

Another way to make someone feel good is to make sure you feel great. When you feel positive, energetic and confident your vitality will rub off on other people. This is another reason to master anchoring and advanced mental rehearsal, which we discussed earlier in step 1.

View conversations with new people as an opportunity to serve, and to give and it becomes a lot easier to make conversation. Ask yourself:
- What would this person like to talk about?
- Is he having a good day?
- How can I help her get what she wants?

When you want something from someone else there is always the risk of being rejected however when you meet someone new and your goal is to give you will feel more relaxed and they will feel respected and appreciated when they see your commitment to giving of yourself. Starting a great conversation then becomes a lot easier.

4 Keeping it Light Makes it Easy for Everyone Involved

When you are talking to someone you have never met before its best to stick to neutral topics that anyone can talk about. Steer clear of politics, religion and sex unless these topics are appropriate for the context you find yourself in and the other person is comfortable discussing these matters.

Remember the purpose of the conversation is to get to know the other person and to let them know something about you. You are talking to make a connection and not to have a serious discussion that solves the problems of mankind.

People often make the mistake of trying to have heavy discussions on difficult topics to pass the time even though it is easier to have several shorter chats on lighter topics as long as you can jump from one topic to another.

Topic jumping is easy only if you have an endless supply of things to talk about. That is why I recommended staying up to date with news even weird news to ensure you do not run out of things to say.

5 Repetition Spells Originality for New People

I used to have a lot of difficulty making conversation with new people when I thought I had to be original and come up with new things to talk about for each new person I met. I used to imagine that strangers already knew everything I had already discussed in the past!

I was very wrong! You do not need to be original in fact you can say the same old thing again and again all day long to whomever you meet. Repetition is allowed!

If you have ever seen a talented musician or dancer perform live you may have watched in awe as they performed with such effortless ease. What you didn’t see was the years and years of practice it took to perfect that skill.
I once worked with a highly successful corporate executive. He was a great people person, he loved telling jokes and he was very charming. I was lucky enough to join him for some meetings with clients and I noticed something very interesting... he always said the same things in the same way!

He had a set of stories, anecdotes and favorite expressions, which he used every time he met a new client. He was a performer. He had given the same presentation so many times that he could do it without feeling nervous and instead he could give his complete attention to the audience.

You can do the same!

Regardless of who you meet there are stories, news and experiences you can talk about. Use the same material again and again and eventually it's like pressing a button labeled "instant conversation". These old reliable conversation topics are new and interesting to someone who has never met you before.

6 Ask Open Questions to Move the Conversation Along

Any conversation is a dance punctuated by questions and answers. The better the questions you ask the easier it is for the other person to give you a response that moves the conversation along. With this in mind it is best to ask open-ended questions that allow more free ranging discussions. Avoid closed questions that demand a short yes or no answer such as did you? Are you? Is that...?

Use the following open-ended questions:

- When?
- Where?
- How?
- Who?
- What?
- Why?

Your goal with questions is to keep the conversation flowing so ask questions that take the conversation forward while keeping the tone positive. And be sure to add your own observations from time to time or else the other person will feel like he is under interrogation.

7 Asking for Advice Encourages Dialogue

One of my favorite tactics when approaching new people is to ask for advice. It makes the other person feel important, it allows them to do the talking and it gives you time to assess the person you are meeting for the first time.
Obviously you need to adapt this approach to the context you find yourself in. In a business setting you may not want to reveal your ignorance of the activities of the company so instead keep the advice request limited to more mundane issues.

Here are a few sample introductions:

- “Hello! My name is John. It sure is difficult parking near this building. Where is the best place to park around here?”
- “Hi, I'm Paul! Nice shirt you’re wearing. Where do you recommend for really good quality clothes?”
- “Hi there! My name is John. I’m glad I made it here on time I had a thousand voicemails to catch up on. The deluge of messages flying around the office is really getting out of hand. How do you keep up with all the emails, voicemails and messages you receive?”

8 Be Yourself and You Win Every Time

It is very important when meeting new people to be yourself. The last thing you want to do is to try and be something you are not. If you do, you will across as false and your words will sound hollow. It will be hard for people to take you seriously and this will make it virtually impossible to create deep rapport.

Obviously you want to be liked and if you are flexible when dealing with people you will be able to get a good rapport going with a wide range of people however you cannot let wanting approval get in the way of being genuine, sincere and honest. Let go of wanting approval (as covered earlier in this report) and view meeting new people as a sorting process.

It is up to you to decide if you want to get to know this person better and the same applies to him. When you have a mutual fit then all you need to do is keep talking and listening and the conversation will progress based on common interests.

However if there is not a mutual common ground to explore simply take charge of the conversation and bring it to a close before moving on to talk to someone else. You do not have to wait until the conversation dries up and an awkward silence takes over and you do not have to wait until the other person decides to end the conversation.

Be proactive and you will not have to worry about standing around feeling uncomfortable with nothing to say instead move on to someone else and go
fishing for a good conversation. When you put all your bets on one person the risk is high – spread your bets and be prepared to look beyond the first few people you meet to strike a good conversation.

9 Discover an Interesting Person and You Have a Recipe for a Good Chat

If you can approach every person you meet with a sense of sincere curiosity you will never run out of things to talk about. Where is this person from? Where has he traveled? What does he like to do for fun?

You get the picture! Every person you meet is a treasure trove of unique experiences, outlooks and opinions. Whatever you look for you will find – search for interesting things to discover and you will find them by asking the right questions:

- What is your favorite holiday destination?
- What kinds of movies do you like most?
- How did you end up living in this area?

When you give someone your complete attention and you are genuinely interested in knowing more about them and their life you will find people very receptive to you.

By caring enough about them to spend time discovering who they really are you will have the basis for a great conversation.

10 Deal with Silence and Save the Day

Every conversation with a stranger is likely to have moments when silence creeps in and you wonder what to do. First of all, remember the onus is not on you to fill the silence. The other person is as responsible as you are to keep the conversation going.

Secondly, ask yourself is this a natural break in the rhythm of the conversation or has the conversation come to a natural conclusion? If its time to say bye then go ahead and move along to talk to someone else.

In negotiation training people are often taught to wait until the other person speaks first because whoever talks first to break the silence loses this battle of the wills. While this may be appropriate in tough negotiations you may want to be a little gentler when you meet new people!
Give the silence a moment to pass and for the other person to speak up and if you still have a rapport going then start talking again by using one of your anecdotes, stories or news stories.

If all else fails you can always say what is on your mind and even say: “I never know what to say when these awkward silences occur!” People will usually respond positively to such direct honesty since everyone can relate to this experience.

11 Making Personal Disclosure Safe

One of the biggest challenges for shy people is how to talk to people when the fear of being rejected is present. What if this person does not like me? What if I say the wrong thing?

Whenever you meet new people the desire for approval can get in the way of making good conversation because you resist saying too much about yourself in case the other person disapproves of you. The end result of this is that you say very little about yourself and your personal opinions and personality are kept out of the conversation.

Whenever you refuse to share yourself you make it very difficult for the new person standing in front of you to get to know you and to warm to you. You make it hard for him or her to find meaningful common ground to discuss.

A little personal disclosure will go along way towards helping the other person to get rapport with you. Use the Conversation Fear report to let go of needing approval and you will feel better about talking about yourself. You can also decide beforehand what you feel comfortable disclosing to people you have never met before.

Decide what is off limits for you and choose what is acceptable for you to discuss. You can include these personal details in both your conversation script and in your role-playing which will we cover in distinction 13 and 14.

12 Creative Linking is the Key to Keeping the Conversation Flowing

You also need to play the game of finding links to new topics. Take any conversation on any topic and if you are creative it will give you ideas for new topics. Let me give you an example.

My new flat screen PC monitor was made in China!

This leads to new topics such as:
- Good places to buy computer hardware
- How small components are becoming, nanotechnology
- Time spent using the PC at home
- The impact of Chinese imports on the economy
- My friend who builds his own computers
- Flat screen TVs and picture quality
- Satellite TV
- Home cinema systems

I could keep going on like this for page after page. The point is there are no rules – you can drive the conversation in any direction you want as long as you have something to say on a wide range of topics.

Don’t be afraid to express your opinions - if you don’t it will be very difficult for the other person to get to know you and get involved in the conversation. Your opinion is just as valid as that of the next person.

You are not involved in a debating contest and only the most unreasonable person is going to pick holes in your statements. If this happens feel free to talk to someone else. You do not have to subject yourself to unfriendly people.

Obviously in a work context different rules apply and you have access to information you can use to prepare for such encounters. Know the facts, be well prepared and you have nothing to fear.

**13 Use a Script Like the Highest Paid Talkers**

People who get paid to talk usually have a script to fall back on for when they get stuck. This is true for sales people, actors and politicians.

Why not write out what you want to say when you meet new people. Make it general enough to cover most situations and read over it from time to time and especially before an event where you want to talk to new people.

One way to make this approach work even better is to ask a talkative friend to help you. Explain that you would like to be more talkative and to be as good at dealing with people as he is. And then ask him how he starts a conversation when he meets someone new.

Find out all the different angles he uses and also make a point of discovering what he does when someone is unresponsive.

After you have picked his brain you will be ready to write out a great script you can use at anytime. If you really want to put your brain on autopilot you could
read the script once or twice a day and to really excel with this tactic write out your script once a day.

I hear you saying: that is a lot of work! Do you want to talk to new people with confidence? If you really do then this is a very small price to pay to transform the quality of your life because each time you write out your script you will be training your brain to make this new way of behaving part of how you are each day.

You could also create scripts for specific encounters:

- Asking your bank manager for a loan
- Meeting your boss to request more responsibility
- Approaching a stranger at a party
- Asking someone out on a date
- Small talk for handling a formal dinner engagement
- Chit chat with staff in the stores you shop in

The script is basically a very detailed statement of how you want to perform. Use it daily and you will be amazed at how your confidence with people steadily improves.

14 Role Play Like a Pro

If you want to prepare for an important social occasion or business meeting you can help yourself to be at your best by spending some time role-playing before the event.

In the privacy of your own home, in front of a mirror, imagine you are at the event and role-play how you want to be in an exaggerated way. Move around the room as if you are walking up to strangers, pretend you are shaking hands and confidently starting conversations with ease.

Speak aloud with energy and passion and smile big smiles while you do this. Run through your favorite anecdotes, news stories and opening lines exactly as you want to say them later when you are meeting people.

Do all of this with emotional intensity and exaggerate your feelings of confidence, dynamism and enthusiasm. This is important because you want to condition these feelings so that you can easily access them when you are at the actual event. Unless you condition strong feelings of confidence during role-playing when you are meeting people for real your nerves could take over.

When you think about it, role paying and rehearsal is the secret that allows actors to deliver great performances. Who are your favorite actors? These actors learn their lines by reading the script again and again; they rehearse the lines alone;
they rehearse with other actors, and when the camera rolls they still do multiple
takes of the same action to find the best performances.

The same approach can work for you. Be kind to yourself and give yourself a
chance to become a great conversationalist by role playing and rehearsing until
you get so good people compliment you and remark to others as to how
charming you are!

15 End a Conversation When it is Fading

No matter how skilled you become at starting conversations you will meet people
who do not want to talk or people you have very little in common with. In these
cases it is acceptable to give it your best and then wind down the conversation
when it is obviously going nowhere. Be polite and make your exit when you know
there is no point in continuing.

Keep fishing until you find someone else to talk to where it clicks for both of you.

Even in the case of a great conversation take charge when it seems to be
winding down. Wrap it up before it declines too far and politely end the
conversation:

- Thank you so much for your time I really enjoyed talking to you. I will
  run along now to give someone else a chance to talk to you.

- That was fun - its great to talk to someone so interesting. I’ll have to go
  now. Hopefully we’ll talk again some other time

When a conversation does not go anywhere do not regard it as a personal
failure. Conversation is a two way street!

Did the other person want to participate? If the answer is No then it’s not your
fault. On the other hand it is always worth reviewing a conversation that does not
work out to figure out what if anything you could have done differently to move
the conversation along.

View these encounters, as learning experiences and aim to get better each time
and you will make steady progress.
Recommended Resources:

1 The Sedona Method

I run a free discussion board where you can learn more about this powerful self help technology. The Sedona Method teaches you how to let go of wanting the approval of other people as well as showing you to improve all of your relationships by releasing the emotional baggage we tend to hold onto.

You can also request a free introductory tape to learn more at:

http://groups.msn.com/TheSedonaMethodreleasingClub/

2 AffirmWare

AffirmWare is a very clever computer application that you can use to stay on track to achieve your goals. It is based on breakthrough understandings of how the mind works and will help you to make your dreams come true.

I use it and recommend it to you as a simple tool you can use each day to improve the quality of your life in unexpected ways.

http://www.affirmware.com.au/#peter1510