

GIVE COMPLIMENTS

Most of us enjoy getting compliments—and we forget how much fun it is to *give* them.

Giving compliments can become a worthwhile practice in itself. The rewards are plain. Delivering a well-deserved compliment can defuse tension and make it easier to resolve conflict. Those who receive our compliments feel noticed and acknowledged.

Compliments change the giver

Compliments change the giver as well as the receiver. The next time you give a compliment, notice what happens. See if you release a little tension in your body. Notice whether you soften your resistance to another person or shed a resentment. See if your breathing becomes a little slower, a little deeper. Even many prescription drugs cannot deliver benefits like these. Granting compliments can be a healing gesture for others and ourselves.

Compliments create our world

Giving compliments is one way to create the world you live in. It's possible to wake up in the morning and notice everything that fails: the toaster that chars breakfast to a blackened crisp, the headlines about murder and mayhem, the fuel gauge that's sagging on empty. You can also comment on how good the orange juice tastes, write a thank-you note to the person who delivers your paper each morning, and compliment the attendant who fills your gas tank. You can practice an "attitude of gratitude."

This is not a suggestion to put on rose-colored glasses or adopt a greeting card mentality. The idea is to balance our perspective and get the full picture. Effective, happy people are in touch with things that don't work well. They also notice when life is delivering the goods on time, in style.

Ways to give compliments

Compliments work best when they're genuine. We can sense when someone is "sugar coating"—giving a compliment that's insincere. People even use random compliments as a way to soften hard news: "I really like the way you perform your job.... By the way,

your position is being eliminated today." This is not a way to become more credible with compliments.

Also, be specific. Point to actions. Give details. "You're so considerate" is pleasant. "I appreciate the way you clear the table after dinner each night" can be more powerful.

To get a head start, remember that you don't have to feel grateful before giving a compliment. Experiment with giving a compliment—one that is truly genuine and that you believe is accurate—even when you don't feel like doing it. Then observe your emotions. Giving thanks might create a feeling of thanksgiving.

According to a saying, "What goes around, comes around." Seize the next opportunity to float a compliment out into the world. Then see what comes back at you. The result might be a leap in your level of life satisfaction.





Bombard others with attention

This exercise is a gem to use at family meetings or at work. Here are the basic steps:

1. Give one person a fixed amount of time to talk—two to five minutes.
2. When this person speaks, everyone else just pays attention and listens.
This means no criticism and no piggybacking (adding to what the speaker says).
3. After the speaker finishes, other group members can offer appreciative comments.
Those comments can focus on what the speaker said or the way she said it.

Give everyone in the group a turn to speak, following the steps listed above.

The logic behind this exercise is simple: The focused, nonjudgmental, and appreciative attention of a group can release fear and allow everyone involved to move toward love. The experience of being truly heard *and* affirmed can be liberating. This is a gift worth giving to the people we care about—and to ourselves.

