



Rifka Schonfeld STRATEGIES

THE NEWSLETTER FOR OPTIMUM SUCCESS

TIPS ON SOCIAL SKILLS FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

Friendship: Art or Science?

Dear Readers,
This week's newsletter will discuss the topic of friendship.



QUESTION:

Ever notice how there are some people who walk into a room and everybody just gravitates to them like magic? What is it about some people? Is it that you've either got it or you don't?

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Actually, Patrick King, the author of *The Science of Likability*, argues that it's not magic at all. It's not even an art. In fact, it's a science. We can all use the science of likability to master charisma, attract friends, and cultivate people. King begins his book with a simple definition of psychology:

The study of psychology isn't about reading minds or interpreting dreams, though I had a fair number of people asking about that. It's simply the study of why people do the things they do.

There were the obvious applications, such as discovering exactly what works in advertisements and why, how to effectively use reverse psychology, and why we get lazier when we're surrounded by more people. These were things I could immediately see and feel in my daily life.

But the biggest takeaway from my degree was that so many of our decisions are made subconsciously and without any awareness on our part. There might be clear reasons to act logically in a given circumstance – and we just might ignore all of them for no apparent reason. Our conscious thought follows our subconscious will, and it often isn't until far after we act that we figure out what actually happened.

King goes on to explain two important psychological studies that helped us understand how the subconscious and the conscious interact. The first involved a young child called Little Albert who was presented with a white rat. He did not have any associations with rats yet, so he simply looked at the rat and did not respond. This was a neutral object. Then, every time the rat was brought into the room, the researchers made a loud sound that disturbed him. After several times, even when the researchers only brought the rat in without the sound, Little Albert responded with tears. He had learned to associate the originally neutral rat with something negative.

The second study involved Ivan Pavlov's famous study with dogs and dinner bells. Pavlov would ring a bell before serving his dogs dinner. His dogs would salivate when dinner was brought out. Over time, even if it was not dinner time and Pavlov did not bring out food, if he rang the bell, the dog would salivate. They had come to associate a neutral thing (the bell) with something positive (the food).

Rats, noises, dogs, and dinner. What does this all have to do with likability? Quite a lot actually! What these studies show us that we respond to memories from our subconscious in conscious ways. Therefore, if we utilize the subconscious, we can ensure that people like us without even knowing why!

What are some ways that you can improve your likability? Among the different suggestions King makes is to help improve the mood of those around you. The ways to do that are to bring up positive memories such as common interests, foods that they like, or even a smell that might be reminiscent of a positive memory. Then, the person's mood will automatically be lifted. Once the mood is lifted, they will see you in a more positive light. The more time they spend with you while they are feeling positive, the more they will gravitate to you in the future.

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