



50 Ways to Say What You Mean and Get What You Want

by George R. Walther

Quick Reference Chart

Project Positive Expectations

"I'll have to."	"I'll be glad to."	Make helping others a pleasure, not a burden.
"I'll try to do it."	"I will do it."	Make a commitment and follow through.
"I'd hate to."	"I want to."	Focus on the positive outcome, not what you want to avoid.
"I can't do that."	"I haven't yet and I can."	Recognize your own limitless capabilities.
"My condition is hopeless."	"I can improve my quality of life."	Help yourself recover from physical challenges.
"I wonder if you could?"	"When will you?"	Be specific about expectations; eliminate conditionals.
"That's a problem."	"A challenging opportunity!"	Concentrate on exploring creative solutions.
"I'm no good at..."	"I'm getting better at..."	Replace self-limiting phrases with empowering assertions.
"Spend time and money."	"Invest time and money."	Concentrate on building your returns, not depleting resources.
"This is impossible."	"This can be done."	If you say something's impossible, it is.
"You're bad."	"That behavior is bad."	Guide others positively; separate the person from the behavior.

Give Credit Where Due

"You'll have to excuse my..."	<i>Don't make excuses.</i>	Change your imagined shortcomings, or forget about them.
"It's only my opinion."	"I believe."	Describe beliefs and accomplishments proudly and positively.
"I got lucky."	"I planned well and worked hard."	Modestly acknowledge your own role in creating successes.
"I'm really not too good at this."	"I enjoy doing this."	Do your best without justifications.
"I hold her in high regard."	"I respect and appreciate you."	Give people credit directly when they do things right.
"I'm getting too old."	"I feel good."	Use positive phrases when talking about advancing age.

Rebound Resiliently

"I failed."	"I learned."	Look for lessons and grow from "failures."
"I see negative consequences."	"I see positive consequences."	Look for positive results following unexpected changes.
"If only I had..."	"Starting now, I will."	Focus your attention on choices, not regrets.
"I'm a loser."	"I am a winner."	Think and act positively when you're at a low point.
"I'm going under."	"I'm going to bounce back."	Describe setbacks as temporary, not terminal disasters.
"What if things get worse?"	"That's all; it's over."	Apply your energy to create a more positive outcome.

Accept Responsibility

"You make me upset."	"I feel upset when that happens."	Focus on your responsibility instead of blaming others.
"I don't have enough time."	"I can manage my available time."	Purge powerless phrases that suggest time is out of your control.
"Can't help it; other guy's fault."	"It's my responsibility."	Decide to take action and make the best of things.
"You'll have to ask someone else."	"I'll help you myself."	Be part of the solution instead of "passing the buck."
"I can't change things."	"I choose to make the best of..."	Choose to change your reactions to unsatisfactory situations.

Encourage Cooperation and Reduce Conflict

"But..."	"And..."	Replace conflicting "but" with coexisting "and."
"That's not practical; it won't work."	"Let's give it a chance."	Stimulate creative ideas, even if they appear impractical at first.
"Will you do me a favor?"	"Here's why this is good for you."	Emphasize the benefit to others when seeking their cooperation.
"Is everything satisfactory?"	"How can I do better for you?"	Ask specific relationship-improving questions daily.
"Here's what I can't do."	"Here's what I can do."	Focus on the positive; indicate what you can do.
"you must follow my rules."	"Let's work together."	Work with rather than against others in conflict situations.
"You'll have to."	"I invite you to choose."	Invite others to cooperate and give them choices.
"You might want to consider."	"I recommend."	Focus on benefits to others and then recommend action.
"Take care of this my way."	"What's the fairest way?"	Appeal to others' sense of fairness when conflicts arise.
"I disagree."	"I understand."	Accept and acknowledge others' ideas and let them coexist with yours.

Speak Decisively

"I should get this done by..."	"I will get this done by..."	Commit to specific dates, times, and amounts.
"Maybe by 2:00 or 3:00."	"Definitely before 5:00."	Add a "safety cushion" and then beat your word.
"I think we understand each other."	"Let's verify our agreement."	Confirm your understanding of agreements.
"Do you have any questions?"	"What questions do you have?"	Get thorough, helpful information with open-ended questions.
"I would tend to think."	"I believe."	Know what you want to say, and say it!

Tell the Truth

"Well, to tell you the truth."	Always tell the truth.	Eliminate "integrity-busting" expressions; be sincere and forthright.
"I don't really want to, but I'll see."	"No, I won't."	When you don't want to, say "no."
"Everything, always..."	"Somethings, sometimes..."	Eliminate universal terms, especially when criticizing.

Get Back to Basics

"I just can't remember names."	"Hello, I'm _____."	Remember and use others' names. If you forget, ask.
"They know I appreciate them."	"Thank you."	Express your appreciation; don't take relationships for granted.
"Don't blame me."	"I'm sorry."	When you make a mistake, admit it and apologize.

Encourage Cooperation and Reduce Conflict

"Surely he knows I'm proud of him."	"I'm proud of you."	Let the people you are proud of hear it directly from you.
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