



THE MORNING NEWS

Jenison Public Schools

Spring 1999

Dedicated to individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities and those who work alongside them to improve mutual understanding.



Gray's Guide to Compliments

Introducing the first Social Workbook



THE MORNING NEWS

A publication of Jenison Public Schools, Michigan
February 1999, Volume 11, Number 1

Dedicated to individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities and those who work alongside them to improve mutual understanding.

Practically a New Century Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter 1999

Closing the century that introduced us to autistic spectrum disorders with four issues devoted to the very best creative and practical ideas.

Introducing the first Social Workbook: *Gray's Guide to Compliments*

...a special rip-out section complete in this issue

About Our Cover:

An illustration from *Gray's Guide to Compliments*,
a Social Workbook written and illustrated by Carol Gray

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Jenison Public Schools publishes *THE M*
of Information and Ideas. Articles appear
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Address all correspondence to: Ca
2140 Bauer Road, Jenison, Michigan 49
Carol Gray, Editor. Sue Jonker, Design

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PAST THE 'USE BY' DATE.

**Information and/or forms in this
section are no longer accurate or
usable. Please disregard.**

A letter from the Editor:

Social Stories for Adults?

Coming Someday, February 15, 1999

February, 1999

Dear MORNING NEWS Subscribers:

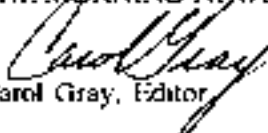
For the last several years, I have had the opportunity to conduct several presentations in the United States and abroad. Without fail, each time I have been approached by adolescents and/or adults with autistic spectrum disorders (a.s.d.), their parents, or professionals who work on their behalf. Cuing the social menagerie of high school, college and dating, the "social-political" aspects of holding a job, and the mystery that underlies adult interaction, they have asked, "Why not write Social Stories for adults?" Each time I have responded with a smile, confirmation that their idea is a great one, and a promise that I will give it a try "someday"

Admittedly, those of us who speak "Typical Social Language" understand that a promise of "someday" is an easy one to make. We know what "someday" *means*. It's an elusive commitment to think and ponder and maybe - if it's possible - translate thoughts into action at some undetermined point in time (with *never* being one option among points in time). In contrast, "Yes, Someday..." in "Asperger Social Language" is a sincere promise. Nothing less. I knew my response of "someday" held conflicting meanings. For me, "someday" was reassuring, politely dismissing what I believed to be a difficult - if not impossible - task. For people with a.s.d., I was making a solemn commitment to give it a try. *Someday*. I was avoiding *and* making a sincere commitment to begin and complete a task at the same time.

The workbook in this issue is my first effort to keep the promise to write for adolescents and adults. My goal is to describe and clarify - with words, tables, and illustrations - important aspects of typical social behavior for people with autistic spectrum disorders. First hand accounts of the experience of autism by Dr. Temple Grandin and others have dramatically improved our understanding of people with autistic spectrum disorders. My hope is that this workbook will in turn clarify typical social behavior for people with a.s.d., to address the "social impairment in autism" by improving understanding from both sides of the social equation.

Listening to the insights of Dr. Tony Attwood from Australia, I selected *complimenting* as an important social starting point: the first topic to tackle in a *Social Workbook*. For months I have talked with friends, coworkers, and family members about *why*, *when* and *how* they compliment. In developing the workbook, the challenge has been identifying the typical social truths that surround each compliment. To develop a format, I have relied on what I have learned from people with autistic spectrum disorders. Now I comfortably understand exactly what I meant by "someday": it is the press date for this issue, *Someday*, February 15, 1999.

Sincerely,
THE MORNING NEWS


Carol Gray, Editor

Letter to the Editor

January 7th, 1999

Dear Carol,

I want to thank you and *THE MORNING NEWS* staff for printing the photographs of my four children on the cover of your (fall 1998) publication!

The warmth and excitement that I could feel in the note that you sent, assured me that you have a good idea of how much that meant to my family, myself and those who are involved with our family!

I really appreciated the extra copies - some of them I put in the front of special scrapbooks that I made for some of the exceptional people involved in our journey, such as our psychologist and child care respite worker. In conjunction with the theme of "Who knows where the road of life is taking us, but one thing is for certain: we'll face it together", I also added in their scrapbooks... "but we can't do it alone! We need the help of talented and caring people as well."

And it really is the truth, isn't it?! Unlike "typical" family settings, an "autism family" needs to learn the ability to accept and embrace such a variety of services and individuals!

God bless you for all that you do to make the world of autism a more fascinating and understood phenomenon!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Koombes-Sokalaki

Stephanie Koombes-Sokalaki

Announcement: Social Story Web Site

www.canterbury.ac.uk/xplanatory/seminars/ss1menu.htm

This web site is part of the Special Needs Xplanatory:

the web site of the Special Needs Research and Development Group
of the Centre for Educational Research within the Faculty of Education
at Canterbury Christ Church University College, Canterbury England.

*"We welcome comments and observations on the ideas
covered which we may include on the site and forward to
THE MORNING NEWS for consideration."*

- Dr. Mike Blamires, Canterbury Christ Church University College

For Autistic Men: My All Time List of Social Blunders and How You Can Avoid Them

- Jerry Newport

Reprinted with kind permission from The M.A.A.P. newsletter, Vol.IV, 1998



Editor's note: Jerry Newport is an adult with Asperger's Syndrome. Above is his high school graduation photo. Raised in New York, Jerry received a B.A. in Mathematics from the University of Michigan in 1970. Jerry is in his fifth year as a Financial Assistant for the UCLA Department of Medicine.

Jerry has returned to the Board of Directors of the Autism Society of Los Angeles (ASLA). Jerry joined ASLA in 1991 and was a Board Member from 1992-94. In 1993, helped by ASLA, and ASA chapters of Long Beach and San Gabriel Valley, Jerry co-founded AGUA (Adult Gathering, United and Autistic) a support group for all adults within the autism spectrum. AGUA has grown from its original fourteen members to over one hundred.

Nationally, Jerry is a frequent speaker on support groups and adult issues. He was featured on "Sixty Minutes" in 1996. Jerry optioned his rights to Dream Works Studio for a possible movie based on his life story. Jerry is on the Advisory Board of ASPEN of America and also on the ASA task force for adults with HFA/AS for ASA of America. He volunteers as a whale watcher and says one of his pet cockatiels makes a great alarm clock; a clockatiel. Jerry invites you to visit his home page at:

<http://www.efn.org/~dmorgan/asperger.html>

This is my personal list, compiled by many years of social malpractice. If you think of dating as a baseball game, it is a lot more fun playing than watching. In comparison to most fifty year old men, I am not that experienced. In the autism spectrum, I am. I learned, painfully, to minimize expectations. I may marry again. I may not. I will not be alone any more than I want to be. On the other hand, I would much rather curl up with a great book than a boring woman.

I am still in a divorce process and socializing was not my interest for a while but the right women finally woke me up. I guess it's the thrill of the chase that gets my blood up. Women do that better, usually, than books. I don't compete with other men for women. I just am myself and they come to their senses or say "no". Right now, I'm an active, social free agent until someone makes me a first round romantic draft pick and makes me an offer, I can't refuse.....

Here's my list.....

1. Seeking the wrong women: A lot of us social rookies seek someone to make us look good. I call this the "arm piece complex". It comes from a lack of confidence, on our part, in how we appear to others. Look beyond what you see. *Be Practical. Define a good potential partner.* There are plenty of women who are attractive enough to add to the quality of your life. They are attractive because of their personality, energy, interests, style, and lots of other real, enduring qualities. List the qualities you want in a date. Look for clubs, interest groups and interesting places where you have a common ground already.

2. Trying for the big first impression: Too many of us spend our last dollar on an all-out first date. It never works. Anyone worth your time can't be bought and the more you strain your wallet with a total stranger, the more foolish

you look. *Be Yourself and start simple:* Meet for lunch or coffee. Be on time, be neatly dressed and clean but forget the tuxedo. Relax. Say her name. We all love to hear our names. Talk about your favorite activities. Find out hers. Don't ask for a date right away. Go home, think of something both of you like to do, call her up in a few days and ask her to do it. Cut to the chase. A little small talk is smart but don't take all night to ask someone out. Know when and where you want the date to happen. Be direct and enthusiastic. Make it easy for her to say "yes". If it's "no", try maybe a couple of more times at the most.

3. Wanting too much too soon: If you have little social experience or are leaving a bad relationship, you can over-react to new, nice experiences. It may be a breath of fresh air for you but usually isn't for women, who tend to be more experienced than us. *Be Patient:* Remember, no matter how good a woman made you feel, that you had a life before you met her and will even if this doesn't work out. It is usually best, at first, not to call up the next day. Give your feelings time to settle to reality. Keep your emotional center because this is not easy on our emotions. Take your time. True love is much better as a slow burn than a forest fire.

4. Talking about yourself too much: I wore this one out in college. Goes along with our insecurity. We think we need to tell our date everything great about us so she will like us. If she is shy you may do more of the talking but not all of it. How can you get to know her if all you do is talk about you? You may as well go out with yourself!

Show genuine interest. This always helps. What in life, makes it worth living for her? What is her passion? Get her to open up and talk about it because most men won't let her. Be the listener and she will love you for it. Don't ask endless questions but don't hog all of the talking either. After a date, ask yourself what you learned about that person. Do you know the color of her eyes? Be creative. Try drawing her.

5. Crowding people: Sometimes, I find it hard to believe someone actually likes me, even when it's obvious to her that she does. So, I force my attention on her. *Give people the space that you want for yourself:* If they tell you they can't talk long, make it short or ask if you can call them another time. Better yet, ask them to call you at

their convenience. That shows real confidence. It shows you are interested in them but sensitive enough to let them have some say in when you talk. Phone calls are necessary but in a sense, they are invasions to many people who feel obligated to answer phones even when they'd rather not. The interested ones will call you back. The others are history, the sooner the better. Never force your company on a person. If that is what you must do to be with them, give up and meet someone else.

**"Hog the stage
and you will wind up
in an empty theater."**

6. Bad Timing: There are times to contact people and times not to. For all of us. *Don't call when you wouldn't want to be called:* Do you like a phone call as you are off to work, getting up, falling asleep or eating? Treat others likewise. Learn what their best times are for talk. Don't hog their lives on the phone. If they tell you they will call you back, trust them. Let them go after you once in a while. They like that.

7. Stale Conversation; Too much of one kind of talking. Not surprising. A couple of jokes are fine, but a string of them just shows you are too insecure to handle a real conversation. It is hard for most of us, being autistic, not to get on a roll about a favorite subject, but too many jokes, compliments or anything makes you look like you aren't connected to the social situation. *Look at your date (without staring)* Does she look interested? Does she act like she wants to hear more or fidget because she isn't getting to talk at all? Hog the stage and you will soon wind up in an empty theater.

8. Losing Your Personal Perspective; It is easy for us to get obsessed with new people. That new nice feeling seems more important than the rest of our lives. This is dangerous. Nobody is that important, except you.

Remember your own life: Make a list of the things you can do on your own or with friends. When you feel yourself really needing to be with someone, use that list to find something else to do. It will help you avoid driving people away by being too dependent on them. You need to know your limits. Some people will take advantage of you once they know you are "hooked" on being with them. You have to tell yourself that you won't do things for anyone, no matter how much you like them, if you can't afford to do them.

9. Misreading Messages: We all like it when someone is really nice to us, but that doesn't mean they have a social interest. I can guarantee you that most bank tellers, waitresses, receptionists and stewardesses will light up your day with their smile and momentary charm. It's their job. Period.

Don't jump to social conclusions: Before you assume a woman has shown an interest in you, look at the situation. Was her behavior voluntary or because she has to treat every person that way? You can save yourself a lot of frustration with this thinking or you can waste your time trying to date women whose professions expose them to every line in real life and the movies.

10. Not hearing the word, "No". Okay, guys, here's the scene. You go out with someone or maybe don't even get that far. You like her a lot. She tells you that she would like you for a friend instead of a romantic interest. Now, what part of the word, "No", is so hard to understand? Is it the "N" or the "O"?

Make friends with women who like you enough to be honest: Thank that woman person for her honesty. She could have led you on and cleaned out your wallet. Ask her what she would like in a friend and offer that if it is reasonable. Maybe she knows some other women. Birds of a feather

flock together. Maybe she can help you grow socially. Women friends prepared me for my first marriage, helped me recover and will help me in the future.

11. Disregarding social boundaries: Sometimes, we have a hard time accepting what a woman tells us, especially, like in the previous example, when it is exactly what we don't want to hear. That is usually the time to accept it with out an explanation.

Respect women's rights to privacy, choice and feelings: This is all about respect. What if you were the woman? Would you want to have to explain to a man why you don't want to see him, or why you don't want the evening to go in the direction he wants to direct it? I'll bet you wouldn't. A woman's body is hers and so are her feelings. Be patient and sensitive. Heed the red and yellow lights and you'll see enough green ones.

12. Not using your friends for support: It is possible to get so interested in your new date that you lose contact with your friends because even when you are not out with her, you are sitting around missing her. Very dangerous.

Stay in touch with your friends. They are vital when your social life is stressed out. They may notice changes in your attitude or behavior or other ways you are not coping with life in general. Listen to them, but be aware of the person, usually the opposite sex, who may not have given up on you. True friends will accept your interest in another and want to help you be happy.

Thanks for your attention. These twelve points work for me. I think they will help you make more sense of the social world. Just remember, failure is commonplace in socializing. Just learn from your mistakes and try again.

THE MORNING NEWS welcomes the submission of articles for publication.

We are most interested in articles that are practical, positive, and creative. We regret that we are not able to publish all articles we receive. Send your articles to the attention of Carol Gray, Editor, at the address listed at the bottom of the Table of Contents in this issue.

Thank you, in advance!

Social Mapping

-Mitzi Curtis, M.A. and Kari Dunn, M.S.



Editor's note: Mitzi Curtis (as a child, above left) and Kari Dunn (as a child, above right) work together at Otter Lake Elementary School. They are teachers in the Communication and Interactional Disorders (CID) program for school district #916 in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. The program serves students ages 5 - 16 with autism and related disorders. Mitzi has taught students with autism and related neurobiological disorders for 11 years. Kari started the CID program 19 years ago and continues to oversee student programs and staff development. She is an Autism Resource Specialist for district #916, serving 11 school districts in the Twin Cities area.

Individuals with autism appear to have difficulties understanding another person's perspective or how another person feels about certain situations. The ability to understand that your actions have an impact on those around you and that other people can contribute to your pleasurable experiences is at the core of social understanding. Simon Baron-Cohen suggests that individuals with autism are often unable to interpret the behavior of others and that without this ability, human behavior would appear

random (Baron-Cohen, 1998). If a person with autism does not understand another person's contribution to a social interaction, he or she may be less likely to seek out interactions or recognize the value in social interactions. Social Mapping is a strategy used to review social situations, events, field trips, family reunions, etc. in a concrete visual way. A social map clearly illustrates the contributions of all the people involved. It may list each person's feelings about a situation or simply list what each person ate on a field trip.

Social Mapping was developed to assist students with autism in processing social events and recognizing the contributions of their peers. The process begins with a Social Story (Gray, 1993) completely made up of descriptive sentences about the upcoming event. The story describes details of where they are going, who will likely be there, where they will sit on the bus, who will be sitting next to them, what the conversation "topic" will be on the bus, and who will be their lunch partner. The Social Story sets the stage by discussing ways that another person will influence their social outing.

After the trip or event, each student fills out a worksheet designed to prompt thoughts about the trip including their favorite activity, what they chose to eat, who they sat next to, what they saw, etc. The goal of the worksheet is to assist the student in formulating their contribution to the Social Map. Each student then brings their worksheet to the large group meeting. The teacher brings a large poster board, markers, tape, pictures from brochures or line drawings to visually illustrate the big event. Each student takes a turn and shares what they recalled on their worksheet, using the worksheet as a visual guide. The Social Map is created from the student's input. In some cases, the worksheet is actually cut up and glued to the map. Figure 1 (illustration by Mayer-Johnson, 1993) is a worksheet completed by students after a trip to Victoria Street Park. Figure 2 is a photo of the Social Map the students developed together.

The end product is a visual representation of a social event that displays pieces of information from everyone's perspective. The Social Map is hung on the wall (at home or school) to be reviewed and studied by students.

References

- Harmon-Cohen, S. (1998). Paper presented at the International Conference on Autism, Toronto, Canada.
 Gray, C. (1993). The Social Story Book. Future Horizons, Arlington.
 Mayer-Johnson (1993). Picture Communication Symbols. Solana Beach, CA.

Figure 1: Worksheet of a trip to the park

We went to the Victoria Street Park! My favorite activity at the park was _____.



On the bus I sat next to

Adam Kyle David Justin Skyler Mark
 Rosa Rikke Stephen Mirza

Their favorite activity was _____.

We came back to the school and celebrated
 Nina Day. We sang songs and tied ribbons on
 Nina's tree.

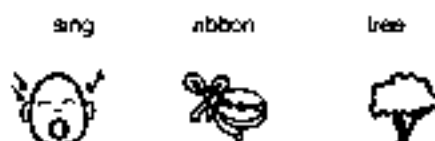
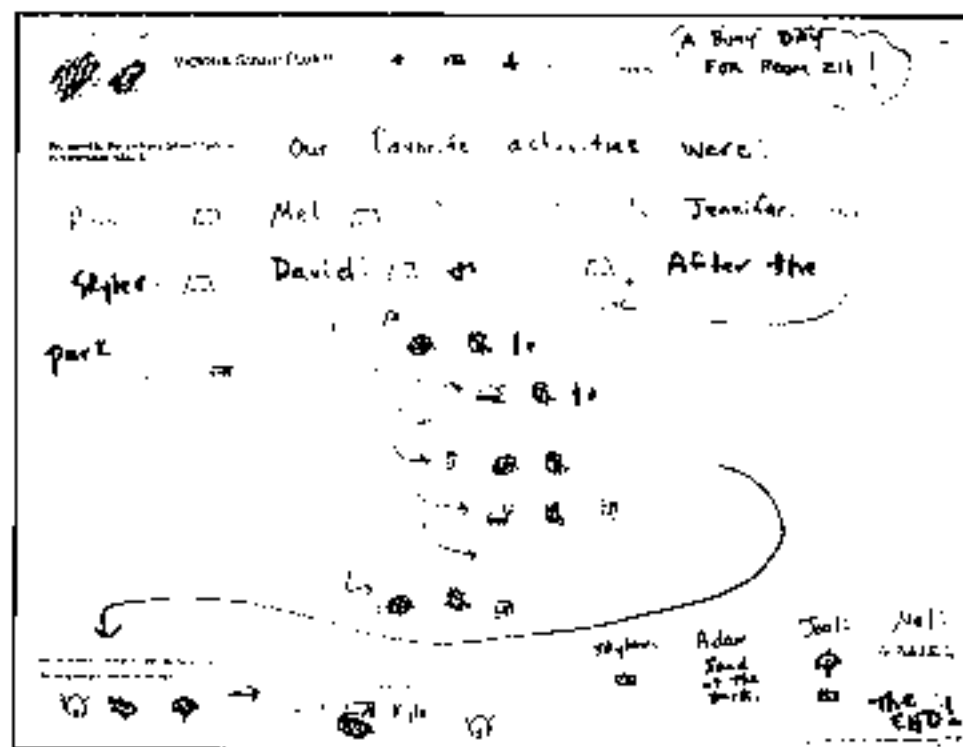


Figure 2: Social Map of a trip to Victoria Street Park.



THE MORNING NEWS **PEN PAL REGISTRY**

welcomes all new pen pals

THE MORNING NEWS PEN PAL REGISTRY provides an opportunity for students with autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and other pervasive developmental disorders to write to others who have the same interests and experiences. Placing interactions in writing provides each person with a chance to look at what has been expressed. In addition, ideas expressed in writing "stay put" so they can be referred to when formulating a response. Using this type of format may make it easier for many children and adults with autistic spectrum disorders to establish and maintain a friendship, and having a pen pal registry makes it easier to find a new friend in the first place.

In the winter 1995 issue of *THE MORNING NEWS*, we

rip-out section. It contained 33 pen pal

following pages are our -

print information -

pen pal, although a

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section are no longer accurate or
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pen pal registry as a

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THE MORNING NEWS, we will

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1 MORNING NEWS Pen Pal Registry

Attn: Karen Lind

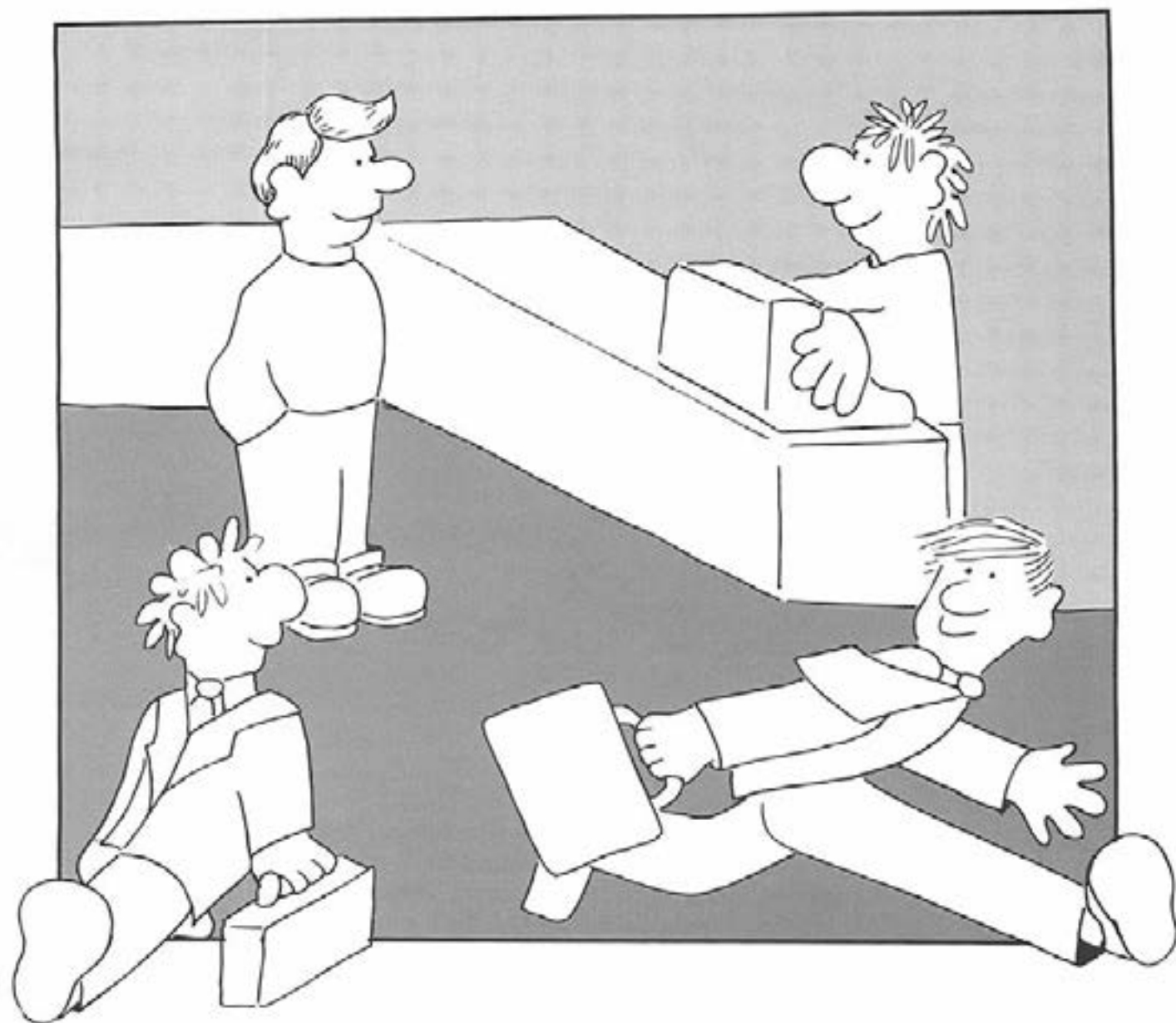
Jenison High School

2140 Bauer Road

Jenison, MI. 49428

We'd like to believe the U.S. mail still provides a method of communication, and that writing a letter isn't a lost art. Still, we recognize some pen pals have computers, and may prefer to write via e-mail. In this case, listing an address on the *Pen Pal Registration Form* is not necessary. Either way, please consider whether you know a person who might like to register as a potential pen pal, and encourage them to send in the enclosed registration form.

We have been happy to hear about new pen pal friendships that have formed as a result of *THE MORNING NEWS Pen Pal Registry*! Please feel free to write to us anytime to share your experiences with the pen pal registry.



Gray's Guide to Compliments: A Social Workbook

- Written and illustrated by Carol Gray, Jenison Public Schools, Michigan,
with contributions by Dr. Tony Attwood, Queensland, Australia

To people with autistic spectrum disorders.

The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of
Dr. Tony Attwood to ideas contained in Gray's Guide to Compliments.

In addition, the author expresses sincere appreciation to
Brian Gray, Tony Attwood, Karen Lind, Sue Jarker, Martha Sweedyk, Dave Dresslar
and Barrett Gray for their participation in the development of this workbook.

Gray's Guide to Compliments: A Social Workbook

What it is, how to use it

A sincere compliment is a nice gesture that is important to building friendships and other relationships. This, then, is an important workbook. It explores why and how typical people compliment one another, and the spoken - and unspoken - meanings that compliments may express.

Gray's Guide to Compliments focuses on compliments frequently used in daily communications and identifies 10 guidelines that govern their use. It is for anyone who wants to improve his or her understanding and use of compliments. This understanding is applied to practical situations. The Reader is advised that to meet the confines of a workbook format the information had to be "socially simplified". In other words, exceptions can be cited for almost every idea presented in the workbook. A few of these exceptions are presented in the text: it is hoped that others will be discussed in Social Skill Groups or within families, with the workbook serving as an outline for discussion and practice.

Several "helps" are included; most of them are built right into the text. Tables and figures summarize and/or illustrate important information. Occasionally an *asterisk appears beside a word. This directs the Reader to side notes containing additional detail, located following the *asterisk at the bottom of the page. Notes in parentheses (like these) help to cross-reference the information in the workbook, often directing the Reader to related text or activities. Titles, and words or phrases needing emphasis, are underlined. New words, and words with ambiguous meanings, appear in *boldface italics* and are described by surrounding text and/or practical examples. Occasionally, an entire sentence appears in **boldface**. This means it is so important that it is included as one of ten compliment guidelines, summarized in Table 3 on page 15. Collectively, these helps work together to make the workbook easier to use and understand.

Gray's Guide to Compliments also contains Compliment Activities (Appendix A, page 16). For those who are interested in applying and practicing some of the ideas and skills discussed in the workbook, the Compliment Activities provide that opportunity.

There's a feedback form on the back cover. The Reader is encouraged to copy it, complete it, and send or fax it to the author. Responses on this form will assist in improving materials for adolescents and adults with autistic spectrum disorders in the future.

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Introduction

Bill and Angela are going out to dinner. Bill remarks, "Angela, you look beautiful tonight!" Helen Hunt accepts an Oscar for her performance in As Good As It Gets. Charlie finds a wallet on the sidewalk. He returns it to the owner, Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith sends Charlie a thank you note. She writes, "I appreciate your honesty and effort! Thank you so much!" Ed shares a problem with his friend, Ralph. Ed comments, "Ralph, you're such a good friend!" Angela, Helen, Charlie, and Ralph all have something in common. They have been paid compliments.

A compliment is an expression of respect, praise or admiration. A compliment can range from a subtle gesture, like the wink of an eye, to a formal presentation of an award or honor. A compliment may be personal, expressed to a single person, or to a group of people, for example when a director praises his orchestra. Some compliments are immediate; others are long overdue. A compliment can involve a lot of energy and excitement—a crowd bursting into applause after a 90 yard return for a touchdown, or it may be quiet and understated—one person whispering "I love you" to another.

Why People Compliment

Dr. Tony Attwood, a Clinical Psychologist in Queensland, Australia, points out that people compliment one another for a variety of reasons, for example to indicate friendship ("I am so glad you are my friend!") or to express genuine admiration ("I am impressed by your ability to play the piano!"). In addition, a compliment may *reassure* and *support* a person ("Just relax, I know you will do well in the play tonight!"), resulting in increased confidence ("OK, here goes! I'll give it my best!"). A compliment sometimes makes starting a conversation easier. In fact, the first time this author spoke to her husband was in response to a compliment. On some occasions, compliments are motivating, and may have a long term impact. They may result in an increased determination to reach a goal, or finish a long term project. To sum it up, paying a compliment is a friendly thing to do that often has a positive result: it makes another person feel good.

Figure 1: Compliments among team members support individual and group efforts.



People working as a team compliment one another frequently. Complimenting the efforts of team mates creates positive feelings in the group. A person who receives compliments from his/her team mates is likely to feel happy about him/herself and the group. This person, in turn, is more likely to compliment the efforts of team mates. Figure 1 illustrates how paying and receiving compliments continually builds positive feelings and relationships in a team. Anyone who has ever watched a football game is well aware of the pats on the back, hugs, and verbal praise that accompany every touchdown or big play (Attwood, 1999).

Table 1: Suggested frequencies for sincere compliments.

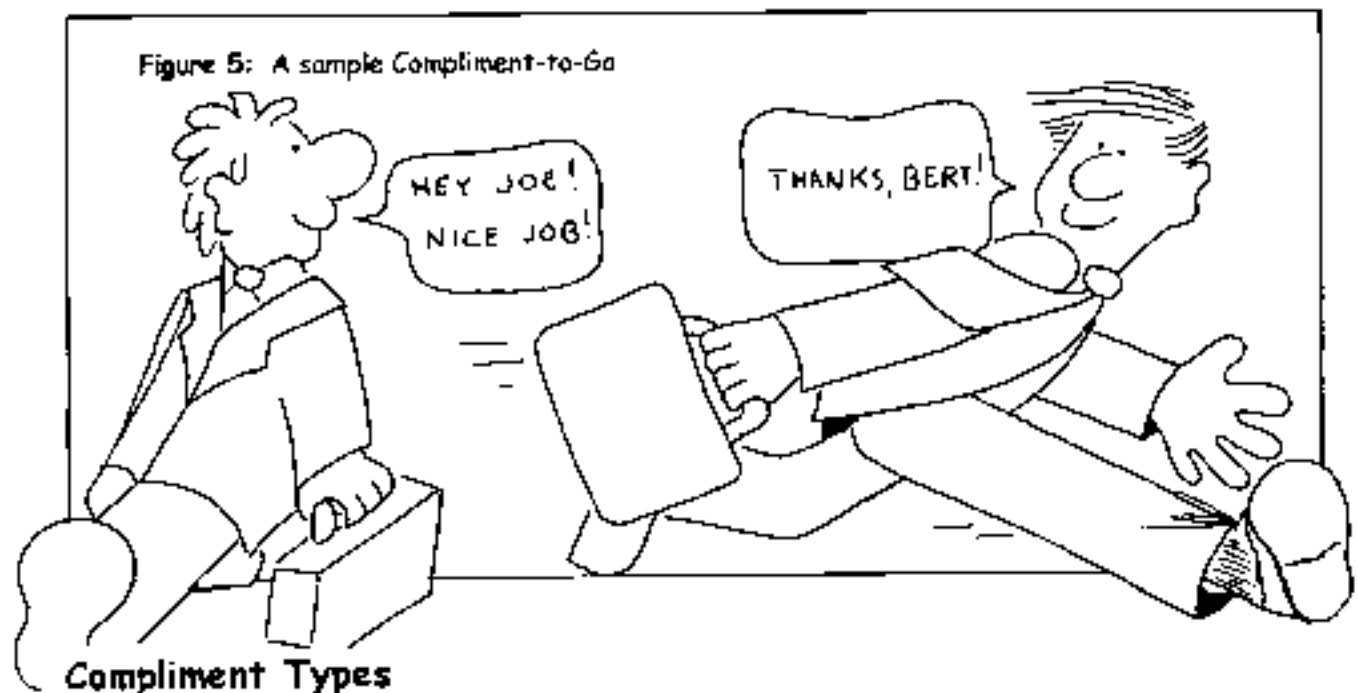
<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Approximate frequency</u>
Loved one: spouse, family member, boyfriend or girlfriend, close friend.	1 - 2 times a day
Co-worker and friend	1 - 2 times a week
Co-worker and not a friend	0 - 1 times a week
Friend	1 - 2 times a week

* A compliment does not need to share new information to be important. One feature of a compliment is that it often expresses information that both people already know. There is no new information shared. This may seem a little illogical until the *social importance* of a compliment is considered. For example, Angie receives a B+ on a Chemistry test. Angie has seen her grade, she knows she did well. Mr. Smith, Angie's teacher, says, "Angie, nice job!" Mr. Smith's comment shares no new information. Still, hearing "Nice job!" from Mr. Smith is important to Angie. Mr. Smith's comment makes Angie feel proud to know that Mr. Smith values her work.

A compliment is stated from a distance that ensures everyone is comfortable. In most cases, a distance of at least 3 feet, or about one adult arm's length, is suggested. For example, Ben notices that Juanita is wearing a pretty necklace. Ben says, "Juanita, nice necklace!" He wants to see it closely, but stays about three feet away so Juanita remains comfortable. Ben may ask, "May I look at your necklace more closely?" If Juanita says it's okay, Ben looks at the necklace closely for a short time (about three seconds) then moves back to about 3 feet. There are times when the distance may be less - or more - than 3 feet. For example, team mates are often closer when they compliment (Figure 2, page 3). Compliments - to - Go (page 8) are often paid from more than 3 feet. Whatever the situation, to be *socially safe* a compliment is stated from a distance that is comfortable for the Sender and Recipient. (*Socially safe* is an adjective that describes interactions and/or situations where all people involved remain comfortable and happy with one another.)

*A side note: In addition to compliments, other statements also share information previously known to both parties. Collectively, these statements are called *small talk*. Small talk often shares information that is obvious (as in "What sunny weather we're having!"). It is rarely controversial - there is little disagreement about sunny weather. This makes small talk a socially safe, friendly place to start or end a conversation. Many interactions are made up entirely of small talk, where others include more meaningful discussions where new ideas or information are shared.

In many situations, a compliment is the entire interaction: a compliment is paid, acknowledged, and that's it. End of interaction. The conversation is started and finished in a few seconds, just enough time to exchange a few brief words. This can happen when either the Recipient or Sender is in a hurry, or needing to get back to a task. It can also happen when the Recipient and the Sender pass while moving in different directions. Several other factors apply that may result in these *Compliments-to-Go*. That is why Senders and Recipients understand that a compliment may - not will - start a conversation, or change the topic. A sample of a Compliment-to-Go is illustrated in Figure 5, below.

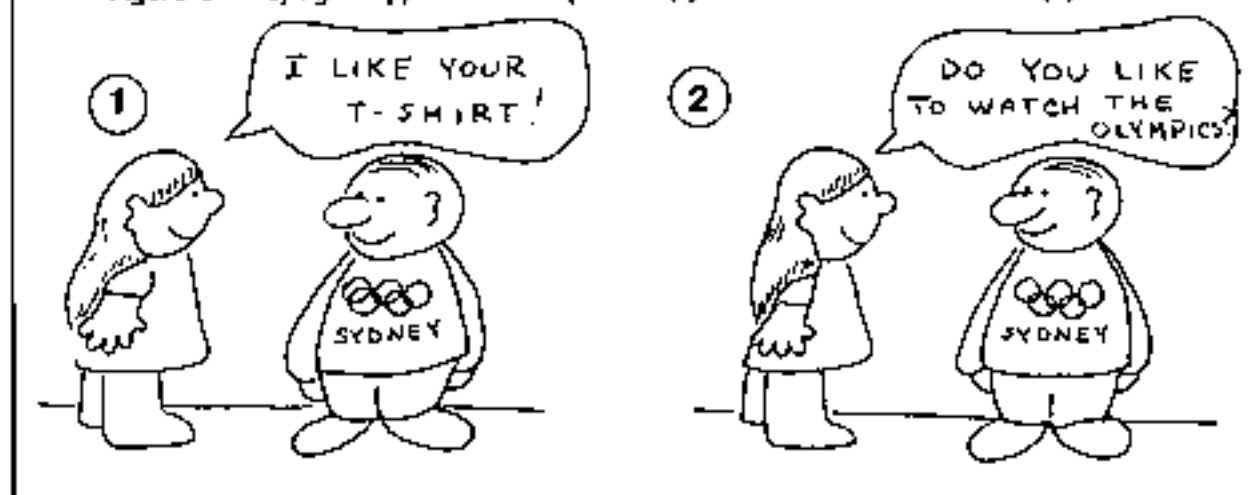


There are three basic types of compliments. Each type serves one or more special roles in a conversation. Here, each compliment type is discussed. (Compliment types are summarized in Table 2 on page 10.)

Appearance Compliments People often like to be complimented about their appearance. They like to hear that another person thinks they look good. These compliments praise a person's general appearance ("Wow, you look nice!"), a nice change in their appearance ("New haircut? I like it!" or "Your diet is really paying off. You look great!"), or clothing or accessories ("That's a great sweatshirt!" or "What a nice handbag!"). These compliments may result in the Recipient saying "thank you", perhaps blushing, and as mentioned earlier may even influence future clothing or grooming decisions.

Appearance compliments often begin an interaction, especially between two people who have never met. For example, if someone is wearing a t-shirt with an Olympics logo on it, a conversation could start with, "I like that t-shirt!" Then, a related question follows, "Do you like to watch the

Figure 6: Paying an appearance compliment (1) that starts a conversation (2).



Olympics?" (Figure 6). This related question may lead a conversation in a number of directions, from the history of the Olympics, to sports, to the next Olympic games in Sydney, Australia.

Appearance compliments may also be helpful starting a new topic within a conversation. In this case, a statement like, "Hey, that sport coat looks great on you!" follows a short pause or "lull" in the conversation. Similarly, this compliment may lead to new topics (clothing that travels well, great places to shop, travel destinations, fun vacations, etc.). An appearance compliment may also be quickly shared as a Compliment-to-Go. (See Activity #3 in Appendix A.)

Sometimes, people make mistakes getting dressed in the morning, or something is wrong with their appearance. They look bad. Perhaps they chose the wrong tie, their pants are wrinkled, or their hair looks funny. Maybe they have gained weight, or definitely chose the wrong hair color. Maybe broccoli or taffy is stuck to their teeth. In Figure 7 (above), Simon's tie and shirt do not look right together. Other people will probably notice Simon's poor choice of shirt and tie. However, many will choose not to mention the error to Simon. Why? They want to spare Simon any embarrassment. In addition, they can be socially on the safe side by keeping thoughts about clothing errors as thoughts only.

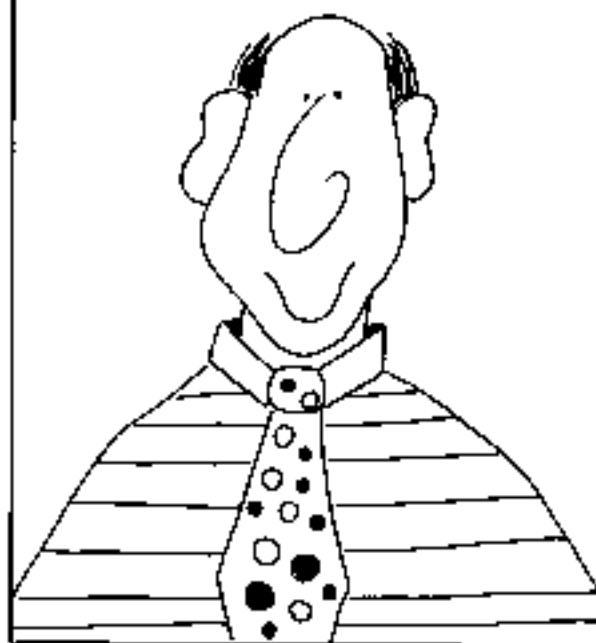


Figure 7: Others may notice but not mention Simon's poor choice of shirt and tie.

Table 2: Summary of three basic types of compliments.

Type	Common Topics (preceded by example)	Common uses	Most easily shared with:	Cautions:
Appearance	<p>"You look great today!"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Praise general appearance - Praise a nice change in appearance - Praise specific piece of clothing or an accessory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start a conversation - Introduce a new topic - Entire interaction (Compliment-to-Go) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To approach someone for the first time - Family and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be socially on the safe side, people often choose not to mention errors in the appearance of another person
Skills, Talents, and Efforts	<p>"You write very well!"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple statement that refers to a skill - Statement that refers to a talent - Statement that acknowledges effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May start a conversation of genuine interest to the Recipient - Introduce a new topic - Entire interaction (Compliment-to-Go) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May sound like a fact or even a prediction, when it is actually a supportive guess intended to make the Recipient feel good - Sender must make sure that the Recipient has the same background information
Personality	<p>"You are so kind!"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General personality trait - Tie a specific situation to an aspect of personality - Express praise and affection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To encourage and support - To praise and express affection at the same time, "I love you" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family and close friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Same cautions as skill, talent, and personality compliments (above)

Compliments about Skills, Talents, and Efforts Many compliments recognize (and directly or indirectly encourage) the skills, talents, and efforts of others. This type of compliment varies in content. It may be a simple statement that refers to a skill ("You frosted those donuts quickly!"); acknowledges a talent ("You sure can sing!"); or recognizes effort ("You studied so hard and passed the test! That's terrific!"). Often, this type of compliment is shared in writing, taking the form of an inter-office memo or personal note. Like appearance compliments, compliments about skills, talents, and efforts may start a conversation ("You sure sang well in church yesterday! I hear that you have been taking singing lessons..."), or introduce a new topic within a conversation ("Oh! By the way, I want to tell you how much I admire your work on the scenery for the play..."). These compliments are likely to be of genuine interest to the Recipient. The Sender is talking about something that the Recipient does well. In some cases, the compliment may be the entire interaction, a Compliment - to - Go ("Hey, Harry, nice job playing Oliver in the play! See you after class!").

Compliments about skills, talents, and efforts are most easily shared among family members or friends. The Sender knows the Recipient well, and has plenty of first hand information about that person. People like to know that others notice, appreciate, and admire their talents, or the things they do well. Hearing this type of compliment may encourage a Recipient to continue pursuing an interest or develop a skill further. For example, if a Sender says, "Wow, you have really improved - that music sounds great!" the Recipient may be motivated to invest an additional half an hour practicing the piano.

Unlike appearance compliments, skill, talent and effort compliments are usually not the best choice for initiating a conversation with another person for the first time. These compliments may be too personal or unexpected coming from a person unknown to the Recipient. Consider this example: Steve and Jeff have never met. Recently, Jeff attended a recital where Steve played his clarinet. At the store, Jeff is excited to recognize Steve working the cash register, and remembers Steve's name from the program. Jeff runs up to Steve, "Steve! You play the clarinet well!" Steve steps back. Steve's mind is full of questions that make him feel uncomfortable ("How does this person I have never met know my name? How does this person I have never met know about my musical ability?") Jeff's compliment is *out of context*. In this situation, out of context means Steve does not know that Jeff attended the recital, and therefore is totally surprised by a customer who uses his proper name and mentions his musical talent while he works at the cash register.

For a Recipient to feel comfortable with a compliment, a Sender ensures that both have the same background information before paying the compliment. A compliment that results in too many questions in the Recipient's mind will result in the Recipient feeling uneasy. Continuing with the previous example, there is a way for Jeff to mention his admiration of Steve's talent, without creating questions in Steve's mind. By following a few steps, Jeff can provide Steve with important

**A side note: Sometimes, people forget to compliment effort, especially if it does not result in a wonderful product or outcome. They become so focused on goals and products, that they overlook the importance of effort. This is a mistake. All efforts result in learning, which in itself is an achievement deserving of a compliment.*

Figure 8: Jeff shares background information before paying a compliment.



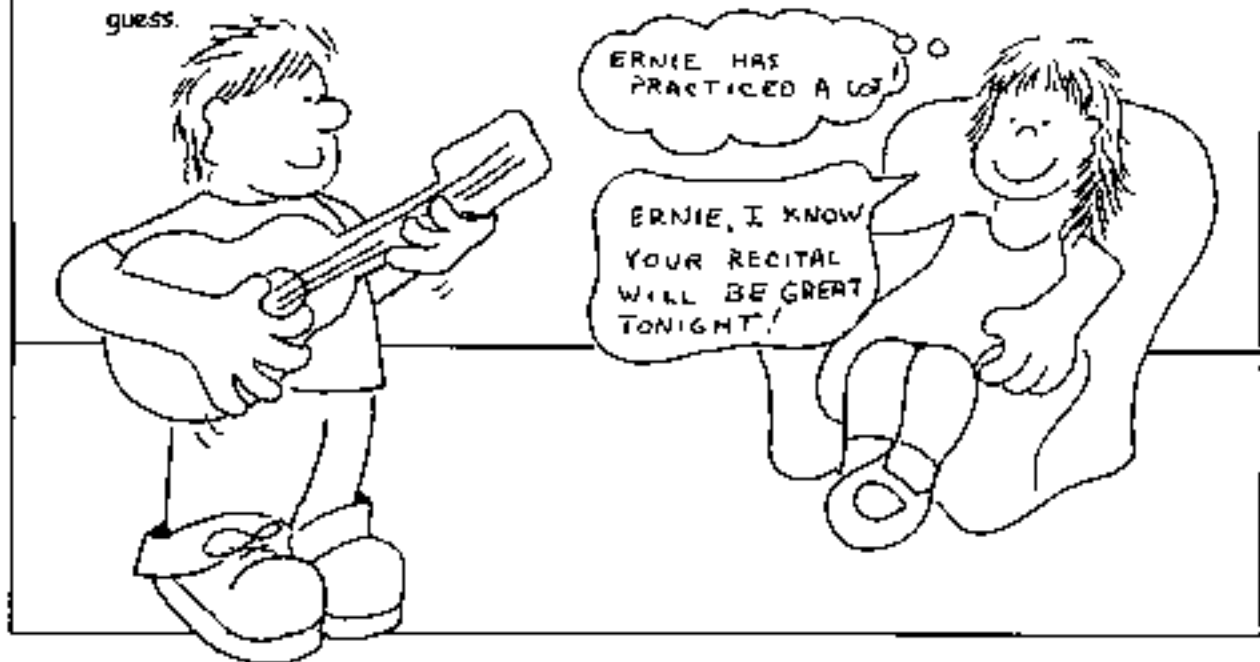
background information. Jeff can: 1) relax, approaching Steve slowly while remembering the 3 foot guideline; 2) wait until Steve is free of customers; 3) establish Steve's attention without using Steve's proper name, by saying, "Excuse me..."; 4) mention how he knows of Steve's talent, "I was in the audience at your clarinet concert last week..."; before 5) paying the compliment, "You play the clarinet well!" This is illustrated in Figure 8, above. Sometimes, people will not bother with all of these steps. Even though it is fun to recognize someone they have seen in a play or performance, they may decide not to approach that person because they have not been introduced.

A friendly compliment may be a supportive guess, stated as a fact. This happens frequently with compliments about skills, talents, and efforts. They sound like fact-based predictions, as though the Sender actually knows how a future event will proceed. Gunilla Gerland, an adult with autism, writes:

What has been very confusing and often hurtful are the more subtle ones, the ones that no-one ever could explain. Like when someone says, 'It's getting better' or 'Of course you will get that job', and I thought this meant that they actually knew this. I thought they couldn't possibly put the words this way if they didn't know this for sure. (Gerland, 1997)

While they are not literally correct, compliments that sound like facts - or even predictions - are commonly regarded as "conversationally okay". The Sender is expressing confidence by making a supportive guess as to how things will go. What is misleading is that the guess is often stated as a fact, as in "Ernie, you are very talented. I know you will play well at your recital!" Understanding the intended message of support is necessary to determine what the Sender really means. This is illustrated in Figure 9 on the following page.

Figure 9: A compliment may sound like a fact-based prediction. The Sender's intended message is often to reassure, support, and encourage the Recipient by making a positive guess.



Personality Compliments A personality compliment refers to one or more aspects of a person's *personality* or character. A Sender may compliment a Recipient on a general personality trait ("You are always so nice!"), or tie a specific situation to an aspect of personality ("You are always on time - you must be a very organized person!"). Often, personality compliments also express affection ("I love how you are always so cheerful!") or offer support and encouragement ("You always persevere until you get it right - stick with it!") Personality compliments take other forms; though the content always directly or indirectly acknowledges or praises the Recipient's personality or character.

Just like compliments that refer to talents, skills, or efforts, the majority of personality compliments are most easily shared when the Sender and Recipient know one another well. Learning about someone's personality takes time, which is why a Recipient will be most comfortable if a personality compliment comes from a Sender s/he knows well. An exception to this occurs when a situation immediately reveals an aspect of someone's personality or character. For example, Joe loses his wallet. Joe is very concerned because he has his money and driver's license in the wallet. Fred finds Joe's wallet. Fred has never met Joe. Fred looks up Joe's phone number in the phone book, and offers to return Joe's wallet. Joe is very grateful and says, "Fred, I appreciate your honesty. Thank you." Even though Joe and Fred have never met, Fred's effort to return the wallet immediately reveals something about his personality and character - he is honest. In this situation, it's okay for Joe to mention Fred's honesty, even though they met only recently.

"I love you" is an important personality compliment. This compliment has many meanings: in other words, a Sender may be thinking a variety of thoughts when saying, "I love you" to a Recipient. The meaning varies depending upon the relationship of the Sender to the Recipient, whether it is parent/child, husband/wife, romantic, or a close friendship. In general, "I love you" means the Recipient is extremely important to the Sender, held in high regard for all of his/her positive personality traits, and ultimately forgiven for mistakes or negative personality features. "I love you," implies that the Sender needs and highly values the Recipient as a part of his/her life (Figure 11). A Sender may have other, personal meanings for "I love you" that vary - if only a little - each time the phrase is used.

Like many other compliments, "I love you" often shares information that both the Sender and Recipient already know. In fact, "I love you" may be the one compliment that is repeated between a Sender and Recipient most often. Why? Hearing "I love you" - even if it has been stated before - reminds a Recipient of how important he or she is to the Sender. Stated another way, all a Sender has to say is a sincere "I love you" to create an important and special feeling in a Recipient. It's a feeling Recipients enjoy.

People sometimes make mistakes with the "I love you" compliment. The two most common mistakes are related to the frequency with which "I love you" is stated: too often, or not enough. On page 6 in this workbook, the point is made that if a Sender compliments a Recipient too frequently, the Recipient may suspect the Sender is not sincere or "up to something". The same may be true of the "I love you" compliment. People who use it too often, especially with people they do not know well, may not be sincere. These Senders may say "I love you" to meet their own needs, without thinking about the needs of the Recipient. A second mistake is not saying "I love you" often enough. Friends and family members expect to hear "I love you" from each other once in a while. Knowing how wonderful hearing (or reading!) "I love you" feels, Recipients like to be reminded of it often. It's a feeling Recipients miss during times when they have not heard "I love you" enough.

Summary

A sincere compliment is a nice gesture, important to building and maintaining friendship and other relationships. A genuine compliment is a friendly thing to do. This workbook has discussed a variety of factors important to why and how typical people compliment one another. People compliment to

Figure 11: Common meanings of "I love you."

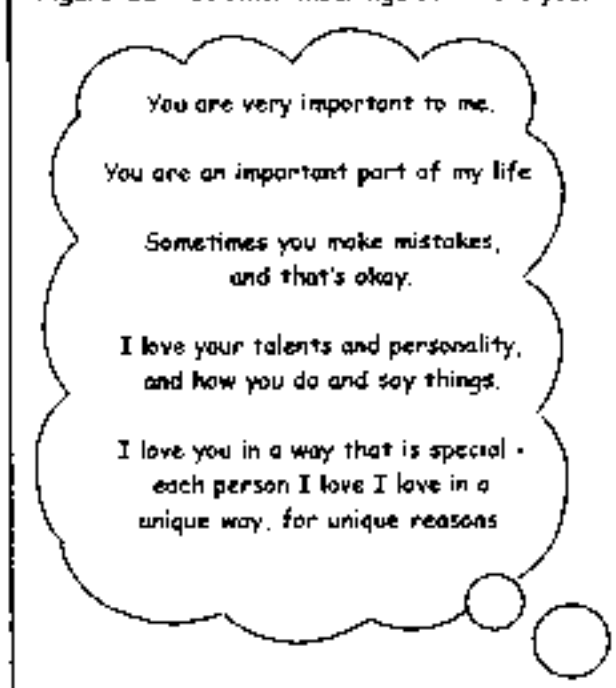


Table 3: Gray's Ten Compliment Guidelines

- #1:** A friendly compliment needs a friendly response.
- #2:** Friendly compliments are sincere, and often begin with the Recipients proper name.
- #3:** A Sender is careful with the Recipient's feelings.
- #4:** A compliment does not need to share new information to be important.
- #5:** A compliment is stated from a distance that ensures everyone is comfortable.
- #6:** Appearance and skill, talent, and effort compliments often start a conversation or introduce a new topic.
- #7:** A friendly compliment may be a supportive guess, stated as a fact.
- #8:** Different types of compliments are used in different situations. Appearance compliments often start an interaction between two people meeting for the first time. Other compliments (skill, talent, effort, and personality) are most easily shared between people who know one another, like friends and family members.
- #9:** For a Recipient to feel comfortable with a compliment, a Sender ensures that both have the same background information before paying the compliment.
- #10:** People like to be reminded that they are important and needed by others, even if they know it already (see #4 above).

praise, reassure, and/or support others; or to start a conversation or introduce a new topic. A basic, friendly compliment is sincere, involves two people, the Sender and Recipient, and is based on certain understandings and characteristics. The most important understandings and characteristics are listed in Gray's Ten Compliment Guidelines in Table 3, above.

The Compliment Activities in Appendix A on the following page give practical application to the information in this workbook. It lists activities that apply ideas presented in the text. These activities give the Reader an opportunity to practice some of the skills with family and friends.

On the outside back cover, a feedback form is provided to assist in the development of future workbooks. Completion and return of this form will provide valuable critique and information, and is sincerely appreciated by the author.

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Appendix A: The Compliment Activities

1. Keep a diary of short notes about the compliments you receive and send. Make a note of what was said and the outcome. (Attwood, 1999)

2. Keep a Compliment Calendar. Compliment a friend or family member once each day, write it in the space along with the Recipient's response.

3. In a Social Skills Group or with a few close friends or family members, practice starting a conversation using an Appearance Compliment. Follow this format (make a chart listing steps to follow):

FIRST: Look. Look at the Recipient's clothing. Sometimes, logos or team designs on t-shirts may provide a great starting point for an opening compliment. Or, maybe the person is wearing a new piece of clothing, or clothing in a particularly attractive color. Decide on a compliment you could pay the Recipient.

SECOND: Compliment. Beginning with the Recipient's proper name, state the compliment. For example, "Andy, that's a great looking Yale University sweatshirt!" A second example: "I love those shoes!"

THIRD: Wait. Wait for the Recipient to respond. Listen to his/her response, it may start a conversation.

FOURTH: Comment/Question. Make a comment or state a question related to the compliment. For example, "Do you know someone who attends Yale?" or "Do you like football?" or "How's the Yale basketball team this year?" Or for the second example: "I think those shoes are made in England," or "Where did you purchase those shoes?"

4. In a Social Skills Group or with a few close friends or family members, make a *Compliment Map*. First, draw stick figures of people well known to everyone in the group. Identify each stick figure with his or her proper name. These are the Compliment Recipients, and those in the Social Skills Group are the Senders. Think about each Recipient's talents, skills, and positive personality traits. Write them next to each Recipient. Next, for each listed skill, talent, or trait, state a compliment. A good situation or time for paying each compliment may also be identified. If there's room, this information may also be placed on the Compliment Map. To close the activity, each member of the Social Skills Group compliments another member on something related to that person's participation in the activity, for example, "Wow, Roberto, you had some great ideas for the Compliment Map we made today!"

Gray's Guide to Compliments: A Social Workbook

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