

Do People Say You Talk Too Much?

Objective

To help you identify situations where excessive talking may be affecting your relationships and to learn conversational signals that can help you understand when excessive talking is driving people away.

You Should Know

Some people love to talk. There are various reasons why some people love to talk and why others are naturally quiet. But if you are sometimes getting feedback from family, friends, colleagues, or employers that you talk too much, then it is a problem you should think about.

It is much easier to form good relationships and succeed in school or professionally when you understand that a conversation is a “give-and-take” event that requires listening as well as talking. For people who are natural “talkers,” making the adjustment can be difficult at first, but, with practice, you can experience some of the benefits of good conversation—people will want to be in your company more, you will get to know others better, and you can develop lasting friendships or more positive, successful work relationships.

Note: Sometimes excessive talking can be associated with Attention Deficit Disorder; sometimes it can be a problem for people with Asperger Syndrome. Consult a mental health professional to discuss additional approaches and strategies if you think this might apply to you.

What to Do

If you think you are someone who talks too much, write down why you think that is true. Is it to get attention? To try to connect with others? To make sure your ideas and opinions are heard? Because you are lonely? Something else? There is no right answer. Write what’s true for you.

Now, for the next week or so, bring awareness to your conversations with others. Notice who is talking and about how much—is it evenly divided? Are you talking more than the other person or are they talking more than you? Write down your experiences and impressions here:

Here are some ways to practice talking less and listening more. Check the ones that you are ready to try in the near future:

Before you talk, think about whether what you're saying is really important.

Talk only when you have something important to say.

Try not to fill awkward silences with words or chatter.

Think about your words while you're talking.

Take breaths before you talk and in between sentences.

Notice how much time you're talking.

Notice whether you are anxious and talking to try to calm yourself.

Try not to talk in a way that is trying to impress others.

Be aware of any tendency to interrupt others when they are talking.

___ Ask questions of the person you're talking with, then continue the conversation, focusing on them, by asking them to say more about that subject.

___ Notice others' body language and gestures. Are they backing away from you? Looking around? Seeming to space out or ignore you?

___ Keep track of any times when people tell you directly, "You talk too much." Don't beat yourself up—use it as a chance to explore what happened and how it happened. Try to do better the next time.

___ Keep track of any times when you might say more than you really meant to say, maybe divulging personal information or feelings, or gossiping about others.

___ Slow down your speech when you are talking. This can help you focus and notice more what is happening with the other person.

___ Practice being more concise when talking about yourself or telling a story. Take an acting class or public speaking course.

___ Be aware of your environment—are others talking? Are others trying to read or study? Respect others' space by not talking in a quiet environment.

Reflections on This Exercise

1. Write down the top three strategies you tried in the past week or so.

2. What was it like to try those strategies? What did you notice inside yourself? What did you notice about the other person in relationship to you?

3. Write down three other strategies that you would like to practice next and keep track of your experience.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?
