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Title – It All Starts with a Warm Greeting

Have you ever thought about what you do when you introduce yourself to someone? We do it hundreds of times every week and, most of the time, we do it without ever thinking. We typically put out our hand, say hello as quickly as possible, have a quick handshake and that's about it. This is called a greeting. What I want to talk about this month is a WARM greeting.

What most people don't understand is the importance of a warm greeting. It's the first chance you have to create the beginning of a connection with another human being. It's also the first time you normally experience physical contact with another person. By understanding the three parts of a warm greeting, you'll come across as warmer and more inviting, and you will start connecting with more people. What are these three tips? Keep reading.

1. The first part of a warm greeting is a good smile. People who smile are considered friendlier, more approachable, and more relaxed. One of the reasons for this is that a genuine smile increases the production of serotonin, the happy hormone. It's also quite a workout! One smile uses more than 16 muscles.

Remember the following benefits of a smile: it shows friendship, it helps make new friends, it makes other people's day brighter, it improves your day, it looks better than a frown, and it puts others at ease.

2. The next part of a warm greeting is a good handshake. Handshakes have been important to me for a very long time. In January 1973, one month before my Bar Mitzvah (a ceremony that marks a Jewish boy's entry to adulthood within the Jewish community), my father sat me down and formally explained the proper way to shake hands. I still remember that precious moment with my dad like it was yesterday. Unfortunately, my father passed away five short years later, but this handshaking lesson lives on in me. My handshake has become one of the most recognizable aspects of my personality, so much so, that it thoroughly impressed my future father-in-law when I first met him.



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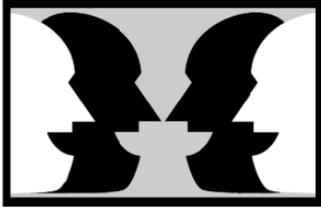
Most people underestimate the impact of a handshake. Here are ten tips for a powerful, confident handshake:

- Always stand when you meet someone, whether you are a man or a woman.
- Face the person squarely, not at an angle.
- Make contact between your thumb and index finger, or web to web, avoiding the dead fish or fingertip-only handshake.
- Keep thumbs straight up. Avoid rolling one hand over or under, as this can denote a power struggle.
- Make eye contact and hold the gaze throughout the introduction.
- Give a pleasant, approachable smile, not an overly big grin.
- Carry papers, briefcase, or drinks in the left hand, leaving the right hand free to shake hands.
- Do not squeeze someone's hand too hard (bone crushing), or too soft (dead fish). These are both signs of insecurity.
- Avoid pumping the hand up and down excessively.
- Whoever is being introduced extends his hand first.

(Thank you, Cynthia Grosso, Charleston School of Protocol and Etiquette, Inc.)

3. The last part of a warm greeting is good eye contact. If you spend some time observing people, you will soon recognize that there are many different eye contact styles. Here are a few of the more common ones:

- The Fixed Stare Style: their eyes never leave you and practically bore through you. Occasionally this style is used as a power trick to intimidate or to give the impression that people are more confident than they really are. This is used by politicians who have been thoroughly coached on how to appear a lot more trustworthy than they often turn out to be!
- The Darting Glance Style: They do look at you – but with very brief glances. They tend to look at you only when your gaze is averted. This style can give the impression of either low self



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confidence or lack of trustworthiness, so if it happens to be your natural style, you may wish to remedy the situation rather than transmit such a non-verbal message.

- The No-Eye-Contact style: Their eyes rarely, if ever, meet yours. They use peripheral vision to watch you. This style is much favored by country dwellers whose lifestyle has not included many opportunities for gazing into the eyes of other humans.
- The Turn-And-Turn-About Style: This is the most common style. I look quite steadily at you while you are speaking. (Although, if you appear to find this uncomfortable, I look away occasionally to avoid creating tension). When it is my turn to speak you look at me steadily while I still meet your gaze but look away a little more (to think, gather my thoughts, check my feelings, etc.).

Once you start paying attention to the impact a warm greeting can have on others, you'll start making a point to concentrate on your introductions and do everything you can to make sure that the first impression is a great impression. See you next month.