

Add Smile Power to Your Life to Empower Your Relationships People with a great smile radiate a warmth that draws others to them instantly.

By John Kinde, Accredited Speaker

Several years ago I was in a San Diego restaurant with my mother. While I paid the check, we both noticed an elderly woman waiting to be seated. As we left the restaurant, Mom asked, "Did you notice that woman with the wonderful smile?" I most certainly did. Her smile lit up the room. It was a smile to die for; one that would certainly win instant friends. It was a smile that you don't often see in a stranger. And maybe Mom and I smiled back, I don't remember. Mom later commented, "I wish I'd told her what a terrific smile she had." But neither of us had. We'd both received a gift without saying thank-you.

Later, on my long drive home, I stopped at a fast-food restaurant for a quick bite. A 70ish woman waited by the condiment bar while her husband ordered. She glanced my way and smiled brightly. It was one of those smiles that broadcast, "I love life!"

I wasn't going to let THIS opportunity pass. I was going to say SOMETHING. As I approached this woman from 30 feet away, her smile melted into a rather startled look; as if asking, "Did I do something wrong?" I walked over to her and simply said, "You have a wonderful smile!" Wow, did her face light up! And she responded with an enthusiastic, "Thank You". My comment probably made her day, but it also made MY day. We truly exchanged gifts that afternoon.

SMILES: INSTANT FACELIFTS

Life's lessons have taught me this: a smile is the number one feature that makes people attractive. It's a welcome mat. It's what makes folks approachable. People with a great smile radiate a warmth that draws others to them instantly.

Some people naturally have a great smile. Others, analytical types like me, must work at it. One way to tell if you're in my category is to recall picking up your developed photos. As you flipped through the pictures, you didn't like the way you looked in most of them. But then...you discovered that one great picture of yourself. In it, you look friendly, you're smiling broadly and your eyes twinkle. Now THAT picture looks like you!

I hate to say it, but ALL the pictures look like you, even those you dislike. Unfortunately, those "bad" photos, where your face doesn't look its best, portray how you often appear. In fact, you might normally look even worse, since you were TRYING to look good for the camera. Usually you're not even making that effort, and may appear even less inviting than you do in "bad" photos. And if you're like me, you assume you're not particularly photogenic and that your smile needs work. When you've mastered your smile, you'll consistently look better in photos. Most important, though, you'll be more attractive and approachable every day.

When you're having a good time, does your face show it? You might be surprised. Years ago I dropped into a comedy club in Montgomery, Alabama. I was sitting in the front row, where one

is typically fair game to be picked on by the comedian. But being the non-expressive, serious Norwegian that I am, I wasn't giving the comic the jovial feedback he needed. I was enjoying the show, but in a straight-faced manner. About halfway through the show, the comic interrupted his routine to ask me point-blank, "Are you having a good time?" I responded, "I'm having a great time." His comeback: "Well then, tell your face!" I was enjoying the program, laughing inside, even studying the performer's humor and technique. BUT...not giving him any outward indication.

In everyday life the same concept applies. You might be enjoying your job, but fail to show it. You may want to meet someone, yet not give them a single, friendly clue. You can even be IN LOVE with somebody, and totally hide it. Your face should express what you feel when you wish to connect with others.

SMILE AEROBICS FOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

One way to become better at smiling is increasing your awareness. Take notice of those you find warm and inviting. Is it their smile? Make an effort to LOOK for great smiles. Notice the appeal of people who smile with their EYES, not just their mouth. The whole face gets involved. Consider these people your models. Study yourself in the mirror. How do you look in the rest room, when shopping, and while passing a reflective window? Do you look friendly? Approachable? Do you really LIKE the image you're projecting?

In fact, a mirror is ideal for your smile workout. Practice various smiles toward capturing that perfect look for the camera. Work on expressing your smile with your eyes. A tip: cut a paper rectangle that permits you to see only your eyes in the mirror. Practice smiling just with your eyes. Get used to the feel of your cheekbones as they lift to brighten your eyes. When you see how a great smile LOOKS, remember how it FEELS. When you can finally project your best smile, hold it. Turn away from the mirror. How does your face feel? What muscles are you using? Make an effort to develop muscle memory, so you can instantly recreate this smile at will.

THE SMILING REMINDER

Sometimes it's life's little reminders that help us focus on making self-improvements. I set out to find a "smile" lapel pin as a permanent token of my smile's importance. After a fruitless one-year search, I commissioned the design and production of smile pins. Now when I encounter a total stranger with a million-dollar smile (not an everyday occurrence), I share the compliment, "You have a wonderful smile...thanks for brightening my day! I'd like you to have my golden smile pin." Then I might add, "And someday, when YOU see a total stranger with a fantastic smile, you can pass on the pin to them."

This little reminder has conditioned me to search out life's glowing smiles, and not to allow them to pass unnoticed. I always carry "golden smile" pins. And when I spot a show-stopper smile, I always express my appreciation.

Other strategic pluses:

1. The pin reminds me never to leave home half-dressed: without my smile. Even while I'm running routine errands, it keeps me focused on smiles as life's true blessings.
2. By shaping my focus, the pin increases awareness of my public appearance and attitude. For example, when in a grocery line, I don't want the checker to glance up and think, "Why in heaven's name is this sourpuss wearing a smile pin?" It forces me to wear a friendly face all day.
3. The pin encourages me to compliment others. When I fail to say a kind word about someone's beautiful smile, I feel guilty. Now, that's what I call constructive guilt! We've often been conditioned to feel shame because we've not lived up to what others expect, but isn't it more positive to suffer guilt for failing our OWN expectations?

You needn't search for a smile pin to remind you. You can choose another object, like a clown pin, that will program you to focus on smile power. Or consider something that nobody else sees, like whimsical underwear. In fact, you may discover that the sheer strength of just your awareness can create positive life changes. With practice you can focus on life's smiles; and create your own relaxed, naturally warm smile. And THEN when you get back a roll of photos, you'll like almost all of them! That's certainly been my pleasant experience. And when you encounter customers, strangers, or loved ones, you'll always be ready to pass on your award-winning smile!

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