

REMEMBER THE ICE:

CREATING BETTER COMMUNICATION (K)NOT BY (K)NOT

There is power in the clarity of your articulation.™

Let me say that again: *There is Power in the Clarity of your Articulation.™*

I want you to take a minute to really think about that statement. It is both the center and the purpose of everything you will learn in this book. My goal is for you to embrace this truth, make it your own, and use the tools I outline here to achieve clarity in your communication.

This skill, in turn, will lead to more personal power than you even realize you can possess. And you already have the tools; you just need to learn how to use them.

How would you like to be listened to, and actually heard, every time you spoke? Confidence in your effectiveness as a communicator translates into confidence in every aspect of your life, from the boardroom to the backyard to the bedroom.

Your sense of personal power, confidence, and self-esteem are wrapped up in how well you are able to communicate your thoughts, needs, ideas and desires. When you articulate clearly and successfully, everything else falls into place. When the details fall into place, they make room for new or expanded ideas. Suddenly, all cylinders fire together, productivity skyrockets, results exceed expectation, and relationships become more intimate and rewarding.

At its most basic, the reason we communicate is to have our needs met. If you wonder about the power of clarity in your message, consider a newborn fresh to the planet. Within moments, he communicates hunger, exhaustion, and discomfort, and in such a way that he is fed, allowed to sleep soundly, and kept warm and dry. He does so without words, and yet he makes his meaning clear when vocalizing his needs.

The key to a newborn's success is the congruency of his message. It is absolutely vital for you to embrace this concept, and I will be talking about it throughout this book. The newborn's thoughts, needs, impulses, facial expressions, body language, and tone of cry are all congruent; they have the same goal and work in unison. They're all layers of the same onion.

As we mature, our needs get more sophisticated and intertwine with our desires. Our vocabularies grow by leaps and bounds, also becoming

more sophisticated. But there is no need to lose the ability to be clear and straightforward in our communication. And yet, somewhere along the line, we do. We muddle things. We overcomplicate our message, and confuse the issue - and the other people listening to us - with some pretty common, pretty poor word choices.

We do it so often, and so automatically, that we fail to register the fact that we are doing it at all.

The first step is to recognize the problem, and then to enjoy the process of changing your behavior; I am fully confident that you will find doing it a breeze and a pleasure.

As you build your awareness and adapt to a new level of personal power, the tools I share in this book will continue to serve you wherever you go in life. Soon, you will discover that where you go in life is completely up to you; your word choices play a huge role in shaping your future.

There is power in the clarity of your articulation.™ Embrace this truth, put it into practice, and change your life. It's time to enhance every single relationship and every single experience you have. Spoken communication is just the beginning. I will show you how to shift your old paradigms and open yourself up to a universe of possibilities.

Why is it so important to pay attention to word choice? It's important because as a society, we have slipped into lazy habits that confuse or undermine the things that come out of our mouths. As a society, we are getting more and more frustrated by our lack of ability to understand and to make ourselves understood.

Poor word choice is a serious obstacle to clear communication and diminishes your personal power. Imagine how much more power and confidence you would have in your life if you could consistently get your message across clearly. How empowering do you think it would be to know that your words influence and inspire, rather than confuse and annoy? I believe few people actually set out to confuse and annoy others. I believe most of us want to be clear and make sense. I believe most people just need to know how to do it.

The good news is that you already have everything you need. It's just a matter of understanding the how and why of organizing and using your words, and putting it all into practice.

The first lesson is about the word "not", or as I like to write it: (K)not. I present it this way as a constant reminder that the word "not" ties your message in knots. I believe the word should be

eliminated from our language.

If the word "not" ever had a good use before it became the standard method for muddling information, overuse has destroyed its meaning. The word is no longer effective. We have become desensitized to its meaning. It has been inserted so many ways and with such frequency to foster excuses and serve for laziness that we no longer think about why we use it, and most critically, we no longer hear it. It no longer registers. We no longer recognize its meaning in a sentence.

To demonstrate what I mean, I'd like to share the story behind the title of this book. "Remember the Ice" is a perfect example of the power in clarifying your message.

In a convenience store on Northern Avenue in Phoenix, Arizona, the manager had placed a couple of signs above his cash registers. Rick's intention was to encourage his patrons to buy more ice during the hot desert summer.

I lived across the street from this store and came to know him fairly well. One day when I stepped up to the counter to make a purchase, I glanced again at the two signs above his cash registers that read "DON'T FORGET THE ICE" and decided to ask him how his ice sales were going.

You may think this was a strange question, but I have always been intrigued by the juxtaposition of words. I am also intrigued by the outcomes of behavior and how the two are intertwined.

Rick replied that ice sales were slow; he was unable to move his inventory with any speed or consistency, and most of it just sat there. We were in Phoenix, in the desert, in the middle of summer where it was 110 degrees in the shade on a cool day.

"Can I make a suggestion?" I asked. "Do you have a couple of pieces of paper and a Magic Marker I could use?" He gave me the items and I quickly made two new signs for him to place above his cash registers instead. The new signs read:

"REMEMBER THE ICE!!!"

I left with a knowing smile and purposely stayed away for about three weeks. When I did go back to the store, I spoke with Rick about his recent ice sales.

He was having difficulty keeping up with demand.

"I have had to triple my order in the last three weeks," he said. "Sales are great."

I smiled and explained what I had done. "If I say to you," I began, "'Don't think of the color blue,'" what color do you immediately think of?"

"Why, blue of course," he replied.

"Of course," I grinned. "Now, if I say 'Don't Forget the Ice', what will you forget?"

"Hmm ... the ice!"

"Right."

With a simple shift in word choice, Rick noticed a considerable increase in his ice sales. He shared the following with me:

"Bob, as the customers stand at the counter to check out, they look up, see the new sign - 'Remember the Ice' - and usually say, 'By the way, add a couple of bags of ice as well.' They pay for their items, pick up their ice from the freezer outside the door, and go on their way."

I love this story. It reminds me just how powerful a shift in speech can be.

It may be trendy to say "Don't forget this" or "don't miss out on that" in your advertising, but why would you deliberately confuse your customers when you know a more effective way of drawing their attention to your product?

The challenge with (k)nots is that their purpose is to invert a sentence and make it mean its opposite. They turn the message inside out and upside down, befuddling the listener. Pay attention to your message and use words that make your statement clean and clear; twisting it into (k)nots serves no purpose.

I have been a student of psychology and language choice my entire adult life. It is my passion, and I have spent the last 40 years learning, observing, counseling, and putting into practice the theories I was taught, tweaking and intertwining them as I honed them into the tools that I use and share every day to help people.

I believe that word choice is the beginning of everything. It is the key that unlocks what we are thinking, and the key that unlocks what we

want to say. When you choose selectively, you place yourself in the process of examining what you really believe, how you really feel, what you really mean, what you really want, and how best to make your thoughts and desires understood.