

HACKS for LIFE

2

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A silhouette of a person, likely a woman, with one arm raised in a fist, set against a bright, glowing sunset or sunrise background. The sun is positioned behind the person's head, creating a lens flare effect. The overall color palette is warm, ranging from deep orange to light yellow.

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Chocolate is good for you after all!

Chocolate is now being touted as a health food! New research suggests there may be some positive health advantages to eating chocolate, including benefits to your heart and brain.

Chocolate (made from the seeds of the *Theobroma cacao* tree) is thought to date back to the Olmec civilisation in Mesoamerica over 3,000 years ago. Ever since, demand for chocolate has boomed with billions of people indulging in its chocolaty delights. In fact chocolate is often considered to be the ultimate comfort food, mood changer and romantic gesture.

But it's not all about self-indulgence, guilt and weight as the health benefits stem from the cocoa and not chocolate itself, which is made by adding sugar and fat. Overindulgence in chocolate (and other sweet foods) can cause weight gain and even a sense of guilt in some people, but weight gain is more likely to be the result of the added sugar.

The purest forms of cocoa are cocoa powder and raw cacao, which contain the greatest concentration of goodness – *without* the added sugar. Any health benefits from eating chocolate means sticking to dark varieties made of and containing more than 70% cocoa.

Cocoa is a rich source of minerals including magnesium, which helps to maintain healthy bones and promote muscle relaxation; iron, which helps to maintain healthy red blood cell production; and zinc, which helps to make new cells in the body. There are also more antioxidants in cocoa than almost any other food on the planet!

These antioxidants are called flavanols (also present in fruit and vegetables) and are at the root of many of the findings from research linking cocoa to disease protection. In fact there's a lot of evidence cocoa may provide significant health benefits, most of which appear to be focused on cardiovascular disease. Certainly, including raw cacao or cocoa powder in your diet will offer the greatest benefit as they both contain the highest concentration of minerals and flavanol antioxidants. But... if you're just looking for a sweet treat and only chocolate will do the trick, then choosing dark chocolate with at least 70% cocoa will definitely be the better choice!

Chocolate affects mood because cocoa increases the levels of several chemicals in the brain that are linked to mood. For instance, phenylethylamine (PEA) – a chemical that has been shown to boost mood, and tryptophan that is converted to the hormone serotonin provides the 'feel good' factor. Cocoa also contains theobromine, which is similar in effect to caffeine, but mercifully, without the jittery side-effects. Together, these three chemicals may explain why chocolate is considered to be so addictive.

When it comes to heart disease, the flavanols in cocoa are thought to dilate the arteries, which improves elasticity and may reduce the risk of heart attack. The effect of these antioxidants are thought to be similar to aspirin in that they help to thin the blood and prevent blood clots. Research has shown that the effect after drinking a cup of cocoa lasts around six hours. An analysis of seven studies carried out by researchers at Cambridge University found that both men and women with the highest intake of cacao or dark chocolate were 37% less likely to suffer with coronary heart disease and 29% less likely to experience a stroke compared to those with the lowest intakes.

Research into how chocolate affects blood pressure on the Chibchan speaking people of the island of Cuna, where cacao is a traditional food, found that the islanders didn't appear to develop high blood pressure as they got older, and this is attributed to the high amounts of cocoa they consume on a daily basis. The researchers noted that once they left the island and consumed less cocoa they also lost the protective effect on blood pressure.

The link between cocoa and blood pressure is that the flavanols it contains increase the availability of nitric oxide in the blood, which dilates blood vessels and lowers blood pressure. Researchers from Adelaide University found that drinking cocoa – rich in flavanols – significantly lowers blood pressure compared to a flavanol-free chocolate drink.

Several studies have shown that drinking cocoa at least five days a week boosts blood flow to the parts of the brain that help with cognition, which in turn can improve mental performance and alertness. The antioxidants in cocoa also help to neutralise low-grade inflammation associated with 'foggy' thinking. The benefits were most pronounced in those people who had already started to show signs of memory decline or mild cognitive impairment that can lead to Alzheimer's.

Studies of older people who were mentally impaired found that those who regularly drank cocoa had greater improvements in memory and verbal reasoning than those who didn't. It's for this reason cocoa has been of interest to researchers investigating dementia.

If, like me, you are a bit of a chocaholic, the best news is that the darkest chocolate bars on the market are the best for your health. A suspiciously large number of studies showed dark chocolate boosts the immune system, heart health and memory.

Researchers at Loma Linda University in California found that high concentrations of cacao – that is, chocolate bars with more than 70% cacao – helped boost the brain and cardiovascular system by increasing blood flow and reducing inflammation. Those who ate the darkest chocolate showed lower levels of stress and stronger immunity. As well as playing a vital part of the body's immune response, cacao can play a positive role in suppressing cancer, heart disease, diabetes, dementia and depression.

Two studies were carried out to test the effect of eating dark chocolate on the immune system and the brain. The first study found bars with 70% cacao increased the production of chemicals that combat inflammation by changing the expression of genes. The second study found they improved memory by boosting connections between brain cells – a process known as 'neuroplasticity'.

Participants in one trial wore electroencephalography (EEG) caps which recorded electrical signals 30 minutes and two hours after they consuming 48g of 70% dark chocolate. The findings showed that the 'superfood' of 70% cacao enhanced neuroplasticity for behavioural and brain health benefits, including cognitive, hormonal and cardiovascular health.

The flavonoids found in cacao are extremely potent antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents with known benefits for brain and cardiovascular health. A study by Italian scientists also found cocoa flavonoids in dark chocolate boosted blood flow to key parts of the brain, improving memory and attention span, better heart health and grey matter linked to age-related decline. People who ate chocolate every day were found to have better attention spans, working memory, ability to process speed and verbal fluency. The team also found that women who ate chocolate after a night without sleep experienced lower levels of brain impairment, raising hopes for people who suffer from insomnia and shift workers.

Cheers! Red wine lowers cholesterol

'In wine there is wisdom, in beer there is freedom, in water there is bacteria.'

Benjamin Franklin.

Red wine lowers cholesterol, reduces the risk of heart disease, lowers the risk of stroke, cuts the risk of colon cancer, controls blood sugar levels and prevents dementia. Now that's what I call value for money!

As a connoisseur of red wine, I was delighted to hear about a scientific report suggesting that light-to-moderate drinking slashes the risk of an early death by a fifth. Particularly heartening was that red wine – in moderation – was singled out as being beneficial.

There have been dozens of other studies that also suggest drinking moderate amounts of alcohol – roughly 21 units a week for men and 14 for women – a figure conjured out of thin air in 2016 by the UK Department of Health, could protect you from various diseases, and even extend your life. Fourteen units of alcohol per week is the equivalent of about six pints of average-strength beer or 10 small glasses of low-strength wine. Twenty-one units is the equivalent of about nine beers or 15 glasses of wine.

Researchers worldwide have linked moderate consumption to preventing the common cold, improving your sex life, and even reducing the risk of developing gallstones.

However, the Chief Medical Officer and self-appointed do-gooder for England, Dame Sally Davies, advised that there is no safe drinking limit 'because alcohol is toxic to the liver and other organs.' She stated women should consider their risk of breast cancer every time they reach for a glass of wine and advised the public to swap alcohol for a cup of tea.

But... the danger has been exaggerated to get the message across that over indulgence is bad for you and others if your drinking is out of control. That is certainly true – excessive drinking is linked to a host of health issues including cancer, poor mental health, liver disease and premature death, not to mention domestic violence, road deaths and general bad behaviour our town centres on Friday and Saturday nights.

Sir David Spiegelhalter, professor of the public understanding of risk at Cambridge University, says that the long-term effects of low alcohol consumption are complex and difficult to investigate, which is why people have been to some extent misinformed and even confused. And Mr John Scurr, a leading consultant vascular surgeon at the Lister Hospital, Chelsea, agrees that we are getting mixed messages when it comes to the link between alcohol and health.

The Department of Health takes a very firm line on alcohol and claims it is never safe. Yet a host of scientific studies show that alcohol in moderation can be beneficial. Some people do drink to excess and others become addicted, but to say drinking is always bad is just plain wrong! We should take a more reasoned look at alcohol and health.

1. Liver disease

Too much alcohol can lead to a range of liver complaints, including fatty liver disease, hepatitis and other problems. At University College London, Professor Rajiv Jalan says

people with healthy livers do not need to abstain. The liver is designed to cope with a certain level of toxicity in the blood. Although not beneficial to the liver, alcohol in moderation – one or two units taken with meals – is not enough to harm it.

The bad news is older people build up a tolerance to alcohol over the years and are thus more at risk of liver disease. As they age, their livers renew more slowly and are damaged by alcohol more quickly.

Oldies should be careful with drink, especially if they are taking prescription drugs, which when metabolised in the liver can affect metabolism – for example, alcohol can inhibit the action of the blood thinning agent warfarin and increase the risk of blood clots and stroke.

2. Diabetes

Alcohol contains huge amounts of calories and so drinking can cause blood sugar levels to rise – a pint of lager is the equivalent of a slice of pizza – and obesity is a risk factor for type 2 diabetes. Too much alcohol can also reduce the body's sensitivity to insulin, the hormone that regulates blood sugar levels, and increase the likelihood of diabetes.

Conversely, moderate drinking may actually help to protect against type 2 diabetes. According to a review of 15 studies published in journal *Diabetes Care*, healthy adults who drank just three units of alcohol a day lowered their risk of getting type 2 diabetes by up to 40% for women but only 30% for men. The research also found that non-drinkers ran the same risk of developing the disease as heavy drinkers.

3. Heart Disease

Multiple studies have shown that alcohol may protect against heart disease because it helps raise levels of 'good' HDL cholesterol and prevents furring of the arteries. A study published in the *British Medical Journal* in 2017, involving nearly two million people, found that drinking in moderation – no more than 14 units of alcohol per week for women and 21 for men – protected the heart more than abstinence!

Moderate drinkers were found less likely to have problems such as angina, heart attack, stroke and aortic aneurysm than non-drinkers. Heavy drinking had the opposite effect, increasing the risk of all these diseases.

Some specialists encourage patients with vascular problems to drink regular small amounts of alcohol to help alleviate symptoms. Alcohol causes blood vessels to dilate which in turn brings down blood pressure and improves circulation.

Professor Martin Cowie, a consultant cardiologist at Imperial College, London, says he never tells his middle-aged patients who drink moderately to give up alcohol. Like Aspirin, alcohol makes the blood less sticky, thus reducing the risk of strokes. Who needs Warfarin when a glass of red will do the trick?

4. Breast Cancer

It appears that there is no level of alcohol that is completely safe in terms of breast cancer. A review of evidence published by the American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund is that even moderate drinking, say just one glass of wine a day, can increase the risk of breast cancer by 5% for pre-menopausal women and 9% for post-menopausal women, while heavy drinkers can increase their risk by up to 50%.

Alcohol may also damage DNA in cells, allowing cancers to develop, and can also increase the levels of certain hormones, including oestrogen, which can assist the development of hormone-sensitive breast cancer.

According to a study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, drinking alcohol in moderation may actually help women with the disease live longer. Women who drank up to six drinks per week before their diagnosis reduced their risk of dying from breast cancer by 15% compared to those who abstained.

5. Dementia

A unique study from the University of San Diego found that moderate to heavy drinkers – that is, those who had more than three drinks a day for women and four drinks a day for men – were actually helping to stave off dementia in old age.

Researchers examined older men and women's health and compared it to their cognitive abilities. They found that alcohol consumption is not only associated with reduced mortality, but with increased chances of remaining cognitively healthy into older age.

6. Life expectancy

Will a daily glass or two help you live longer? According to a study published in August 2017 by the American College of Cardiology, the answer is a resounding YES!

Adults who had more than three drinks a week but less than 14 (seven for women) slashed their risk of early death from all causes by 25% for women drinkers and 13% for male drinkers. But those results are reversed for heavy drinkers, who are 25% more likely to die early.

While Dame Sally Davies, the tea-total Chief Medical Officer and party animal, dismisses the argument that red wine can be healthy, other studies suggest it has a chemical composition that makes it special.

Antioxidants in red wine, such as resveratrol and proanthocyanidins, which help mop up harmful free radicals in the blood, are believed to provide health benefits. Red wine also contains flavonoids, compounds used in many drug therapies to help improve circulation. Resveratrol is found in grape skin and also in non-alcoholic red grape juice. Non-drinkers who want to get the benefit of the compound – thought to help keep arteries flexible and decrease blood pressure – could benefit from drinking it.

Pure alcohol (ethanol) which is found in spirits, beer and cider, is probably responsible for the majority of the protective effect against cardiovascular disease because it causes vasodilation – the expansion of blood vessels – and helps to keep arteries free from fatty deposits which can lead to heart disease.

Low-calorie alcoholic drinks are preferable as they help to reduce weight gain. Beer – often blamed for being high in calories – actually contains half the amount as a similar volume of red wine – but of course people tend to drink twice as much of it.

Overall, studies seem to suggest that alcohol can be beneficial. In particular, red wine in moderation has been shown to bestow the greatest benefits – even more so than white wine – and surprisingly, abstinence.

A study at Harvard study found that a glass of red wine a day keeps the doctor away because they were less likely to be admitted to hospital than teetotallers – and a study of 21,000 men and women in Italy found that for moderate drinkers, when mixed with a typically Mediterranean diet, a small glass of wine (125ml) a day lowered the chance of needing medical treatment compared with heavy drinkers or those who abstain, like Chief Medical Officer Dame Sally Davies. Those who never touched a drop were 11% more likely to find themselves hospitalised than those in the one-glass-a-day club.

The Harvard study was published in the journal *Addiction*.

Drinking wine in moderation – five or more glasses a week – cuts the risk of needing eye surgery by a whopping 23%. In a study by Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and University College London's Institute of Ophthalmology, researchers found that drinkers who consumed up to 14 units per week were less likely to develop cataracts – the cloudy patches that form in the lens of the eye.

While the reason for the link is unclear, the experts think that polyphenol antioxidants – especially abundant in red wine – may have a protective role. But the most significant reduction in risk was linked to drinking wine rather than beer, cider or spirits, where there was no significantly reduced risk. The research examined data from more than 490,000 people in the UK and was published in the journal *Ophthalmology*.

A glass of red anyone...?

The shape of water

Water is the most important thing we need to stay alive! Your body body needs water, but it's important to drink the right amount; not enough and you'll dehydrate - too much and you'll literally drown in your own fluids!

A common question is 'how do I know I'm drinking the right amount of water each day?' Some people say that you need to drink at least 2 litres of water every day, but that isn't necessarily true. The answer is, everyone is different and so the amount of water you need can depend on body mass, how much exercise you take, how hard you're working, and believe it or not, how hard you think!

Losing as little as 2% of your body's water content can significantly impair physical performance. If we don't stay hydrated, physical performance can suffer. This is particularly important during intense exercise or high heat. Dehydration can have a noticeable effect if you lose as little as 2% of your body's water content.

However, it is not uncommon for athletes to lose up to 6-10% of their water weight via perspiration. This can lead to altered body temperature control, reduced motivation, increased fatigue and make exercise *feel* much more difficult, both physically and mentally. Believe it or not, muscle is made up of about 80% water! So, if you exercise intensely and tend to sweat, then staying hydrated can help you perform at your absolute best.

Your brain is strongly influenced by hydration status. Hydration exerts a major effect on energy levels and brain function! Dehydration can affect brain structure and function. It's also involved in the production of hormones and neurotransmitters. Prolonged dehydration can lead to difficulty thinking and reasoning.

Even mild dehydration (1-3% of body weight) can impair many aspects of memory and brain function. In a study of young women, fluid loss of 1.36% after exercise impaired both mood and concentration, and increased the frequency of headaches. In a study of young men, fluid loss of just 1.59% was detrimental to working memory and increased feelings of anxiety and fatigue.

So the common measure of how much water you should drink each day depends on your individual needs. The rule is: if you're thirsty, drink some water, but if you're not thirsty, don't drink it just for the sake of it.

Another way of telling if you are drinking enough water is to look at your pee. If it's pale or almost clear, then you're probably drinking enough. If however, its very yellow, that's often a sign that you might be dehydrated. If you pee is very dark, you might need to see a doctor!

The most important thing is to keep hydrated.

Water delivers oxygen to the body

Blood is more than 90% water, and blood carries oxygen to different parts of the body.

Water boosts skin health and beauty

With dehydration, the skin can become more vulnerable to skin disorders and premature wrinkling.

Water regulates body temperature

Water stored in the middle layers of the skin comes to the surface as sweat when the body heats up. As it evaporates, it cools the body - this is particularly important if you play sport! If there's not enough water in the body, you are less able to tolerate heat strain.

Water boosts performance during exercise

Dehydration during exercise may hinder performance. It's also possible that dehydration reduces performance in activities lasting longer than 30 minutes.

Water can help with weight loss if it's consumed instead of sweetened juices and sodas. Drinking water before meals can help prevent overeating by creating a sense of fullness and boosting metabolic rate. In two studies, drinking half a litre of water was shown to increase metabolism by 24-30% for up to one and a half hours. Drinking water half an hour before meals is the most effective. In one study, dieters who drank ½ litre of water before meals lost 44% more weight over a period of 12 weeks. It's better to drink water cold, because then the body will use additional energy to heat the water to body temperature, thereby burning more calories.

Drinking water reduces the chances of getting a hangover

Hangovers are partly caused by dehydration, and drinking water can help reduce some of the main symptoms of hangovers. Alcohol is a diuretic, so it makes you lose more water than you take in. This can lead to dehydration, although dehydration and can cause symptoms like thirst, fatigue, headaches and dry mouth. If you've been drinking alcohol, Try to have have *at least* one glass of water before going to bed.

Drinking water may help to prevent and even treat headaches

Drinking water can sometimes help relieve headache symptoms, especially in people who are dehydrated. Dehydration can trigger headaches and migraines in some individuals. Several studies have shown that water can relieve or reduce the intensity and duration of headaches in those who are dehydrated.

Water is part of saliva and mucus

Saliva helps us digest our food and keeps the mouth, nose, and eyes moist. Drinking water also keeps the mouth clean and can also reduce tooth decay.

Water lubricates the joints

Cartilage, found in joints and the disks of the spine, are about 80%water. Long-term dehydration can reduce the joints' shock-absorbing ability, which can lead to joint pain.

Water helps your digestive system and flushes body waste

The bowel needs water to work properly. Water is needed in the removal of urine and faeces. Dehydration can lead to digestive problems such as constipation and an overly acidic stomach. This increases the risk of heartburn and stomach ulcers. Drinking plenty of water can help prevent and relieve constipation, especially in people who generally do not drink enough water. Carbonated water can give promising results for constipation relief, although the reason is not fully understood.

Water helps maintain blood pressure

A lack of water can cause blood to become thicker, increasing blood pressure.

Water helps clear the airways

When dehydrated, airways are restricted by the body in an effort to minimise water loss. This can make asthma and allergies worse.

Water dissolves minerals and nutrients making it possible for them to reach different parts of the body.

Water prevents kidney damage

The kidneys regulate fluid in the body. Insufficient water can lead to problems such as kidney stones. Increased water intake appears to decrease the risk of kidney stones.

Higher fluid intake increases the volume of urine passing through the kidneys, which dilutes the concentration of minerals, so they are less likely to crystallise and form clumps. Water might also help prevent the initial formation of stones, but more studies are needed to confirm this.

Confidence trick (2)

SEVEN RULES TO A MORE CONFIDENT FUTURE

In reality, confidence is an abstract construct that people believe they have. Confidence is merely a feeling that might make it easier for a person to complete challenges, but the reality is – it is in no way essential.

The most extreme form of confidence is narcissism. True, narcissists have little regard for the opinions of others and are often happier and less stressed.

Surveys have also shown that narcissistic people are more satisfied with life. This is because they have less social anxiety and think of themselves as the most important person in the room.

It's hardly surprising, given that they are experts in putting themselves first and are blind to criticism. By taking a few leaves out of the narcissists handbook may protect your mental health. But how do you become just enough of a narcissist to boost your mood, without making enemies?

RULE ONE

Act first, think later, for positive results. Most narcissists don't flinch when they have to speak in public or have a stressful job interview because they rarely think about what they do before they actually do it. As a result, they're more likely to reach the pinnacle of their career than the rest of us.

Most of us too easily catastrophise, thinking 'what if?' So, in nerve-racking situations you should act first and think second.

It seems counter intuitive to everything we're taught as children – but it works!

Before your big event, picture someone you consider to be confident and behave (imitate) exactly as they would in that situation. Completing the task will instil the belief that you *can* do it, which will make you more comfortable about doing it next time.

Positive behaviour means the positive thoughts will follow!

RULE TWO

Take pride in your appearance. Looking good means feeling good and it also means you are treating yourself with value... and those who value themselves feel happier... and those that feel happier also feel more confident.

Studies show that if you roll out of the front door in the morning without so much as brushing your hair, you're more likely to feel miserable. If you know that on certain days this is more likely to happen – Monday mornings, for instance – you should make a plan that makes your morning routine easier.

Get a haircut, pick an outfit you feel great in and perhaps buy a new pair of shoes.

RULE THREE

A little self love is OK – it's light years away from narcissism and it's not at all selfish to do what's good for *you*.

It's also alright to say to yourself every morning *'I'm alive, and I'm OK!'*. Sit on the edge of the bed and say that to yourself six times every morning!

RULE FOUR

We've all been asked to do things for a friend when we'd really rather not. Most people automatically say yes out of fear, desperate not to seem selfish or unkind, but regret it later.

Again, it's OK to just say no to what doesn't serve you and yes to what does. There's a simple exercise that will help you make decisions that serve you better – just swap an immediate yes with *'I'll need to think about it because I've got a lot on at the moment'*.

You can also try a simple breathing exercise before you respond. Look around you and name, in your head, five things you can see and five things you can hear. This will allow time for the decision-making centre in the brain – the pre-frontal cortex – to compute the information before your emotional response kicks in.

You'll be far more likely to be guided by what you want to do, as opposed to what you feel you have to do.

RULE FIVE

Don't downgrade your achievements!

Most of us have a fixed view of ourselves and our abilities. If we pass that exam or get our dream job, it doesn't suddenly make us believe we're a great person.

We don't think too much of ourselves, so we put successes down to being 'lucky'. Narcissists, on the other hand, see their achievements as indicators of the brilliant, successful people they believe they are. And if they don't succeed, it's no slight on them as a person. So while it's important to be realistic about your mistakes, remember it doesn't make you a bad person.

Instead of viewing successes and failures in terms of your personality, try to see each event in isolation.

Rational emotive behaviour therapy (a fancy riff meaning the ability to contextualise the way you feel about stuff) teaches you to see negative things as individual unimportant failings, rather than as a sign you are a failure.

In other words, you shouldn't waste your time thinking about your worth in terms on just what happens at any one time, but what happens over your life. All the good things, all your successes, all your achievements, are more important than one bad thing that's happened.

It's not only normal, but it's ok to succeed in something today but tomorrow. It doesn't matter... you have another success the day after.

You can keep a daily diary of your achievements and failures to help you remember – they are just experiences, that’s all. And next time, you’ll do better!

RULE SIX

Set clear goals – and take small steps to get there!

When narcissists set a goal, they’ll most likely achieve it. This is because they obsess over a series of specific, clear steps that get them there. Others make vague pledges such as ‘doing more exercise’ or ‘joining a club’.

When we’re not clear on exactly what we want and how and when we’re going to do it, we set ourselves up for failure.

Draw out or write down a really clear plan of action and a timeline featuring specific, daily mini-steps – and stick to it – to help you reach your goals.

RULE SEVEN

Face fears head on and you’ll get stronger.

One of the most common phobias I see is social anxiety – a fear of big groups of people.

Sufferers are so overcome with worries about what other people think of them, and this can occasionally trigger extreme panic.

In fact, unless you indulge yourself in some kind of unacceptable behaviour like getting drunk and insulting people, no one will think anything bad about you.

Narcissists are immune to this as they are not bothered by what others’ opinions or what others might think – and neither should you be!

The way to overcome social anxiety is to face it head-on. By ‘*not giving a f**k*’ – you will strengthen yourself and be able to face any challenge. Remember...*no-one* is thinking anything about you at all, except how pleasant you are.

So start small... Perhaps invite two or three people round for dinner, or attend a small event with a friend.

The following weekend invite a few more, or tag along to a small party. After a very short time, your brain will learn that the fear is irrational and nothing is quite as scary as you once thought it would be.

Remember: It’s alright to put yourself first and remind yourself every morning – ***‘I’m alive, and I’m OK!’***

How to win friends and influence people

NINE RULES THAT WILL MAKE PEOPLE LIKE YOU

(Shamelessly stolen from the Neuro Linguistic Poppycock (NLP) Handbook!)

1. Ask them to do you a favour

Start with something simple such as asking them *'Could you please hold my bag for a moment?'* Their unconscious mind will automatically believe they like you because they're doing you a favour.

2. Use a person's name when speaking

Why? Because it makes us feel important and appreciated and people like a good listener.

3. Wait before replying to what someone says

This makes them feel you're really thinking about what you're going to say in reply and it makes you seem like a better listener. But only pause for a second or two, otherwise it will make you look creepy.

4. Speak with your palms facing outwards

This communicates that you are open, that they can trust you and that you are their friend. But be careful not to do it too obviously as it might also make them think you are a bit odd, which let's face it, most NLP enthusiasts are. Showing an open palm is prehistoric – it shows the other person you are no threat to them or you're not carrying a weapon.

5. Nod your head in affirmation

This gives the person you're listening to a feeling of validation because it shows you're really listening to them – even if they are talking rubbish.

6. Notice small details or give compliments

It's one of those immutable rules of social interaction that people like people who like *them*. Noticing and commenting on even the smallest of details show you are interested.

7. Mirror their tone of voice and body language

Unconsciously, they will get that you are like them – and they will like you even more in return! But again, try not to make it obvious or they will start to think you are taking the piss.

8. Give credit and compliment other people when in a group

Recognising the good in others and complimenting them on something they've done or achieved will get them to like you a lot more – and so will the other people in the group.

9. Showing your vulnerable side

Showing your vulnerable side will trigger other people's instinct to protect you.