



## *Tool #13 - Part A*

### *Magic Words that Change Negative to Positive*

#### *Part A Includes:*

*Lesson*

*Quiz*

*Goal Setting*

(Each tool is presented in a 2 part lesson format.  
Part B will follow in two weeks)

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Some everyday words can be detrimental to relationships at work. How often do you think about the meanings of the words that you use every day? Like most people, do you just utter the words that seem to flow naturally from your mouth? Some of the words that you commonly use may actually create negative relationships with your co-workers, managers, and your customers.

Here are some places where you might run into trouble by inadvertently using negative words: leaving a message on voice mail, talking with a colleague at work, chatting with a client. Negative words can also cause you trouble in relating with your family and friends.

Here's how you can eliminate some commonly used negative words and replace them with positive words.

**PROBLEMS become SITUATIONS**

A negative statement would be, *"I have a difficult problem at work."* Contrast this with the more positive, *"I have a difficult situation at work."*

A problem seems as though it is stuck to you and will always be there. It weighs heavy on your shoulders. A situation, on the other hand, seems temporary and solvable. It has a much lighter feel to it, and it won't cause as much anxiety.

**ALWAYS and NEVER become OFTEN and SELDOM**

A negative statement would be, *"You **never** help with the filing. You always leave the charts for me to file."* Contrast this with the more positive, *"Since you don't often offer to help me file the charts, I get frustrated because I often have to stay late to get the filing finished. Can we work out a plan so that we can share the filing?"*

Always and never are negative words because they are rarely true and exaggerate a situation. Since they are usually used to criticize, people feel attacked and can become very defensive.

The worst part is that others may focus on your exaggeration and entirely ignore your message. In the more positive statement, however, you are explaining your own feelings and wishes, so there is no need for your co-worker to get defensive, and you are more likely to get cooperation with the filing.

**SHOULD HAVE becomes COULD HAVE**

A negative statement would be, *"You **should have** worked on that management report instead of filing papers."* Contrast this with the more positive, *"You **could have** worked on*

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*that management report instead of filing papers. Next time, would you please ask me what the priorities are if you are not certain which task to do first?"*

Using the words, should have, creates condemnation and guilt for something that has already been done and cannot be changed, whereas the words, could have, don't condemn anyone. They let someone know he or she had a choice, and this experience then becomes a lesson for making better choices in the future.

#### **BAD becomes UNWISE**

A negative statement would be, *"It was really bad that you missed work to go to the dentist when we had a deadline to meet."* Contrast this with the more positive *"Missing work to go to the dentist when we had a deadline to meet was not very wise. The rest of us had to work overtime to get the project done. So, what can you do to make it up to everyone?"*

Using the word, bad, is a judgement of a person's character, and causes resentment. On the other hand, using the word, unwise, refers to the natural consequences of the person's actions, and doesn't judge a person's basic character.

#### **FAULTS become DIFFERENCES**

A negative and judgmental statement would be, *"One of my co-worker's **faults** is that her desk is always a mess, and it is so frustrating because it is right next to my desk"* Contrast this with the more positive, *"One of the **differences** between us is that she keeps her desk messy, while I get frustrated unless everything is put in its place."*

In using the word, *faults*, you are judging someone's actions as right or wrong. Using the word, *differences*, removes the critical tone, because you are pointing out how you are different, not that one person is right or wrong.

#### **MISTAKES become VALUABLE LESSONS**

A negative statement would be, *"You made a mistake."* Contrast this with the more positive, *"There is a valuable lesson in what you did."* The first way makes others feel ashamed of what they did, and is certain to stifle creativity in the future. The second way gives others something positive to do – to learn from their actions, thereby encouraging learning and experimentation.

#### **MUST becomes PREFER**

You add stress to your workday if you *must* have certain things happen for you to enjoy your work.

Instead of saying, *"I **must** finish everything on my task list by 5 PM,"* replace it with, *"I would **prefer** to finish everything on my task list by 5 PM, but if I don't, I am still a valuable*

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*and capable employee.”*

Instead of saying, “Everyone **must** treat me with respect,” say, “**I would prefer** that everyone treat me with respect, but if some people choose not to, I can still have respect for myself and have a happy day.”

**PLEASE becomes WOULD YOU PLEASE**

Even if you are trying to sound pleasant by using the word “*Please*” it can sound like a demand. Instead, using the words “*Would you please...*” softens your request because it gives the person a choice, and you will be more likely to get cooperation without resentment.

**A Smile Needs No Words**

Smile when you greet people at work. A smile is international language. It brings happiness to others. Try to do something once a week for your co-workers that will make them smile. Bring in cookies, post a cartoon on the bulletin board, pass out trivia questions, remember birthdays, and show your appreciation for any help you get from others.

**Watch Your Tone of Voice**

Avoid using a critical tone of voice or sarcasm. Instead, use positive words to get your point across. You will gain the respect of your co-workers and get more cooperation.

**Body Language Speaks Louder Than Words**

Your body language should reflect your words. If you do not pay attention to your body language, you may be sending mixed messages. For example, crossed arms or hands on hips reflect anger. Hands relaxed at your side are more positive. People will believe your body language more than your words.

**Be a Role Model**

If you work in a negative environment, you can be the catalyst to bringing in the positive. Just by keeping a positive outlook and using positive words, you can be a role model for others. It may take a while, but if you are persistent others will get on the positive bandwagon with you. It only takes one person to start making a difference.

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***Tool #13 - Quiz***  
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Complete the quiz, and give the answers to your supervisor.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are some situations where you might run into problems using negative words?

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2. What are some words you can use to get cooperation from co-workers without creating resentment?

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3. What are the consequences to using the words “*always*” and “*never*”?

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4. What word, when used towards a co-worker, implies judgment of a persons’ character?

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5. What are three other things you can do to change a negative work environment into a positive one?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

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***Tool #13 - Your Goals to Use***  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

What are your 3 main goals for this month to change negative into positive?  
Make a copy of this to give to your supervisor, and keep one for yourself.  
Post your goals in your workplace where you can easily see them.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

In two weeks you will receive Part B of this lesson. It will contain:

- The 7 key points from this lesson to refresh your memory, and
- A place for you to record your progress toward your goals.

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#### *Additional Resources*

*All are available on The Confidence Center Web at*

[www.ConfidenceCenter.com](http://www.ConfidenceCenter.com)

#### *Free Resources*

##### **Email Newsletter:**

##### **Employee Morale and Confidence Tips**

It has creative ideas you can use every week to keep up morale.

Sign up for Free at [www.ConfidenceCenter.com](http://www.ConfidenceCenter.com)

##### **Assessments:**

Are you happy at work? Take the [Employee Morale Assessment](#)

How confident are you? Take the [Confidence Quiz](#)

##### **Articles and Past Newsletters**

##### **Calendar of Special Days:**

Special days you can celebrate for every month of the year.

##### **Fun Zone:**

Jokes, cartoons, and more - when you just need a break.

##### **Coaching:**

Telephone coaching by our certified professional coach. To get one *free* coaching session.

Details at <http://www.confidencecenter.com/serv06.htm>

#### *Low Cost Resources*

##### **Products:**

Books, eBooks, videos, and other products to make you more successful at work.

##### **Seminars:**

We offer in-house seminars, customized for your company or organization.

##### **Tele-seminars:**

Telephone seminars on employee morale and employee performance. These will be announced in our newsletter and on our web.