

The Smart Social Skills Course

→ **Week 1: How to Make a Great First
Impression**

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A brief introduction

The # 1 thing I wanted to get better at 8 years ago was not my productivity. And not my self-esteem, fitness habits or money habits.

I wanted improvement in those areas too, sure.

But the most important thing for me was to get better socially. To feel more confident and relaxed. To be less shy. And to be able to connect better and deeper with people.

I wanted to develop smart and simple habits that allowed me to meet new people in any situation.

But I was not in a good place socially at that time. I was deathly shy, especially around women. I hadn't had date in several years. I was a big introvert. I quite often found it hard to come up with things to say or to start a conversation in school, at a party or at some kind of meeting.

It was a limited life. It was frustrating. It often felt lonely.

Things didn't stay that way forever though. Over the years I found the habits and tactics that helped me to turn my social skills and my whole life around.

I am now in an awesome relationship with a wonderful woman and have been with her for the last 3 years. I have become much more confident and at ease with new people and it is now fun to connect with people and to develop relationships.

A part of me is still introverted, I still love to read and be by myself for some time each week. But I have also developed this previously severely underdeveloped part of myself, these habits that have changed my social life and people skills. I have found a social freedom where I used to mostly only find frustration and fear.

And the wonderful thing is, as with any change, that if you stay persistent and patient and you work on the most important habits then this change becomes permanent. It becomes the new normal and most of the time a relatively automatic thing in life. You just do it like you would brush your teeth or go to the gym or go out running on Sundays.

It is just a new normal.

But a wonderful new normal I couldn't have dreamed would be in my life 8 years ago.

In this 12-week course I would like to help you to develop these essential habits that have transformed my social skills and relationships – and truly, my life – so that you can have the same wonderful experience and get out from being stuck in a situation socially that makes you unhappy, frustrated and may make you feel alone in this world.

So let's get started.

About the author



My name is Henrik Edberg and I live on the west coast of Sweden with my awesome girlfriend and two adorable and slightly quirky cats.

I have written weekly articles and newsletters on personal development on my website The Positivity Blog since 2006 for an audience of about 60,000 subscribers and hundreds of thousands of monthly readers.

Other courses and e-books that I have created are:

- [The Self-Esteem Course](#)
- [The Art of Relaxed Productivity](#)
- [The Simplicity Course](#)
- [31 Days to a Simpler Life Course](#)

Feel free to follow me on [Twitter](#) and [Google+](#), to become a fan on [Facebook](#) or to send me an email by using [this contact form](#).

The Small and Simple Steps of a Big Journey

I will keep things simple in this course.

Each week you will get just a few specific action-steps to take. Because I don't want you to just read a whole lot of pages and feel good for a while. And I don't want you to feel overwhelmed and so you take little or no action after a while.

I want you to be able to change or add simple habits to your own life by using this course as a guide. I want you to be able to make positive social changes that stick rather than becoming stuck in dreams of better social skills and relationships.

So, at the end of each week's guide you get a couple of action steps to take that week to build your social skills. These steps always include doing some work with that week's worksheet.

Doing the exercises in the worksheets will help you to more fully understand yourself and how to apply the habits and strategies you learn to your own situation and life.

So please do the exercises and fill in the worksheets throughout the course. It is only a few extra minutes you have to invest each week but it will help you for the rest of your life to improve and maintain your social skills at a more helpful level.

If you don't have a printer to print out the worksheets simply use pen and paper or a Word-document (or something similar) on your computer to fill in the answers to the exercises and questions of the week.

Here are a few answers for questions you may have before starting this course.

What do I do if I fall of the horse?

As you are taking the weekly action-steps life may interfere. You have too much to do at home or at work. You get sick. Life throws you a curveball. And you get behind on doing the tasks for a few days or a week.

What do you do then?

Instead of stressing yourself out and trying to cram in two weeks of actions into one week, relax. Instead of beating yourself up for not keeping up, be kind to yourself and nudge yourself on to the right path again.

Do that by starting again where you left off. And if you need a day - or two - of rest during course then take it and then continue where you were.

If you get behind on the weekly schedule then that is totally OK and you will reach the final day anyway. It is important to not stress yourself out during this course but to take things one step at a time.

What do I do if some strategy doesn't work right away or if I make a mistake?

As you go through the action-steps of this course you'll hit a bump or two.

If you try something during this week or weeks ahead and it doesn't work quite as well as you had hoped the first or second time then don't make one of the most common mistakes and give up.

Instead, keep going. Keep using the technique or strategy.

It often takes more than one or two tries to get the hang of something and get it to work as you want. And if you slip up, if you make a mistake in a conversation during these weeks then welcome to the club.

Everyone who wants to do something of value, who wants to expand their comfort zone and make real changes in their life will make mistakes and slip. It is the natural order of life and one way to learn.

So even though such a thing might sting for a short while don't take too seriously. Don't beat yourself up about it because that will certainly not help.

Nudge yourself in the right direction once again and keep going instead.

What do I do if I want to spend more time on the course?

If you want to spend two weeks or a month on week #2 or week #4 for example then do that. Keeping the weekly schedule is just a recommendation.

So do this at your own pace if you like.

It's your choice.

Should I keep doing everything I learned from previous weeks?

You can keep practicing for example assuming rapport that you'll learn this week every week if you like. But it and other things you may choose to keep practicing + the new action-steps you get every week can become too much to handle and to keep in mind and practice.

If you follow the weekly schedule and don't spend several weeks on certain or on all weekly guides then my suggestion would be to just follow the action-steps for the week. Nothing more.

And then you can choose what habits you want to focus more on in the future during the last week of the course, week 12, and with the help of the guide for that week.

What We Will Explore During These 12 Weeks

Here's what we will explore each week during these 12 weeks of building better social skills.

- ✓ Week 1: How to Make a Great First Impression
- ✓ Week 2: How to Become a Better Conversationalist
- ✓ Week 3: How to Overcome Shyness and Social Nervousness
- ✓ Week 4: An Attractive Attitude of Optimism and Giving Value
- ✓ Week 5: The Power of Truly Listening
- ✓ Week 6: How to Build Your Social Confidence
- ✓ Week 7: How to Become More Assertive
- ✓ Week 8: The Power of Kindness and Acceptance
- ✓ Week 9: How to Give and Receive Criticism in a Helpful Way
- ✓ Week 10: How to Handle Difficult People and Conflicts
- ✓ Week 11: The Importance of High Self-Esteem
- ✓ Week 12: Better Social Skills That Stick with You for Life

How to Make a Great First Impression

So where do you start with improving your social skills? Well, let's start at the beginning of a new relationship or conversation. Let's start with making a great first impression.

Making a positive impression is a thought that fill many with nervousness to the point that they may not even try. And so two people – or more – that could have had great time never get the opportunity to enjoy each other's company.

Or maybe the nervousness and negative thoughts cause you to not make much of an impression during those first few seconds or minutes. The real and best you do not come across correctly to the other person. And so a relationship that could have been wonderful and fun never blossoms because you think you didn't come across well or because he or she didn't get much of a positive impression from you and moved on.

Things don't have to be this way though. It can actually be quite simple to change the impression you give to more positive one by changing a few basic habits.

Here is my step-by-step guide with the habits I used to improve the first impressions I made. And I still use these steps whenever I feel a bit nervous or not in top form before I am meeting someone for the first time.

1. Breathe

Habit number one is deceptively simple. But it is so effective for calming down butterflies in your stomach or for centering yourself if nervousness is shaking your body and mind.

As you are heading to the meeting, party or date just stand or sit still for 1-2 minutes.

Then breathe. Take a little deeper breaths than usual. Make sure you breathe with your belly. Not with your chest (a common problem when people get stressed or nervous).

Focus on just your slow in-breaths and out-breaths for those 1-2 minutes that you are still.

This will calm you down and make it easier to think normally again. And that singular focus on the air going and out draws you back into this moment again rather than leaving your thoughts focused on past failures or future worries.

2. Assume Rapport

The focus on the breathing is the one part of the two part combination that gets me into a great headspace for a great first impression.

The second part is even more powerful.

It is called assuming rapport and it has truly changed my life.

Assuming rapport is also a small and simple habit that means that just before – a minute or two or so – you met someone you pretend and think to yourself that you are meeting one of your very best friends.

Then you'll naturally slip into a much more relaxed, comfortable, confident and enjoyable emotional state and frame of mind. In this state of mind the conversation tends to flow more naturally too, without much thinking. Just like with your friends.

If you are going into a business meeting where it may not be the best thing to hug and treat everyone as your best friend then simply imagine that you are meeting one of your best clients or co-workers. And you slip into a confident, relaxed and appropriate headspace for that meeting.

This is one of the very best and helpful habits I have adopted since I first became interested in personal development. And it is one of the best and most easy to use habits you will learn about during this course.

3. Remember to Smile

As you are approaching your date, the person or people in your meeting, your friend or co-worker remember to smile. It doesn't have to be an over the top super-positive smile as that could be a bit much or look forced and unnatural.

Go for a kind smile and warm smile instead. This may seem a like a very obvious tip but putting into to practice very consistently it can make a big difference.

Now, if you do the breathing + assuming rapport then this part will often be taken care of on its own as you will launch into a genuine and warm smile almost automatically.

And that is all for this week. A simple start.

Now take a look at the action-steps for the week and use them as best you can.

The Action-Steps for This Week

Here's a quick summary of the action-steps to take this week:

1. **This week:** Do the simple combination of breathing for a minute or so + assuming rapport just before any conversation or meeting, date, party you are going to this week. It may feel somewhat strange or not work so well the first few times but don't give up. Keep doing it and it will get easier and be more effective. And remind yourself to smile.
2. **Day 7:** Use the worksheet to see how this week went and to see what interactions that went well, what interactions that did not go so well and what you can learn.