**Conversation Pieces**

**The art of conversation consists of the exercise of two fine qualities: you must originate and you must sympathize; you must possess at the same time the habit of communicating and the habit of listening. The union is rare, but irresistible. *(Benjamin Disraeli)***

**You should avoid making yourself too clear even in your explanations. *(Baltasar Gracian, Spanish philosopher)***

**Wife: "Dear, do you remember the pot roast that I shouldn't have promised you for dinner this evening?" Blondie: "Oh, no! For Pete's sake, that's no way to begin a conversation!" Wife: "I'm sorry, honey, I'll start over. When was the last time we had a nice bowl of shredded wheat instead of pot roast for dinner?" Blondie: "Nope! Still no improvement." *(Dean Young & John Marshall, in Blondie comic strip)***

**Ultimately, the bond of all companionship is conversation. *(Oscar Wilde)***

**There's nothing more boring than a collision between two one-way conversations. *(Doug Larson, United Feature Syndicate)***

**You usually find yourself talking more when you're with people you have nothing to say to. *(Beryl Pfizer, in Ladies' Home Journal)***

**We discovered a terrific four-letter word for psychotherapy: talk. *(Penni and Richard Crenna)***

**A conversation is like a good meal. You should leave it just before you have had enough. *(James Alexander Thom, in Nuggets)***

**There is no such thing as conversation. It is an illusion. There are intersecting monologues, that is all. *(Dame Rebecca West, Irish-born author and journalist)***

**Don’t knock the weather – without it, nine out of ten people couldn’t start a conversation. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Other man: "Oh, yeah?" Hagar: "Yeah!" Other man: "Yeah?!" Hagar: "Yeah!" Servant: "Who says conversation is a lost art?" *(Chris Browne, in Hagar the Horrihle comic strip)***

**When two people have a good conversation, they often feel that they’ve just “clicked.” A new story of that phenomenon has found that conversing can produce an almost eerie synchronization of brainwaves, so that speaker and listener experience a kind of “mind meld.” Using a special type of MRI device, researchers at Princeton University imaged the brain activity of a student as she told of two personal experiences – of a troublesome encounter with a police officer after an accident, and of two boys fighting over which one would take her to the prom. Researchers then scanned the brains of several subjects listening to the stories. Listeners who followed and enjoyed the stories quickly synchronized their brain waves to the speakers’. But if the listener didn’t like or understand what was being said, this effect disappeared, and brain patterns decoupled. “That feeling we all have with people, that feeling of ‘clicking’ might actually have real neural basis,” researcher Greg Stephens tells LiveSciencecom. The effect goes beyond the parts of the brain used to process language; during a good conversation, people will unconsciously begin imitating each other, using similar sentence structures, speaking rates, and physical gestures and postures. In fact, listeners can get so turned in that they can even begin to anticipate what the speaker is about to say. *(The Week magazine, August 13, 2010)***

**Working mothers take heart: Biochemically speaking, a phone conversation with your kid is as good as a hug. Previous studies have shown that close physical contact spurs the release of oxytocin, the “love hormone,” which helps promote bonding between a mother and her child. To see if a phone chat could have the same effect, researchers in Wisconsin administered a stress test to several dozen girls, ages 7 to 12, in which they had to give a talk or do math problems before an audience of strangers. Afterward, a third of the girls were hugged and soothed by their moms for 15 minutes; another third talked with their moms on the phone; and the rest watched a movie. Stress levels did rise in the girls in the movie group, but dropped an equal amount for girls who’d interacted with their mothers either in person or on the phone. Likewise, both the phoned and the hugged girls released similar levels of oxytocin. “That a simple telephone call could have this physiological effect on oxytocin is really exciting,” study co-author Seth Pollak tells Scientific American. For years, Pollak had seen students call their mothers immediately after an exam. “Maybe it’s a quick and dirty way to feel better,” he concedes, and “not pop psychology or psychobabble.” *(The Week magazine, May 28, 2010)***

**If you would be a popular conversationalist, have a care to the punctuation in your talk. Keep out the colons, which mean subtopics to what you are saying; and avoid semicolons, which indicate afterthought; but put in plenty of periods, which show you're stopping. And especially use question marks, which invite the other person to start talking. *(Pelham, Georgia, Journal)***

**Good week for: Texting, which 55 percent of young cell phone owners now prefer to voice conversations, according to a new survey. People 24 and under now send an average of 110 texts per day. *(The Week magazine, September 30, 2011)***

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