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## Quillbot for word

By Ken Michaels, Guest Writer In Shakespeare’s play “Hamlet,” Polonius inquires of the prince, “What do you read, my lord?” Not at all pleased with what he’s reading, Hamlet replies, “Words, words, words.”1 I have previously described the communication model in which a sender encodes a message and then sends it via some channel (or medium) to a receiver, who decodes the message and, ideally, understands what was sent. Surely the most common way of encoding a message is in choosing the most appropriate words for the listener or reader. In Hamlet’s case, he so disliked what he read that he described it elementally, as mere words, rather than a message. So I thought I’d devote a little ink to words themselves. “Nym” Words Have Specific Meaning Words ending in nym describe classes of words. Some of the more frequently used nym words are synonym (means the same as); antonym (means the opposite of); homonym (has the same sound as); and acronym (a word derived from the first letters of a more complex term, such as SCUBA or AIDS). Homo means “same,” and hetero means “different.” Therefore, if there are homonyms, it stands to reason that there are also heteronyms. While homonyms have the same sound but different spellings (like pair and pear), heteronyms are spelled the same but have different meanings and, often, pronunciation: a person who sews is a sewer, but a repository for waste products is a sewer. Sewer, then, is a heteronym. But the lexicon of nym words by no means ends here. One of the websites I visited recently2 lists no fewer than 26 nym words, many of which are pretty arcane and of interest to relatively few. Some are downright amusing. Do we really need a word to mean another word composed of two identical parts? If so, then tutu, pawpaw, yo-yo, and bye-bye are tautonyms. A couple of weeks back, my son asked me what is meant by a metonym. I didn’t know, so we looked it up. In retrospect, I ought to have been able to logic it out, as “meta” means change. A metonym is a word that designates something by a word that is associated with it. For example, Hollywood is a metonym used to mean the U.S. motion picture industry, while the Crown refers to royalty, and the bottle refers to alcohol. My use of the expression “a little ink” a couple of paragraphs back is also a metonym for written communication, even when no actual ink or writing on paper is involved. The point of all of this has to do with precision in the use of our language. It will do me no good to encode a message using a word like metonym, or heteronym, or tautonym, unless I’m certain that my listeners (or readers) are familiar with its meaning. Either that, or I’m prepared to add the definition for their benefit, in which case I might have just used the definition in the first place. Still, learning the proper use of words, however arcane, can be useful, and if you like words themselves, even fun. What’s Your Idiolect? In his book “The Half-Life of Facts: Why Everything We Know Has an Expiration Date,” Samuel Arbesman3 discusses the changes in language that occur over time, and the two camps that see this phenomenon differently. He explains prescriptive grammarians as those who focus on the way words ought to be used, and descriptive grammarians as those who are more concerned with the way they actually are used. Arbesman asserts that every individual develops his or her own set of rules about how to use words, and that all of us—you, me, and everybody else—have our own personal idiolect. This delightful term describes our unique language and speech pattern, as determined by what we learned when we were young, as well as by who’s around us, and includes our grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation of words, and even our accent. There’s an important lesson here. If we’re really going to communicate effectively, we need to be mindful that every time we encode a message, someone whose idiolect is significantly different from our own may very possibly decode it in such a way as to get a different message entirely. So it pays to be careful about our choice of words: is it really a message, or simply “words, words, words”? © 2013 Ken Michaels. All rights reserved. References: Shakespeare, William: “Hamlet,” act 2 scene 2. Arbesman, Samuel: “The Half-Life of Facts: Why Everything We Know Has an Expiration Date,” New York: Penguin Books, 2012, page 190. Ken Michaels, retired manager of Visual Communications, Leidos Biomedical Research, is a special volunteer for NCI at Frederick. Keep up with the latest daily buzz with the BuzzFeed Daily newsletter! Published on May 18, 2021 We have two ears and one mouth for a reason—effective communication is dependent on using them in proportion, and this involves having good listening skills.The workplace of the 21st century may not look the same as it did before COVID-19 spread throughout the world like wildfire, but that doesn’t mean you can relax your standards at work. If anything, Zoom meetings, conference calls, and the continuous time spent behind a screen have created a higher level of expectations for meeting etiquette and communication. And this goes further than simply muting your microphone during a meeting.Effective workplace communication has been a topic of discussion for decades, yet, it is rarely addressed or implemented due to a lack of awareness and personal ownership by all parties.Effective communication isn’t just about speaking clearly or finding the appropriate choice of words. It starts with intentional listening and being present. Here’s how to improve your listening skills for effective workplace communication.Listen to Understand, Not to Speak There are stark differences between listening and hearing. Listening involves intention, focused effort, and concentration, whereas hearing simply involves low-level awareness that someone else is speaking. Listening is a voluntary activity that allows one to be present and in the moment while hearing is passive and effortless.Which one would you prefer your colleagues to implement during your company-wide presentation? It’s a no-brainer. Listening can be one of the most powerful tools in your communication arsenal because one must listen to understand the message being told to them. As a result of this deeper understanding, communication can be streamlined because there is a higher level of comprehension that will facilitate practical follow-up questions, conversations, and problem-solving. And just because you heard something doesn’t mean you actually understood it.We take this for granted daily, but that doesn’t mean we can use that as an excuse.Your brain is constantly scanning your environment for threats, opportunities, and situations to advance your ability to promote your survival. And yet, while we are long past the days of worrying about being eaten by wildlife, the neurocircuitry responsible for these mechanisms is still hard-wired into our psychology and neural processing.A classic example of this is the formation of memories. Case in point: where were you on June 3rd, 2014? For most of you reading this article, your mind will go completely blank, which isn’t necessarily bad.The brain is far too efficient to retain every detail about every event that happens in your life, mainly because many events that occur aren’t always that important. The brain doesn’t—and shouldn’t—care what you ate for lunch three weeks ago or what color shirt you wore golfing last month. But for those of you who remember where you were on June 3rd, 2014, this date probably holds some sort of significance to you. Maybe it was a birthday or an anniversary. Perhaps it was the day your child was born. It could have even been a day where you lost someone special in your life.Regardless of the circumstance, the brain is highly stimulated through emotion and engagement, which is why memories are usually stored in these situations. When the brain’s emotional centers become activated, the brain is far more likely to remember an event. And this is also true when intention and focus are applied to listening to a conversation. Utilizing these hard-wired primitive pathways of survival to optimize your communication in the workplace is a no-brainer—literally and figuratively.Intentional focus and concentrated efforts will pay off in the long run because you will retain more information and have an easier time recalling it down the road, making you look like a superstar in front of your colleagues and co-workers. Time to kiss those note-taking days away! Effective Communication Isn’t Always Through Words While we typically associate communication with words and verbal affirmations, communication can come in all shapes and forms. In the Zoom meeting era we live in, it has become far more challenging to utilize and understand these other forms of language. And this is because they are typically easier to see when we are sitting face to face with the person we speak to.Body language can play a significant role in how our words and communication are interpreted, especially when there is a disconnection involved. When someone tells you one thing, yet their body language screams something completely different, it’s challenging to let that go. Our brain immediately starts to search for more information and inevitably prompts us to follow up with questions that will provide greater clarity to the situation at hand. And in all reality, not saying something might be just as important as actually saying something.These commonly overlooked non-verbal communication choices can provide a plethora of information about the intentions, emotions, and motivations. We do this unconsciously, and it happens with every confrontation, conversation, and interaction we engage in. The magic lies in the utilization and active interpretation of these signals to improve your listening skills and your communication skills.Our brains were designed for interpreting our world, which is why we are so good at recognizing subtle nuances and underlying disconnect within our casual encounters. So, when we begin to notice conflicting messages between verbal and non-verbal communication, our brain takes us down a path of troubleshooting. Which messages are consistent with this theme over time? Which statements aren’t aligning with what they’re really trying to tell me? How should I interpret their words and body language?Suppose we want to break things down even further. In that case, one must understand that body language is usually a subconscious event, meaning that we rarely think about our body language. This happens because our brain’s primary focus is to string together words and phrases for verbal communication, which usually requires a higher level of processing. This doesn’t mean that body language will always tell the truth, but it does provide clues to help us weigh information, which can be pretty beneficial in the long run.Actively interpreting body language can provide you with an edge in your communication skills. It can also be used as a tool to connect with the individual you are speaking to. This process is deeply ingrained into our human fabric and utilizes similar methods babies use while learning new skills from their parents’ traits during the early years of development.Mirroring a person’s posture or stance can create a subtle bond, facilitating a sense of feeling like one another. This process is triggered via the activation of specific brain regions through the stimulation of specialized neurons called mirror neurons. These particular neurons become activated while watching an individual engage in an activity or task, facilitating learning, queuing, and understanding. They also allow the person watching an action to become more efficient at physically executing the action, creating changes in the brain, and altering the overall structure of the brain to enhance output for that chosen activity.Listening with intention can make you understand your colleague, and when paired together with mirroring body language, you can make your colleague feel like you two are alike. This simple trick can facilitate a greater bond of understanding and communication within all aspects of the conversation. Eliminate All Distractions, Once and for All As Jim Rohn says, “What is easy to do is also easy not to do.” And this is an underlying principle that will carry through in all aspects of communication. Distractions are a surefire way to ensure a lack of understanding or interpretation of a conversation, which in turn, will create inefficiencies and a poor foundation for communication. This should come as no surprise, especially in this day in age where people are constantly distracted by social media, text messaging, and endlessly checking their emails. We’re stuck in a cultural norm that has hijacked our love for the addictive dopamine rush and altered our ability to truly focus our efforts on the task at hand. And these distractions aren’t just distractions for the time they’re being used. They use up coveted brainpower and central processes that secondarily delay our ability to get back on track.Gloria Mark, a researcher at UC Irvine, discovered that it takes an average of 23 minutes and 15 seconds for our brains to reach their peak state of focus after an interruption. Yes, you read that correctly—distractions are costly, error-prone, and yield little to no benefit outside of a bump to the ego when receiving a new like on your social media profile.Meetings should implement a no-phone policy, video conference calls should be set on their own browser with no other tabs open, and all updates, notifications, and email prompt should be immediately turned off, if possible, to eliminate all distractions during a meeting.These are just a few examples of how we can optimize our environment to facilitate the highest levels of communication within the workplace. Actions Speak Louder Than Words Effective communication in the workplace doesn’t have to be challenging, but it does have to be intentional. Knowledge can only take us so far, but once again, knowing something is very different than putting it into action.Just like riding a bike, the more often you do it, the easier it becomes. Master communicators are phenomenal listeners, which allows them to be effective communicators in the workplace and in life. If you genuinely want to own your communication, you must implement this information today and learn how to improve your listening skills. Choose your words carefully, listen intently, and most of all, be present in the moment—because that’s what master communicators do, and you can do it, too! More Tips Improving Listening SkillsFeatured photo credit: Mailchimp via unsplash.com Page 2 Last Updated on April 19, 2021 Do you ever come across people who are always upbeat and no matter what life throws at them? While people can be genetically disposed toward happiness, it’s more likely that these people have simply discovered more of the things that make you happy in life and utilize them to their advantage.The good news is that you can increase your own happiness quotient by doing these 14 things that make people happy.1. Start With a Good Dose of GratitudeBeing consciously aware of what you’re thankful for can actually change your level of happiness.When you wake up each morning, spend time recalling all the things for which you feel grateful. Before you go to bed, you can keep a gratitude journal. Write down 3 to 5 things that you felt grateful for that day and why. Use all five senses to imagine these things vividly in order to help you brain latch on to all that goodness.One study found that, among mindfulness, belief in personal control, and gratitude, “happiness among students was primarily predicted by gratitude”You can learn how to start a gratitude journal here.2. Make Sure You’re Giving BackDo you give 10% of your income to your favorite charity or organization? Instead of spending money on yourself, you’ll feel happier giving to others. There’s something about giving that allows you to receive more in return besides just the act of giving to help others. When you give, you’re sending a message to the Universe that you know everything’s going to be alright.According to a study published in 2010, “people experienced happier moods when they gave more money away—but only if they had a choice about how much to give” By giving, you’ll be taken care of, too. You see it from those with very little to those who have millions: you have to give to get, and by doing that, your happiness increases. You’ll feel better as well when you accomplish your goals.3. Laugh Every Day (It’s Better than Money)Do you spend time each day laughing? Do you purposefully find happy things to laugh about?When you laugh, you release happy hormones called oxytocin and endorphins. These are hormones that uplifts us as we share experiences with others. Even just making yourself smile will put you in a better place.It is thought that the fact that laughter releases these hormones in order to promote social bonding, so try getting together with friends for a good dose of laughter, as well as increased social connection. These are things that make you happy.4. Foster Good Relationships With Family and FriendsHappy people don’t spend large amounts of time alone. By spending time with people you like and love, you forge supportive relationships that help people feel better during times of stress.You also bond with others through common experiences, such as life’s ups and downs. They become your support network and help bring more of the things that make people happy.People who don’t spend as much time with family or friends are more prone to loneliness and depression. Here’s How to Tell If You Are Fostering Positive Relationships in Life.5. Take Some Alone TimeIn contrast to spending time with family and friends, it’s important to step back and take some time for yourself in order to cultivate self-care.You can recharge your spirit and find a little peace. Taking some time away and being alone can do wonders for your mood and outlook, as well as help you find the meaning of true happiness. Use this time to do more of the things that make you happy, such as a favorite hobby, exercise, or simple relaxation. Even just sitting in the sun or listening to your favorite song can improve your life satisfaction in the short term.6. Do What You LoveHave you ever heard the phrase, “Do what you love, and the money will follow?” Doing things that you love to do—and even better, getting paid for it—are good ways to boost your levels of happiness.When work feels like play, you’re more likely to enjoy other aspects of your life more, too.7. Volunteer Your TimeWhen you give your time or talent, your focus shifts from your life to that of others. This can help you realize that your own problems may not be that bad. You invariably forge new relationships and experience an uplift in your spirit.Furthermore, volunteering can give you a sense of purpose and keep you active during downtime in your life. It will also increase self-confidence as you begin to feel better about yourself and your place in the world.8. Get Enough ExerciseAmong the things that make you happy, few are as well researched as exercise. When you take time out for exercise, you’re doing your body good in more ways than one.First, you’re doing what it was designed to do: physical exertion. Humans were made to move around, and the body works best when it does what it was meant to do.Furthermore, as you exercise, you release a ton of feel-good hormones. These hormones can help increase happiness levels, as well as lower stress.One study found that “Exercisers were more satisfied with their life and happier than non-exercisers at all ages”. And the good news is that it takes as little as 30 minutes to gain the amazing benefits of exercise.Try these 10 Simple Morning Exercises to Make You Feel Great All Day 9. Avoid RegretsWe all make mistakes in life—that’s part of the human condition. However, with a little forethought, you can try to avoid making big mistakes and focus more on the happy things in life.Even then, they still happen. That’s when it’s best to learn to forgive-yourself and others—because everyone else just trying to get through life the best they can, too. They’ll make mistakes, but the trick is moving on from them.10. Take Time to MeditateSitting-down, lighting a candle and doing some deep breathing for 10 minutes is all it takes to relax your mind and body.In doing so, you get in touch with your inner-self, and invariably, you’ll get to know your values and priorities a little better. That’s definitely a booster on the happiness scale and will lead you toward more of the things that make you happy.11. Deal With ClutterAre you overrun with books and papers piled everywhere? Too much mail sitting on the table? Why not tackle a small task each day for a month in an effort to de-clutter your life?When you’re not running around looking for items you can’t find, and when everything has its place, you’ll automatically be less stressed and in a better mental state.That’s a great place to be on Monday morning when you’re trying to get to work and you already know where the lunchboxes are, and the bills you have to mail.Here’s a guide to help you declutter: How to Declutter Your Life and Reduce Stress (The Ultimate Guide)Among the things that make people happy, sleep is one of the easiest and most natural. Ever notice how cranky you are in the afternoon when you’ve only had 5 or 6 hours of sleep? Many of us are suffering from sleep deprivation, which can lead to higher levels of stress and edginess.Research has shown that simply getting enough sleep “improves memory, increases people’s ability to concentrate, strengthens the immune system and decreases people’s risk of being killed in accidents”. After a good night of sleep, you can tackle your daily tasks in a more calm, alert way. It’s so much better than experiencing that awful sluggish feeling in that oh-so-important meeting with your boss. Your body will thank you, too.13. Eat Healthier FoodsYou’ve heard the phrase, “You are what you eat.” Healthy, nutritious foods not only make your body feel good, but they can improve your mental health as well.If you spend your time eating package after package of boxed noodles, canned dinners, or fast food, your body is going to let you know by gaining weight, feeling sluggish, and quite possibly having a host of health problems. How can you look and feel your best if the foods you eat are not good for you?By eating better, you’re not only taking care of yourself, but you’ll also feel more vibrant and energetic. You’ll literally be healthier from the inside out.Try the tips in this article: How to Start Eating Healthy No Matter How Old You Are14. Don’t Compare Yourself To OthersThis is definitely easier said than done, but if you can condition your mind to focus on the good that you are doing and the good things in your life, you’re not going to be tempted to focus on how others are doing.Research on the effects of social media use has found that upward comparisons on social media are associated with lower self-esteem.Here are some tips to help you stop comparing yourself to others.Final ThoughtsHappiness comes from all the small things and habits you do every day. If you want to start living a happy life, practice these 14 happy things and fit them into your daily routine!More on Things That Make You HappyFeatured photo credit: Matheus Ferrero via unsplash.com

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