

smile



A First Impression
Can Change Everything

PARTICIPANT BOOK



Service Quality Institute

The Global Leader in Customer Service

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Introduction

Congratulations on being selected to participate in SMILE: A First Impression Can Change Everything, a valuable program designed to help you learn and practice the habits and skills of positive outlook and a positive attitude. These, in turn, can help you find your own genuine, inner smile and to share it with others. The lessons and techniques described in this program can help you develop a routine to build your own confidence and resilience, improve your interactions with your customers, and be more effective in difficult situations that arise on the job. In addition, this program offers a management approach to help distinguish your organization from the competition.

Successful companies set themselves apart with the service they provide to their clients and customers. The training and techniques outlined in this program can help you improve your interactions with everyone at your organization from your customers and co-workers to your supervisors. In addition, the skills built here can help you take that next step up the ladder within your organization.

A smile—one of the first elements in superior customer service

No matter what goods or services your organization provides, whether commercial, industrial, health care, or government, at the core are your customers—people. Your business and your job would not exist if there were not people who needed what you do—people to “buy” what you can provide.

A smile –costs you nothing while it invites customers in.

At work, a smile instantly conveys to your customer:

- “I like you”
- “I care about you as a person”
- “I value you”
- “I care about your needs”
- “I’m ready to help”

Smiling is about more than what happens to the muscles on your face. Even from a distance, a genuine smile, even a small one, conveys a positive attitude and projects respect.

People are naturally wired to notice and evaluate faces, even at a distance.

From birth, we are conditioned to recognize faces and look for patterns. And unless we are busy or preoccupied, our minds continue to look for patterns and in faces throughout our lives.

One of the most instinctive patterns we recognize is a smile. There are two kinds of smiles: intentional (sometimes called “forced”) and genuine.

A genuine smile:

- affects muscles around both the eyes and the mouth
- is controlled by the emotional center of the brain

A fake smile:

- can only control the muscles around the mouth
- is controlled by the motor cortex in the brain

So, a fake smile is only mechanical. A genuine smile lifts the corners of your mouth, raises your cheeks, and makes small wrinkles appear around your eyes. When you can find a genuine smile for yourself, you trigger your own, positive emotions. A genuine smile comes from inside of you—it happens when you

think of or experience something pleasant. And perhaps most importantly, it conveys a positive, can-do attitude.

As you greet someone, whether a friend or a stranger, a genuine smile, even a small one, conveys openness and interest.

A simple, genuine smile can go very long way in setting the tone for whatever interaction follows.

Most employees DON'T genuinely smile

Think about where you live and shop.

When you walk into a store, what percentage of the employees notice you and genuinely smile?

How does it make you feel?

How do you think it makes your customers feel when you don't smile?

Think again about where you live and shop, about a government office you've used, about your doctor's office. What if 100% of employees offered you a genuine smile when you entered an office or a store?

How would it make you feel if they did? Would you feel better about shopping there?

How would it make your customers feel if everyone at your organization genuinely smiled?

Keys to putting a smile into your interactions with customers

1. Offer a genuine smile. A genuine smile can connect with a customer. And it makes YOU happy, too. More about that later.
2. Maintain a positive attitude. Find a way to frame interactions in your mind that can help you keep a positive attitude. Think about how you can help your customer get what they need.
3. Communicate with empathy. Even when your customer is unhappy, find a way to understand where they are “coming from.” Empathy goes a long way in diffusing tense situations.

Chapter 1 Review:

Points to Remember

- A smile is one of the first elements in superior customer service
- A smile costs nothing
- A smile instantly conveys
 - “I like you”
 - “I care about you as a person”
 - “I value you”
 - “I care about your needs”
 - “I’m ready to help”
- A genuine smile comes from inside of you

A Smile Can Change Everything

My boss is telling me to smile. What is there to smile about anyway? I don't exactly love my job; customers can be a royal pain and wearing a big goofy fake smile all day leaves me grumpy and exhausted. WHY BOTHER?!

Stop smiling for those other people. Start smiling for yourself.

Did you know that when you truly smile, even a little, you make yourself happier?

Maybe you're someone who doesn't believe that. Maybe you've been in a situation where you felt you had to paste on a big, fake smile and that just annoyed you.

If you can smile for yourself, even a little, you will truly feel better, both physically and emotionally.

Researchers have shown that a smile can signal to your brain to release endorphins—chemicals in the body that help you relax and lift your mood.

Endorphins: dopamine, and serotonin are sometime called feel-good hormones. Their job is to tell your mind and body to relax and to feel better, Feel-good hormones work in seconds.

Don't believe it? Try this: Close your eyes. Picture someone, somewhere or something that makes you happy. Maybe it's a friend, a pet, a favorite place, or even a favorite dessert. Can you feel the corners of your mouth lift a little? Do you feel a bit of joy wash over you?

That wave comes from those hormones.

And the smile works both ways. You can smile after you think of something pleasant. Or here's the amazing secret: you can get yourself to smile, even a little, and feel the hormones wash over you because of the smile! It can work when you are anxious or in a bad mood too. You can choose to smile and make yourself feel better.

Researchers have shown that a smile, while you are under stress or immediately after a stressful situation, helps your brain produce those hormones and promote recovery to your mind and body.

It doesn't take much of a smile to trigger your brain to release feel-good hormones. One experiment involved having people hold a pencil sideways in their mouths. This made the muscles in the corners of their mouths turn up a bit—like a small smile. Researchers determined that the mechanical act of using those muscles, made people feel happier! They felt better **BECAUSE** they smiled a little.

A little half-smile is a gift you can give yourself any time. In any stressful or boring situation, a small smile can be helpful. First thing in the morning, a half-smile can help you face the day. Whenever you do, your brain will release those feel-good hormones.

Try giving yourself a half smile whenever you can. You deserve it! It will allow you to let go of a little stress and feel better.

As you feel better, stronger and more confident, your personal relationships will improve. Friends will warm to you, partners and family will see you in a better light.

I can hear you arguing that a big, forced smile doesn't work. You may be right. Researchers discovered that when people feel that they **HAD** to smile all day, they wore themselves out. They had to clamp down on their feelings all day and used up all their self-control on the job, leaving them deflated and miserable.

Smiling because you HAVE to is not the same as smiling because you WANT to. Instead of smiling because you have to, try to smile for yourself! Give yourself a genuine half-smile to feel better and your brain will help you out. Even when you have to face an unhappy customer, say to yourself “I can feel better and be better-able to cope with this if I take a deep breath and give myself a little smile.” And that smile could also communicate a calming welcome and a willingness to help to your customer.

Real smiles come from within

Some people smile a lot. They always seem to have a sunny outlook. They always seem to find the best in a situation. Or maybe they are able to minimize unpleasant situations and look forward to something more positive.

The truth is, we all have “down” times, even “sunny” people. Nobody feels like smiling all the time. But “sunny” people have learned to see the positive whenever they can. They’ve learned to carry a positive attitude and a sense of purpose. They’ve learned to focus on what they can control and let go of the rest.

If you choose, you can cultivate that kind of positive attitude in yourself. And if you do, you’ll do yourself a favor by making your personal life and your work life better. There’s growing medical evidence that a positive attitude can not only help you to live happier, but to live longer too!

Give yourself reasons to smile

You can learn to smile, even when the going gets tough. Smiles come from a positive outlook and a positive attitude. Growing a positive attitude in yourself grows your ability to smile! Here are a few ways to do it.

Notice and let yourself feel joy. Whenever something pleasing happens, try to slow down, and focus on it and let it “soak in.” Start

with small things—your first sip of a favorite drink, a breath of fresh air, the sight of someone you love. Train your body and mind to give extra-large attention to what you enjoy.

Notice what you are thankful for. Maybe even keep a list—a gratitude journal. Write down what you feel when something makes you smile.

Practice mindfulness. “Mindfulness” is training your mind to really focus on what is happening RIGHT NOW and RIGHT HERE. The value of mindfulness is that you can often find things that bring you happiness in any situation. This allows you to “reframe” events in real time and to let you find the positive bits.

When mindful, you are connected to activities and situations. You have more capacity to deal with unpleasantness. You are less likely to be bothered by stressful situations, and less worried about past or future, success, or failure.

Why you should smile

First, genuinely smiling is good for you. As we mentioned, it triggers endorphins which lower your blood pressure and raise your mood. When you can share a smile, it costs you nothing and conveys warmth and welcoming. A smile can invite customers to engage with you. It shows that you care and are willing to provide quality service. At work, a smile instantly conveys to your customer:

- “I like you”
- “I care about you as a person”
- “I value you”
- “I care about your needs”
- “I’m ready to help”

Smiling is about more than the muscles on your face. Even from a distance, a genuine smile, even a small one, conveys a positive attitude and projects respect.

While your smile can benefit you, it can also help you see customers as people—more than just another sale or problem to endure.

A smile is worth the investment. In addition to making you feel better, it can set the tone for a positive customer interaction. It can improve your day AND the customer's day while it creates opportunities to provide quality service and helps head off potential problem situations.

When not to smile

When it comes to how your smiles reach others, think about happy smiles, joyful smiles, connecting smiles, open smiles, empathetic smiles. There are times and situations when these smiles aren't appropriate. But even then, your face can support your customers. Think about understanding smiles, empathetic smiles, even sad smiles. Think about and try to feel or empathize with their situation. When you do, a look of understanding or empathy will come to your face when that's what's needed.

Chapter 2 Review:

Points to Remember

- If you can smile for yourself you will truly feel better, both physically and emotionally
- In any stressful or boring situation, a small smile can be helpful
- Smiling because you HAVE to is not the same as smiling because you WANT to
- Real smiles come from within
- Give yourself reasons to smile
- Growing a positive attitude in yourself grows your ability to smile!