

The
NEW
Hello

WHAT TO SAY
WHAT TO DO
IN THE NEW WORLD OF WORK

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INDIE BOOKS
INTERNATIONAL

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— CHAPTER 7 —

Words to USE + Words to LOSE

We've covered plenty of material on how to show up and look your best online or in person. But once you've arrived at your destination—digitally or face to face—how can you best express yourself? In this chapter we'll discuss how to use language in your interactions that will elevate your professional presence. We'll cover **Words to LOSE** that are overused and sound hesitant or weak and offer ways to replace them with **Words to USE** that sound strong, have influence and are worthy of you.¹

Words to LOSE:

The following words and phrases are influenced by fear and our culture, says Linda Brice. Linda is a world-renowned voice coach and founder of Transformational Voice. She shared with me, “Our biggest fear is that we will be shamed, humiliated or banished from the group when we speak up. So, we freeze and can’t access our thoughts. And we literally stop breathing. While we stand there, madly trying to gather our ideas, we use various words to mask our anxiety.” Words such as:

Fillers

Uh. Um. Like. You know. Really. Very. Things. Whatever. So. Wow.

Add to it, when we hear people use these words incessantly in our culture, in person, on social media, in movies, on TV, the radio or podcasts, we tend to start using them too. We desperately want to fit into the crowd and not be left out.

Linda says, “Breathing consciously is the key to getting your voice to flow out of you like a river. When the breath begins to flow again, the thoughts flow too, and those filler words disappear.”

Filler words can also be a bad habit. My personal weak filler is “so.” I tend to use it as a transition. “So, the next time... So, if you are interested... So, I suggest...”

I never knew that “so” was one of my weak words until I was prepping to be a guest on a Portland TV program called “Afternoon Live.” The producer and I discussed the topic. I suggested a list of questions and about a week ahead, I practiced my answers. When I practice, I call it, “a shelfie!” I put my cell phone on a bookshelf, press record and rehearse the conversation. Here’s the shocker. In that mock, 6-minute interview, I used the word “so” 13 times! That’s nearly once every 30 seconds.

Hedges

Just. Kind of. Sort of. A little bit. Maybe. I guess. I think. Actually. Pretty.

Linguists call these add-on words “hedges”² because it’s as if the speaker is hedging to appear less aggressive or pushy. Instead, these Words to LOSE sound hesitant, soften your delivery, and can undercut your message.

How often have you written or said, “I’m *just* checking back” or “I *just* want to say” or “I *just* have a few quick questions.” It’s as if we’re trying to *justify* what we’re saying.