

## the art of meeting women

### Small talk

by Rhona Sacks  
Special to Q-Notes

All relationships start with small talk; it's the first step toward getting to know someone. Small talk is simply a prop for starting a conversation; the substance of the conversation isn't as important as the act of conversing. The best small talk centers on non-threatening topics like the immediate surroundings, a shared experience or common knowledge. Meeting someone new can throw us emotionally off-balance; we may feel anxious. Talking about innocuous things like the food, party or weather helps us regain our emotional balance. Through small talk, we are able to warm up to each other and feel more at ease.

Small talk isn't supposed to be brilliant, only relaxing and engaging. Don't worry about trying to impress a woman with a profound remark. A pleasant comment, question or compliment is all you need to draw her into a dialogue with you. To get the most of a casual conversation, fully participate in it. Commit to being thoroughly involved in a discussion, even if it lasts only a few minutes. Small talking is a vital tool of talk. You can't have a relationship with a woman if you don't have a conversation with her, and small talk gets the conversational ball rolling.

Offer a comment, not an opening line. Worn-out gambits are an absolute turnoff; don't use them. Instead, offer a relevant and positive comment. It's a perfect ice breaker because it's a friendly invitation to talk. Make a comment on what's happening around you, such as the decor, the speaker, the event, the organization, the music or the artwork. Anything (and everything) you find interesting is a ready topic for breaking the ice. Some possible comments: "What a great club!" "What an interesting sculpture." "She's an excellent speaker." "The food is delicious." "The music is terrific."

Stay away from negative comments ("This is an awful party"), they are alienating and will not help you to build positive rapport.

Until next time, have fun practicing small talking. ▼

[Rhona Sacks is the author of the bestseller *The Art of Meeting Women, A Guide for Gay Women* (Slope Books, 1998). It is available in bookstores nationwide and online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).]

### Letter

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How do you deal with the problems you create when the church gives people double messages, when it preaches one thing while acting another? Poet Adrienne Rich, a lesbian, has written that giving people double messages is one of the cruelest things you can do to them. Rich says that when we ask people to assume a publicly acceptable persona which is other than their real self, we split their souls and do serious damage to them.

Is this not what your Catholic position on homosexuality does, when it claims to welcome and accept gay people while prohibiting loving relationships among gay people? How can you preach compassion, when you tell gay people that their sexual orientation is "intrinsically disordered," as a recent Vatican document proclaims?

To many thoughtful and committed Catholics, such mixed messages are very demoralizing. To many of us, when our bishops shake the hands of the Scalias of the world, they appear to be playing power politics, and not preaching the gospel. How will the church restore the faith of so many thoughtful and committed people, when the power politics it plays — on a daily basis — so undercuts its preaching the gospel of love?

Perhaps it would be better not to preach a compassion that your actions belie. Giving oppressed people mixed messages may, in the long run, be more damaging to their souls than showing outright disdain for them. ▼

— William D. Lindsey  
Little Rock, AR

[The writer is the former chair of the Theology Department at Belmont Abbey College.]

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Freedom Tea Dance • 4pm-10pm  
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