

# Positive Speech – It Serves You Best

A Special Report

By Bob Burg

Excerpted from *Master Your Traits – Master Yourself*

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The Sages of the Talmud asked, “Who is a mighty person?” and answered, “He who can control his inclinations/character traits.” And what a profound saying that is.

Each of us is born with - and develops over time - a set of traits that make up our character. Some of these traits make us more effective in life (and in different areas of life); while others cause us to be not so effective. The good news is that, as human beings, we can work on ourselves in order to master these inclinations, thus becoming more effective in all aspects of life both business and personal.

In my program, “Master Your Traits – Master Yourself”, based on the wisdom of perhaps America’s most famous Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin and featuring the wisdom of other Sages, we focus on 13 character traits. These traits are of critical importance in reaching one’s full potential and accomplishing their goals.

We use Dr. Franklin’s method of focusing intently on one particular trait per week before moving on to the next. That way, we begin the process of mastering this trait before turning our intention elsewhere. Since there are 13 different weekly traits we work on and 52 weeks in a year (and 52 divided by 13 are 4) we get the opportunity to dedicate total focus on this trait for an entire week four times during the year. It’s been proven again and again that this method will help one master any traits they so desire.

I can tell you firsthand that Dr. Franklin’s system worked for me . . . big-time!

In this “Special Report” we’ll look, in detail, at the second trait we discuss in the program.

Mastering this one trait alone – the trait of Positive Speech (and avoiding it’s opposite . . . Gossip) – will make a huge difference in your life and how effective you can be. So, let’s begin.

## **Week/Trait Number Two is “Positive Speech”**

Under Positive Speech I have the following written:

*“Judge the value of my words before I speak. Speak only what may benefit others and myself. Avoid evil speech, gossip.”*

In his wonderful book, *The Four Agreements*, Don Miguel Ruiz makes the excellent point that words are a creative force. He says: “Your word is the power you have to create.” So true, isn’t it? We may initially think the thought, but before anything happens, it must first be spoken into existence.

He writes:

*“Through the word you express your creative power. It is through the word that you manifest everything. Regardless of what language you speak, your intent manifests through the word. What you dream, what you feel, and what you really are, will all be manifested through the word. Your word is a force; it is the power you have to express and communicate, to think, and thereby to create the events in your life.”*

With words, we create. And with those words we can create good in the world and/or we can create evil. The choice is ours. And, one of the ways we can create good in our world is through the words we speak to AND ABOUT others.

Rabbi Pliskin writes:

*“A righteous person will constantly bless each and every individual. His mouth is a source of life. The evil person, however, misuses his ability to speak by cursing and insulting others. This leads to other people cursing him back and creates much violence in the world. Make your mouth a source of life for people. Wouldn't it be great if we could feel enough love and compassion for people who misuse their power of speech and in this manner influence them to be a source of blessing? Keep your eyes open. You may have that chance today.”*

Interesting about speech. As we just discussed, it has tremendous power. The Bible tells us G-d spoke the world into existence. It also tells us we are created in G-d's image. Thus, if G-d is the Creator, and we are created in His image, then we as individuals are *mini-creators*, and we create much of our circumstances through speech, don't we? We speak so much into existence. Interesting that we can actually raise a person up or bring them down . . . with our words.

If we consider this carefully, we realize that we have tremendous and amazing power with our words. Our spouse, friends, children, associates, people in our business organization look to us to, actually tell them who and what they are. Now, should it be that way? Should it be that anyone gives us the right to make them feel good or bad about themselves?

Well, maybe not. In fact, I don't think it should be and you probably don't either. However, that's just the way it is. It's the way of the world; at least for now in humanity's overall level of consciousness. And, like any Universal Law or principle, we can embrace it, or we can deny it, but we can never alter or change it.

Certainly that is so regarding the power of speech. One point I'd like to touch on if I may is gossip. Gossip is using the power of speech to the negative extreme. There is practically nothing worse and more destructive, whether in personal life or business.

Gossip ruins lives, assassinates reputations, splits families, alienates friends and can tear through a business organization like a cancer. If gossip is going on in your family, within your

friendships, organizations, or anywhere else where you have some level of influence, then do your very best to stop it now. If you're gossiping, stop it now.

To share something very personal, I'll just tell you that up until about 6 or 7 years ago I was a terrible gossip. It was just a part of my life. It always was and I'll admit to you right here...I enjoyed it! I used to speak it, I used to listen to it and, heck, I even used to encourage it in others. I don't know why because, growing up, it was always discouraged in my home. But, for some reason, I seemed to have received some recessive gossip gene.

Then, fortunately, while reading a particular book by Rabbi Pliskin, in which he discussed a Sage from the last century who dedicated his life to eradicating gossip, I realized . . . suddenly, that what I had been doing was wrong. And, I made an intense study on how to rid myself of that evil habit.

I made a decision and, applied what I call, "The Success Formula" to it; in other words, I had the desire to eradicate it from my life, I learned a system for doing so, I applied the information immediately, I was persistent (which I needed to be because, believe me, I messed up a lot in the beginning), and I had the belief that ridding it from my life was the right thing to do. I also had the belief in myself that I could do it. And my life has forever been changed.

I look back on the bad feelings I had stimulated - and I wasn't a bad guy – it was just a bad part of my being - and I saw the destruction I had caused with certain people and, mainly, how it always came back to haunt me. In fact, gossip is one of those insidious things that, while it does hurt others, typically, it eventually comes back to hurt the purveyor of gossip even more; this in hurt feelings, lost friendships, negative reputation, etc..

Eventually, actually, several years ago, after I had turned the gossip habit into a much more positive aspect of my life (many people now say things to me like, "Bob, I never hear you say anything bad about anybody" – something that could not have been said about me prior) I co-authored a book with Lori Palatnik on the topic entitled, *Gossip: Ten Pathways to Eliminate It From Your Life and Transform Your Soul*. And, I'll tell you, eradicating it from my life did transform my soul. It's made me a much happier person, and much more effective with people, and as a leader.

I beseech you, if this is an area in your life which you feel needs some work, then please make this one of your 13 traits to work on and turn all negative speech into positive speech. By the way, just to illustrate the ramifications of gossip, I'd like to share with you a story. It's typically entitled, "Feathers in the Wind" and is cited as a 19th century folktale.

*Apparently, a young man made a habit of slandering the town's wise man. One day, realizing the harm and hurtfulness of his actions, he went to the wise man's home and asked for forgiveness. The wise man, realizing that young man had not really internalized the gravity of his transgressions, told him that he would forgive him on one condition: that he go home, take a feather pillow from his house, cut it up, go the edge of a cliff, and scatter the feathers to the wind. After he had done so, he should then return to the wise man's house.*

*Though puzzled by this strange request, the young talebearer was happy to be let off with so easy a penance. He quickly cut up the pillow, scattered the feathers, and returned to the house.*

*"Am I now forgiven?" he asked.*

*"Just one more thing," the wise man said. "Go now and gather up all the feathers."*

*"But that's impossible. The wind has already scattered them. There's no way to retrieve them."*

*"Precisely," he answered. "And though you may truly wish to correct the evil you have done, it is as impossible to repair the damage done by your words as it is to recover the feathers. Your words are out there in the marketplace, spreading hate, even as we speak."*

And that, in my personal experience, both as the gossiper and, on occasion, as its victim, is an analogy, or parable, that is right on the mark.

By the way, an incident doesn't have to be false to be gossip. The fact that it is true is what *makes* it gossip. If it's false, then it is libel or slander, depending upon whether spoken or written. It's still gossip, even if it's true. As a working definition, we can say that gossip is the relating of any type of harmful or hurtful information . . . that is not *necessary* to share.

My friend, Paul Myers, says, "Gossip is like a fired bullet. Once you hear the sound, you can't take it back." And it isn't just what we say about someone to others, but what we say to that person directly as well. We've all been told that "Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never harm me." We also know that is totally untrue. While a body will typically recover from a physical injury, the harm caused by direct insults can sometimes last a lifetime, and tear the self-esteem right out of a person.

On the other hand, kind, encouraging words can build a person's self-esteem, help him or her to grow and give them the impetus they need to do great, significant things with their lives. The choice regarding how we speak about or to someone is ours. It's called "free will."

So, instead of gossiping, Bless each and every individual with your kind words.

To recap, for this particular week:

### **Positive Speech**

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Bob Burg is co-author of the National Bestseller, *The Go-Giver* and *Go-Givers Sell More* and author of *Endless Referrals* and numerous other books and audio programs.  
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{Note from Bob} If you enjoyed this special report, then you might be interested in ordering the full program which you can find – along with some of my other resources – at <http://www.burg.com/success-tools/>

Meanwhile, I hope you can use the information in this report to increase both your personal and professional success.

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I wish you the very best of success always . . . and in everything!

Bob