

Ben Franklin's 4 Rules for Disagreeable People

Ever had an encounter with a person who, despite all your efforts, is difficult to get along with because he is so disagreeable?

If so, Ben Franklin would probably sympathize. His high level of interaction with the public, not to mention his overbearing relatives, likely led him to write the satirical "[Rules for Making Oneself a Disagreeable Companion](#)" in 1750.

Here they are:

"If possible engross the whole Discourse; and when other Matter fails, talk much of your-self, your Education, your Knowledge, your Circumstances, your Successes in Business, your Victories in Disputes, your own wise Sayings and Observations on particular Occasions, &c. &c. &c."

Translation: Agreeable people make it a practice to learn and inquire after the welfare and wisdom of others.

"If when you are out of Breath, one of the Company should seize the Opportunity of saying something; watch his Words, and, if possible, find somewhat either in his Sentiment or Expression, immediately to contradict and raise a Dispute upon. Rather than fail, criticise even his Grammar."

Translation: Agreeable people are NOT Grammar Nazis.

"If another should be saying an indisputably good Thing; either give no Attention to it; or interrupt him; or draw away the Attention of others; or, if you can guess what he would be at, be quick and say it before him; or, if he gets it said, and you perceive the Company pleas'd with it, own it

to be a good Thing, and withal remark that it had been said by Bacon, Locke, Bayle, or some other eminent Writer: thus you deprive him of the Reputation he might have gain'd by it, and gain some yourself, as you hereby show your great Reading and Memory."

Translation: Agreeable people avoid habitual criticism and stealing the limelight.

"When modest Men have been thus treated by you a few times, they will chuse ever after to be silent in your Company; then you may shine on without Fear of a Rival; rallying them at the same time for their Dullness, which will be to you a new Fund of Wit."

Translation: Agreeable people avoid using others as a source of mockery.

In a world where quick wit and self-interest are the norm, Franklin's words are worthy of reflection. Could it be that the high-pitched, contentious nature of public discourse today is a direct result of America's encouragement of self-esteem and self-promotion?