



*Clear Thinking newsletter from Uncommon Knowledge - Issue 90*

Join our new Facebook group and get the hypnosis download 'First Time Hypnosis' as a welcome gift. [Become a Fan and get your download here.](#)

In this month's Clear Thinking...

1. Maximize client motivation with the language of personal gain
2. Online course: How to Stop Anyone Smoking

## **Maximize client motivation with the language of personal gain**

*Learn how to sidestep the unconscious sabotage of negative language*

A man accidentally falls off the platform and gets stuck in the rails of the London underground. A train is fast approaching. Another man crouches down and calls: "Give me your hand!" To his astonishment, the man refuses.

His would-be saviour shouts more desperately: "*Give me your hand!*" But again the man declines. The train is now practically bearing down on him, a great wave of roaring steel. Suddenly, a third man shouts: "Take my hand!" The stuck man takes the proffered hand and is hauled to safety in the nick of time. The second man is amazed and asks the rescuer: "How come he took your hand but not mine?"

"Ah, well, I know him! He's a tax collector. You said '*Give me your hand*' and he couldn't bring himself to *give* anything; I said '*Take my hand*' - and he found that much easier!"

Yes, it's a joke. But it illustrates how important language is as a motivator.

The joke may be an exaggeration but most people do have strong unconscious negative associations with words like 'losing' or 'giving up' or 'quitting'. From early

*Maximize client motivation with the language of personal gain - Clear Thinking Issue 90*

childhood onwards most of us have been conditioned, whether we noticed it or not, to link such terms with the idea of deficiency or lack or weakness. And we don't like deficiency or lack or weakness. And we don't like not having something that we used to have (even if it was bad for us).

This can present the therapist with a challenge when a client turns up who wants to 'lose weight' or 'give up smoking'. The very words they use hinder them from getting what they want – and need. Like that tax collector. He probably didn't know *why* he couldn't bring himself to grab that saving hand, either.

So here's two tips on using the *language of gain* to maximize motivation when working with dieters and smokers

### **1. Switch the focus from 'loss' to 'gain'**

Words frame ideas and ideas power motivation... or not. A middle-aged woman I worked with spent a long time telling me about her 'year of loss'. She'd 'lost' her pet dog. She'd 'lost' her job. She'd 'lost' her son when he moved out. And now she wanted to 'lose' weight. This meant she was using the most negative term possible to describe something she supposedly wanted.

The idea of *getting rid* of something can provide some motivation, but not nearly as much as the idea of *getting* something.

So I didn't talk to her about *losing* weight at all. Instead we spoke plenty about

- *getting* slimmer
- *having* more health and fitness
- *gaining* a new sense of herself
- *claiming* her real womanly shape... and so on.

Why talk about 'losing' anything? As she *got* slimmer over the weeks, we spoke about how she could 'notice herself *getting* lighter and firmer'.

Don't let the subliminal associations some people have with the concept of 'loss' get in the way of making life enhancing changes.

### **2. Look forward to 'becoming something new'**

I doubt that the average caterpillar does any logical thinking, but if it could, would it think in terms of '*giving up* being a caterpillar' or would it be looking forward to '*becoming* a butterfly'?

Now think of the language smoker's use when contemplating the extremely important task of saving their lungs: *stopping, quitting, giving up*. It's all looking backwards, at the

*Maximize client motivation with the language of personal gain - Clear Thinking Issue 90*

pain of leaving the past behind.

I like to get them to focus on what they'll *get* and *become*. So I talk about

- *becoming* a natural non-smoker
- *reclaiming* the oxygen needed by lungs, eyes, skin (and sexual organs)
- *looking forward* to feeling healthy and strong in mind and body

So-called 'self-defeating behaviour' is often just fear of losing the familiar. It's odd that we can become 'familiar' with something that might be killing us, but at least when you know what's going on you can choose your words more carefully and craftily to help with the transition.

## What do you say to smokers?

The careful use of language is an important element in helping anyone to make deep and lasting changes in what they do, think or feel. What you say matters just as much when it's a smoker who wants to quit as when it's a phobic who wants to stop being frightened of 'nothing'.

Our [online course on how to stop anyone smoking](#) will not only teach you just what to say (and how to say it) to smokers, but will provide you with a wide range of skills and know-how for making the process of becoming a non-smoker easy, effective and even entertaining – for *you* as well as your client!

The next How to Stop Anyone Smoking course starts on 12 April 2010, so get cracking with your booking!

See you in a fortnight.

[Mark Tyrrell](#)

Co-Founder

Uncommon Knowledge

*Psychology trainers since 1995*

More resources from **Uncommon Knowledge...**

- [Uncommon Knowledge](#)
- [Hypnosis Downloads](#)
- [Free Self-Confidence Course](#)
- [Free Panic Attacks Course](#)
- [Depression Learning Path](#)
- [Uncommon Forum](#)
- [Uncommon Help](#)

*Maximize client motivation with the language of personal gain - Clear Thinking Issue 90*

Published by Uncommon Knowledge LLP  
Queens Building, 8 George Street, Oban PA34 5SB, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)1273 776770