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The seven sins

Now that you know the seven sins, it's time to investigate their effects on your outcomes in life. Whether it's you inflicting them on these around you, or others inflicting them on you, they will have effects on your communication and thus on your happiness, effectiveness and wellbeing. Remember, we're not saying never do these things - but we are saying that if they become habits, they will rob you of power in your speaking, or of tolerance in your listening. You can't easily remove them in others (just try telling someone they are habitually negative or dogmatic!) though you might gently try to inspire them to take a course like this or read some books you've found useful. Attraction by showing your own progress always beats promotion!

The table overleaf gives you a format to use in your own enquiry. Feel free to create your own document. the main thing is to make your inventory as comprehensive as possible.

S P E A K
L I S T E N
B E
W E L L

Sin	Who / when I do it	Who does it to me	Effects	Action
Gossip				
Judgmentalism/ condemning				
Negativity				
Complaining				
Excuses				
Exaggeration/lying				
Dogmatism				



Some suggested exercises

Gossip

If you over-indulge in gossip, try abstaining, for a day, or maybe a week, to start with. Gossip is prevalent, so this may involve avoiding magazines, your usual TV, your favourite blogs or website, and even not seeing certain friends or colleagues or walking away from some conversations. You can usually make an excuse to do so without letting people know what you're doing – or you could enrol some of your associates in the game and make it easier by holding one another accountable.

This is difficult, but even if you don't achieve complete abstinence you will give yourself a chance to break the habit and set a new baseline.

Condemning, negativity and complaining

1. Take time out at the end of each day to journal in a notebook on one side the times when you have condemned or criticised those around you, and on the other side instances when you praised, encouraged or complimented them. Review your journal each week and watch as the negative erodes and is replaced by the positive.

2. Raise your consciousness of the word NOT: most requests and observations can be turned around from negative (as in "Please don't..." or



“You haven’t...”) to positive (“I’d love it if you did...” or “Next time please could you...”).

3. Develop a habit of creating gratitude lists, either mental or written. Be rigorous and exhaustive. You might list life, health, relationships, possessions, achievements, service for others, surroundings, experiences... develop the habit of focussing on these things and your negativity and complaining will wither.

Excuses and exaggeration

Pay attention for a few days to your honesty level. We all like to think we’re totally honest, but few people are: white lies pop out to make people feel better or avoid criticism or punishment; excuses or exaggerations become habitual to curry favour, be more respected or shift the blame.

Take stock and consider instituting a rule of absolute honesty in the area of concern. In my experience, settling for near-honesty is not as effective as an absolute commitment where the line is clear and you do not cross it. Be careful not to hurt people around you with rigorous honesty: it is always possible to say nothing, or if compliments are demanded and you cannot honestly give one, you can use double-edged praise, like one actor passionately (and honestly) telling another that his performance was ‘unforgettable’. When you err, own the mistake, apologise and say what you’re doing to make sure it doesn’t happen again.