Getting a grip on those feelings of guilt

By Susan Ginsberg, Ed.D.

Oh, those feelings of guilt, we all have them. They’re part of the human condition—and those of us who are trying hard to juggle our work and home responsibilities seem to be especially hard hit.

“I’ve been working overtime and haven’t said good-night to my kids in weeks.”

“I couldn’t take care of my grandson the other night because I was too tired after work. I felt bad saying no.”

“I should visit my parents more on weekends, but it’s the only time I have to catch up on things I need to do.”

Outside and inside guilt

In other words, guilt comes from not meeting our own expectations—and the expectations of others as well. We feel guilty when there’s a gap between what we believe we should be doing and what we’re actually managing to do. And it’s not just our parents and family members who call our lives into question. A perfect stranger feels free to say to a pregnant woman, “You’re not going back to work after your baby is born, are you?”

Amazingly, all these years later, images are still in our heads from an earlier era—when moms were at home, waiting for their kids after school with snacks of milk and cookies. Though our lives are very different today, we still feel pressure to conform to the Donna Reed ideal of a mother who constantly nurtures and nourishes her children and is always available to them.

What about dads?

Notice that the “we” I’m talking about are moms mostly. Don’t dads feel guilty too? Certainly some do, but it’s women who have a stronger “guilt gene.” We know that fathers are spending more time with their children these days and are doing much more work at home. But if you ask a roomful of dads if they feel guilty about anything they’re doing as parents, chances are they’ll give you a funny look and wonder what you’re talking about.

When fathers talk about the things that stand in their way of being a better parent or when they describe a problem they’re having with a child, they are more likely to say they feel “frustrated” or “angry,” not guilty.

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Consider your choices

Some parents feel guilty about things they should not have done: “I yelled at my son the other night. He didn’t do anything. I was just upset about something that happened at work.” But often we feel worse about things we don’t do, like not staying home with a sick child or not going on a class trip.

In some areas we have choices about what we can do, and in others we have little or no control. It’s important to separate the two. That way, we can make a distinction between feeling “bad” or “sad” and feeling guilty.

Child psychologist Lawrence Balter makes the point: “Are you missing your baby? Do you feel sad that you’re not with her? These are normal feelings and you shouldn’t mix them up with guilt.”

And if you can’t get away from work to go to your daughter’s class play, try to arrange for someone to go in your place and record the performance. Then you can watch it at home later with your child.

Good and bad guilt

The distinction between “good” and “bad” guilt is also important. If feeling guilty makes us examine something we ought to be examining, it’s helpful. We don’t want to not feel guilty, for example, if we slapped a child in anger or broke a promise three times in a row.

It’s good guilt if it pushes us to make positive changes. If we feel guilty for yelling at our child, we can look at when and why we did it, so we can avoid doing it again.

If we’re uncomfortable with a babysitter or concerned about something at our child’s school, there are things we can do. If we’re not spending enough time with our children, we can figure out how to spend more—such as turning off our phone or answering email after the kids are in bed.

Modifying our expectations

Although the Superparent myth has faded a bit, it’s still with us. But if we think we’re responsible for everything that’s going on, we hesitate to ask for help for ourselves and, for example, we’re less likely to ask our kids to do the chores we should expect them to do.

Our own and others’ expectations will determine to some degree what we think we “should” and “ought to” be doing and how we use our time. We need to assess our strengths and ask: Does my house really need to be spotless all the time? Am I being realistic about the same issues. It’s reassuring and you can be helpful to each other.

Be with kids in the here and now. Put to-do lists aside. Try to include a few minutes of daily alone-time with each child and a weekly activity, even if it’s only for ten minutes. Do something you both enjoy. Work on a puzzle, throw a soft ball. It’s important for all kids, from toddlers to teens.

Have fun as a family—playing, eating, going to the movies. But don’t think of it as “quality time” because that too can become a guilt trap. So often, the times we carefully set aside just don’t work out as we wanted. Rethink the entire concept of quality time. It can be planned or unplanned. It can be “hanging out” time—or whenever you really focus on your kids, really listen and connect with each other.

Take time for yourself. Don’t try to do everything yourself. Taking care of your own needs is not selfish. We have to take care of ourselves to be able to look after others and to perform well at our jobs.

Look at today’s moms. At-home mothers do not spend all day doing creative activities with their kids. In fact, they spend about the same amount of time in one-to-one interaction with their children as moms who work away from home. And a new study by Working Mother has found that at-home moms have the same level of guilt as women who have jobs outside their homes.

Get over working-mom guilt.

In her book Not Guilty: The Good News About Working Mothers, Betty Holcombe talks about how hard it is to balance a job and a family, especially with a new baby. “The newness is so delicious and wonderful. But you are still a part of their lives—every day. In fact, women have always worked outside the home and their kids have turned out just fine.”

The ‘balance’ ideal

As we think about the options in our lives, we might ask: What are my real priorities as an individual and as a family member at this point in time? Are they the same as they were five years ago? Will they be the same five years from now?

We need to take a longer view of “balancing” or, as some people call it, “integrating,” “navigating” one’s work and family life or having a healthy “work-life fit.”

“At different points, different priorities compete for our attention,” says Dr. Barbara Moses, author of What Next? “And no matter how hard we strive to keep balanced, there will be tensions between competing desires.”

These are not necessarily bad, she says. They’re what make us human and what make us grow.

Questions to ask

So, rather than searching for some mythical perfect balance, the real questions should be:

Do you feel good about how you are spending your waking life? Are you able to play out the roles that are important to you? If you’re making sacrifices now, are they part of a plan that will help you realize your vision for the future?

At any given point, it’s impossible to have it all: a demanding job, lots of family time, community involvement, artistic pursuits. We are rarely in perfect balance. But our lives are made up of many chapters with shifting priorities.

Keep in mind that giving up something now does not mean giving it up forever. Over the course of a lifetime, we’ll have periods when we’re more preoccupied with our work and others when we’re able to spend more time and energy on our children, our parents and our friends.
Our readers write...

Great ideas in your September “Interchange” about what to do with kids’ art projects that can easily fill a refrigerator! As the parent of two teenagers, I remember the first time we tried to take art work from day-care off the fridge.

A suggestion we received years ago that worked well for us was to photograph the fridge at regular intervals with the family artist standing nearby. With digital cameras, we could take these pictures often.

This made it easier to remove the “originals” for storage or to send to family, etc. Whenever a project had special meaning or took great effort, we would take a picture of our son or daughter holding it. That way we could archive the work and record the proud smile.

Saving digital photos eased separation concerns when things were moved off the fridge. They made later viewing possible and allowed us to share electronically through email or family circles on social media sites.

—Jen B., East Hartford, CT

I really enjoy your newsletter. I send out the links by Twitter. Keep up the awesome work!

—J.G., East Lansing, MI

I am compelled to write a note to say thank you for this wonderful resource of news, information, tips and pure enjoyment. I compliment you on your diversity, timeliness, life-span emphasis, research, consistency and quality. Every page reveals an interesting article and array of suggestions. Please keep writing!

—J.H., Macon, MO

Your newsletter is such an easy way for companies to get materials in employees’ hands and to say “we care about your whole life.” I am impressed.

—M.M.S., Washington, D.C.

INTERCHANGE

Better to give than receive? So it seems.

Gift giving has been studied by psychologists, anthropologists, economists and market researchers, all of whom have found it to be a complex human behavior that helps define relationships and strengthens our ties with family and friends.

The social value of giving has been shown historically. Among many clans and villages, status was determined not by who had the most but by who gave away the most. Ancient potlatch ceremonies celebrated extreme giving.

More recently, researchers have observed gender differences in gift giving. Men are typically more practical while women try harder to give gifts that have greater emotional significance, says consumer psychologist Margaret Rucker of the University of California, Davis.

Gift giving might even signal that a relationship could (or should) end. As one woman says, “I knew the thrill was gone when my husband handed me a birthday present in a brown grocery bag.”

At this time of the holidays, as we think about the holidays, many of us would like to cut back on our spending. But banning gift exchange with loved ones may not be the best solution, says psychologist Ellen J. Langer of Harvard. “If I don’t let you give me a gift, I’m not encouraging you to think about me, and I’m preventing you from experiencing the joy of engaging in those activities. You do people a disservice by not giving them the gift of giving.”

People who stop giving gifts may also lose out on some important social cues, says Mary Ann McGrath of Loyola University. “Who is on your gift list says who is more important and who is less important to you.”

Interestingly, the biggest effect of gift giving is on the giver, says Dr. Langer. Giving to others reinforces our feelings for them. And showing how much we care makes us feel good.

To further study the psychology of giving, marketing researcher Tracy T. Ryan of Longwood College has explored gift giving by pet owners. She explains that this activity, by its nature, is self-serving—because a pet cannot return the favor.

“When you’re giving to another person, you have this pressure of reciprocity,” says Ryan, “but it’s not there with a pet. It shows us that a lot of pleasure is in the giving, knowing that you’ve taken care of someone.”

What your neat or messy office says about you

There are real personality differences between the neat and the messy. Both styles can be successful but there’s a general prejudice against clutter, says David Freedman, co-author of “A Perfect Mess.”

Most people believe they would be more successful if they were neater, Freedman explains. But studies have found that levels of office messiness actually increase with education, salary and experience.

Clean, tidy work spaces are signs of people who are organized, methodical and task-focused, says psychologist Sam Gosling of the University of Texas. Less-neat people tend to respond more to cues such as stacks of papers, folders, post-it notes and laid-open books to remind them of what they’ve done and what they need to do.

“There are benefits to be had for each type that seem matched to the way people organize their work activities,” says cognitive science David Kirsh of the University of California, San Diego.

—Adapted from “Psychology Today”
Visiting your out-of-town relative?

On this page last month, we answered several frequently asked questions by those who are new to long-distance caregiving. Now we’ll focus on what you can reasonably expect to accomplish—before, during and after a visit to your older relative.

Visiting regularly is one of the most effective ways to assess your relative’s abilities and any changes that may have occurred. And there’s a lot you can do even before a visit.

Get a head start

It’s important to be aware of the support services that are available to your relative locally. You can learn about these services before your next visit. Here are some suggestions.

Involve older relatives in the planning for your visit. Talk to them about their specific current needs and what you can do to help.

Start your own directory of local contacts for health care and daily life. Get a phone book from your relative’s area. The online White Pages and Yellow Pages can be a big help too.

Use the Internet. A wealth of information is available. A good place to start is with some of the agencies listed in the sidebar on this page. You may also search for the key words “agencies on aging.”

Reach out. Share your travel plans with your siblings or other relatives. Call or email your relative’s neighbors and friends to let them know you’re visiting.

Start a new service. If you make it happen before you arrive, you can see how it’s working, and, if necessary, hire or replace personnel while you’re on the scene.

While you are there

Use all of your senses to help you objectively assess the situation and any changes that may indicate the need for assistance or new services.

Grandchildren can be a big help on your long-distance care team.

Observe your parent’s house or apartment. Is there a change in the cleanliness or tidiness? Is dirty laundry piling up? Is mail stacked on tables or desks? Are bills unopened? Are there any unpleasant smells?

Look for signs that help is needed for daily activities. Do you notice a change in your family member’s personal hygiene? Is he or she eating properly? Has there been a weight change? Does he or she appear unsteady when getting up or down from a chair? Are there indications of incontinence?

Is your loved one having cognitive or emotional difficulties? Does he or she seem more forgetful? Is the house dark? Are neighbors and friends still coming by? Are appointments being kept? Do you see any safety risks such as burned pots in the cupboard or medications that were not taken properly?

Talk to friends and neighbors. Ask how your parent is coping when you’re not there. Is someone available to drive your mother to the doctor? Is someone needed to help out with home repairs? Be realistic about your parents’ abilities. They may talk a good game because they don’t want you to worry. Offer to reimburse your parents’ friends for their expenses.

Have a backup plan in place. Small (or large) problems are bound to arise in your absence. Duplicate a list of key people in your parent’s lives: include their work, home and cellphone numbers and email addresses. Send copies of your list to each of them as well. Leave an extra set of your parents’ house keys with a trusted neighbor.

Stay in touch from back home

With all the electronic media available to keep us connected, this is easier to do. Here are some suggestions:

Be alert to changed moods and behaviors. For example: phone calls at odd hours or for no apparent reason, repeating information, forgetfulness or slurred speech. These may be signs of a health problem and a reason to consult with your relative’s doctor.

Establish a routine. Make sure your older relative is being called regularly. Rotate the calls with other family members. Encourage grandchildren to make a special effort to stay in touch. Ask friends and relatives to send email, newsy notes and photos. Show your appreciation to those who help out with thank-you notes and gifts.

If you are looking for a new service

Here are some excellent resources for long-distance caregivers.

The Elder Care locator (800) 677-1116 www.eldercare.gov

National Family Caregivers Association (800) 896-3650 www.thefamilycaregiver.org

National Association for Home Care and Hospice (202) 547-7424 www.nahc.org

Family Caregiver Alliance (800) 638-8799 www.caregiver.org

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (520) 881-9008 www.caremanager.org

Visiting Nurse Associations of America (800) 426-2547 www.vnaa.org


National Association of Social Workers (800) 638-8799 www.socialworkers.org

As you follow through on referrals by phone or email, be concise. Ask about eligibility, waiting lists and fees. If you’re unsure about your relative’s needs, ask to speak to a case manager or social worker. Repeat important information to verify your understanding—or print out the email. Organize information in folders under categories such as Health, Personal, Legal and Financial.
Impact of new technology on kids’ manners

By Eileen Wacker

L ast summer we dined out with my extended family in Boston. In the middle of the meal, my mother remarked, “I’m sorry, I just have to say something. Ethan is wearing his hat to dinner and I find it disrespectful.”

I asked my eight year old to take off his new Patriots cap. Then she sighed and went on to say about my niece, “And Kate is doing that email thing. Children today have no manners.” She meant texting, but you get the point. Since then I’ve been polling people about technology and the potential demise of manners.

Our culture has changed

These days almost every American child is using an electronic device of some kind—and likely more than one. Are we truly raising a disaffected, mannerless generation?

We need to update our approach to this issue. Along with the electronics revolution, we have experienced a cultural revolution. I’ve done some research on the subject, and here are my observations:

This is a common scenario. We’re in a minivan. My youngest two are watching a Scooby Doo video and listening with headsets. My tween is playing a game on iTouch and my teenager is listening to music with earphones on an iPhone.

I feel like an unpaid taxi driver. But really, do my children have bad manners or are they just being typical kids with more options for amusing themselves in the car than we had? Granted, it’s a missed opportunity for us to talk with each other. On the plus side, there are fewer fights in the back seat.

Kids text a whole lot. Their words look like old-fashioned shorthand, with abbreviations, acronyms and jargon that they all seem to know. One surprise to me is that they text bad news. They cancel plans and break up relationships in truncated sentences. This may seem rude to adults but not to kids—because they text everything, good and bad.

Talking to no one in particular was once thought to be “crazy.” Now, talking (too often, loudly) on a phone with a headset is a common sight—and not just with children. The people of all ages who do it may not see the practice as rude. Kids have told me they sleep with their cell phones and carry them every waking moment, even to the bathroom. The beeping and vibrations of mobile devices are part of their culture.

Thank-you notes are a thing of the past. I’m talking about the mailed, handwritten kind on stationery. The important thing is that a child acknowledge receipt of the gift, and this can be done with a phone call, email, or even a YouTube video.

Don’t bother to leave a message. Kids’ peer-to-peer behavior is to call and hang up if no one answers. They can see the number and will call back if they want to speak to that person. They don’t listen to or answer voice mail. You can text them if it’s really important. Kids still find it odd that many adults continue to annoy them with long voicemails.

A lot of bad language comes with access to technology. You can limit your child’s exposure to the worst of it, but you can’t stop all of it. Try to modify your expectations. Instead of demanding that kids “never swear,” teach them the degrees of bad language.

They also need to know when not to use inappropriate language. For example, I’m aware that kids say something “sucks,” but I do not allow my children to use this expression at home, with teachers or in front of young kids. We have taboo words that are never to be uttered, and we don’t use bad language in front of an older person.

A good-manners issue once considered very important was how to address someone. And for today’s kids from 18 to 25, this is still a dilemma that is evolving even as I write. Ask yourself: Do I want to be called Mrs. Henslow forever? With email, kids often write “Hi!” or “Hello” with no title, just the salutation. They’re not trying to be rude or overly familiar. They honestly do not know what many people would like to be called.

Some manners and rituals are worth holding onto and I would like to keep them going for as long as possible. These include but are not limited to:

—Expressing some form of polite “hello” and “goodbye.”

—Knowing when to say and saying “please,” “thank you,” “excuse me” and “I’m sorry.”

—Making eye contact.

—Being able to maintain a conversation with older people as well as their peers.

—Knowing how to conduct themselves in a restaurant, at a theater and in other social situations.

—Having “unplugged” family meals together as often as possible.

In a nutshell

As parents, we can also let our kids know that because they have a phone with them every second, there’s no good excuse for not responding to our calls.

Look at it this way. Kids are just using the technology that was created for all of us. And we do not get to choose the norms of our children’s generation or the etiquette of their interactions with peers. Of course, we can lament the loss of some aspects of a less-wired generation and we can set limits—but we cannot halt the changes in our culture.

How to present ideas that ‘click’ with people

By Dr. Rick Kirschner

Some people you just click with. Communication flows. You feel appreciated for who you are. And clicking with the people you work with can make everyone happier and more productive on the job.

You may think of quick and easy connections like this as something that just happens, or it doesn’t. People get you or they don’t. But the truth is, clicking with people is a skill like riding a bike, and we can make it happen.

It’s worth learning too

At the workplace, we can learn to click more effectively with coworkers and customers. Then, once you’ve made an initial click, you have a green light to share your ideas. To do that successfully—to continue the click—you need to know how to share an idea and how to convey it persuasively.

The key is for other people to think of your idea, at least in part, as their own. To get there, you need just a few tools for clear, concise communication.

Keep it short and simple

To deliver a message as briefly as possible, aim precisely at your goal.

- **Put the most important information up front.** Lead with your main point. For example: “It’s about making connections,” works better than, “Business books are more popular than ever in this down economy, and....”

- **Be specific.** Include key details such as names, places and actions. But don’t tell them everything. Give them the bottom line clearly and early on. If people want more information, they will ask for it.

- **Focus on goals, not process.** State your desired result rather than elaborating on the process of getting there. If there’s an action you want someone to take, tell him the specific desired result rather than elaborating on the process of getting there.

- **Choose familiar words.** Do not try to impress people with your vocabulary. Familiar words make it easier for people to connect with your ideas.

Be clear and direct

Tell people what you’re going to tell them and why. For example: “I have a proposal that we XYZ, and I think it will excite you as much as it does me. I bring it forward because we have a unique opportunity now. Here are some of the key details.”

- **Make it stick with examples and numbers.** Use statistics sparingly. They can be helpful but rarely count as vivid language.

- **Point the way forward.** After you have presented your idea, tell people what you want them to do and why. The more specific you are about a desired direction, the easier it is for people to consider going there.

Repeat and restate

Repetition is no substitute for conviction. But when you have confidence in your ideas, it can help you. Just don’t say the same thing over and over, however. It’s irritating, and our brains crave novelty as well as reinforcement.

Repeating a point in a different way gives people the idea that they’re hearing something new, while underlining what they have already heard. In the advertising world this is called “building response potential.” Here are some strategies for reiterating an idea without sounding repetitious:

- **Use different words to get at the same idea.** If necessary, consult a thesaurus for alternative words to use.

- **Change your frame of reference.** If you’ve already talked about how your idea applies to others in general, talk about how it applies to someone specifically or how it applies to you. Or shift from talking about your idea in relation to the future to talking about it as a past experience.

- **Back it up with an example.** This is a way of restating an idea without monotony. Just remember that a little goes a long way. Saying the same thing in different ways makes your point stronger. Going on and on does not.

The rule of three

It’s often said the third time is the charm—and the “rule of three” is one of the most powerful, potent and practical rhetorical devices. It is also one of the simplest to use.

For example, if you want to make a suggestion to a colleague that she should consider a new way to grow her company, you might put it this way:

“You want to build your brand.” (Step 1) “That means letting more people know about what you do.” (Step 2) “Have you considered advertising on the radio?” (Step 3)

Rhetorical questions

Raising a question and providing an answer can make your opinion sound stronger and may help tilt the playing field toward consensus. For example: “Is Joe’s proposal the best one for our situation? Clearly it is.”

Be aware, however, that some rhetorical questions can put people on the defensive if they say or imply something negative, are off-putting in their tone, are condescending or use loaded language. Trot them out occasionally for more powerful effect.

Do more with less

When you take what you know about a person’s needs, motivations and values, and then present your points using these as a guide, you can deliver an idea for maximum persuasive click.

As always, don’t go overboard in applying any of these tools. Use them to enhance not direct your interactions entirely. One way to think of them is as seasoning, not the main course. Too much and you overwhelm, too little and you dilute their power. Get it just right and whatever you’re serving will be at its most palatable and easy to digest. ◆

—Adapted from the author’s book “How to Click with People: The Secret to Better Relationships in Business and in Life” (see page 8).
Advice to drink 8 glasses a day still holds water

Not long ago, the British medical journal “BMJ” called the old notion that we should drink 8 glasses of water a day “thoroughly debunked nonsense.” But new research may suggest otherwise.

Two studies reported in 2011 found a lower risk of long-term kidney problems among people who drink more water and other fluids daily.

The journal “Nephrology” published the findings of a University of Sydney study of 2,400 people over the age of 50. Those who drank the most fluids (about three liters daily) had a “significantly lower risk” of chronic kidney disease than those who drank the least.

“The Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology” reported another study, by Canadian researchers who closely followed the kidney functioning of 2,148 healthy men and women, average age 46, for seven years. After controlling for diabetes, smoking, medication and other factors, the study found that those who drank the most fluids were the “least susceptible to declines in kidney function.”

These findings do not support “aggressive fluid loading,” says the researchers, but they do suggest that moderately increased fluid intake may benefit the kidneys.

Older people in particular should try to drink more water, because their bodies cope less well with heat—and, with age, thirst may become a less reliable indicator.

How do you know if you’re drinking enough water? If your urine is light rather than dark yellow, you probably are.

—Adapted from The New York Times and UC Berkeley Wellness Letter

Making New Year’s resolutions that stick

Around this time every year, we start making resolutions to eat healthier, exercise more, spend less. The tradition of New Year’s resolutions began with the ancient Romans, who made promises of good conduct to Janus, the deity who looked both backward and forward, says John Norcross, a behavioral psychologist at the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania.

And although most of our resolutions are forgotten by spring, they still have value, Dr. Norcross says. “It’s an opportunity to start anew, a chance for a do-over with some built-in social support, since the people around you are making similar resolutions.”

The most successful resolutions take at least three months to form, use a buddy system and are reasonable to begin with. But there’s no question about it: they do require an action plan.

Here are some suggestions from experts on how to live up to the most common resolutions:

- On becoming fit. Be positive and specific. Come up with a plan that sets measurable goals. Don’t say, “I’m going to lose 50 pounds” if that’s not realistic for you. "I will take off 15 pounds by the end of this year" would be a more doable resolution.

- On hanging tough. For long-term success, choose activities that you enjoy, like kickboxing or dancing the tango. Your attitude is important too. For example, try to think of a new eating plan not as a personal deprivation but as liberation—that will remove the anxiety out of wondering what to eat.

- On behavioral change. Resolutions are fairly similar. What makes the difference are the actions taken by individuals. You need to be ready to make a change, and it helps to make that commitment public. The buddy system works. Make a pact with a friend. Once you have an action plan in place, you can track your successes and give yourself rewards.

- On recovering from a slip. Occasional slips in one’s resolutions are part of the process. On a positive note, in a study by Dr. Norcross, 71 percent of successful resolvers said their first slip actually strengthened their efforts. The key is to stay very concrete. And if you hate being told “no,” think about it differently. Instead of saying “no more desserts,” resolve to “eat more salad,” for example. Just don’t expect a big change overnight or even in the first month or two. “It’s a marathon, not a 100-yard dash,” Dr. Norcross says. “This is not just January, this is for life.”

Home-brewed sports drinks can do the trick

Electrolytes are essential minerals that help our bodies maintain muscle and keep the nervous system functioning. Anything that depletes the body of fluids can also disrupt our balance of electrolytes.

Heavily advertised electrolyte-replenishing sports drinks have become popular but, for the most part, they contain lots of calories and added sugar, according to “Consumer Reports on Health.”

The good news is that you can make a healthier version of a “sports drink” at home that will save you both money and calories.

Here’s the recipe:
Mix 4 cups of water with 2 tablespoons of sugar and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Stir thoroughly.
Add lemon juice or sugar-free flavoring as desired.
You might also want to eat a banana along with the drink to get some extra potassium.

Unless you participate in endurance sports, you should probably steer clear of electrolyte drinks altogether. The added sugar can actually worsen dehydration.
Making smoother, faster connections at work

We’ve all had the experience of meeting a new coworker or customer, and all of a sudden the ideas are flowing. We’ve made a fast, smooth, positive connection. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could do that anytime, anywhere, with anyone?

Well, maybe we can. In a compelling new book How to Click with People, Dr. Rick Kirschner tells us how to do it, step by step.

But first we have to look inward and take responsibility for the way we relate to others. Too often, Dr. Kirschner says, we sabotage our own efforts to connect. Until we understand our own style of communication, it’s hard to really listen to others around us and connect with them.

In his engaging book, the author explains how to listen for feelings—when someone is upset, has a hidden agenda or when you want to persuade others of the value of your own ideas (see page 6).

The author talks about various styles of communication and how an understanding of these styles can help us to advance our own ideas. He also explains that just as people’s lives are complex, our motivations are as well. If we can understand a person’s primary motivation, we can frame our comments in a way that speak to that motivation.

In today’s crazy-busy environment, it would help to know how to click with people via phone, email and social networking, and Dr. Kirschner is on the case. He offers very specific, helpful tips for when we lack visual cues to guide us.

In the end, getting people to click with our ideas isn’t so much about convincing them, he says. It’s about helping them convince themselves. After all, people have to change their own minds. We can’t do that for them.

And despite our sincere efforts to connect, we can hit stumbling blocks at times, especially when a person’s mindset makes it hard to accept change. In a chapter on this subject, Dr. Kirschner suggests ways to remove troublesome issues and questions to ask to clear the way and go forward.

How to Click with People: The Secret to Better Relationships in Business and in Life (Hyperion, hardcover, $24.99) is available online and in bookstores.