Built for your mouth, not just your ears

The printable companion to the audiobook

Pocket card, checklist, openers, exit lines, phone script, meeting agenda, Closing the Tab and a 30-day reps tracker.



The Small Talk Kit

For Stop Rehearsing Every Conversation.

Beat Social Anxiety, Master Small Talk and Stop Replaying What You Said

Mariah Renner

SECRET SELF CARE, BOOK 2
PRINT IT, OR KEEP IT ON YOUR PHONE

START HERE

Practice, not rehearsal.

Brief practice helps you act. You try a line once or twice, notice how it feels in your mouth, maybe change a word, and then you go use it. Endless rehearsal tries to remove all uncertainty before you walk in, and perfect never shows up.

How to use this kit

Every line in here is a shape, not a script. Say it out loud once, change the words until it sounds like you, then take a messy version out into real life. On a bus, say it under your breath. Somewhere crowded, say it in your head. All of those count.

What success looks like

"I did it without being sure." Not **"I had the perfect words."**

And if your head starts to spin and you can only remember one word, make it **Out.**

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Out, Curious, Kind

pocket card

Not a checklist to perform during a conversation. A handle: something to grab when your head starts to spin. If you're under pressure and can only remember one, make it the first one. **Out.**

FRONT

Out.
Curious.
Kind.

It fits in a pocket, next to the nerves.

BACK

Out	Go back to their words. Catch the next one that pulls at you.
Curious	Not "How am I doing?" but "Who is this person?"
Kind	A sentence came out clunky? **"Fine. Keep going."**

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Or take a photo for your phone

FRONT

Mind went blank?

"Sorry, I lost my thread. Can you say the last part again?"

BACK

Before	"That's enough. I'll find the rest there."
During	"Fine. Keep going."
After	"That was a bit awkward, and you went anyway."
Later	"Noted. Already closed."

OUT

Interrupts the monitoring, because your attention goes to the other person instead of your own face.

CURIOUS

Replaces the rehearsing, because you react to what is actually being said instead of running a script.

KIND

Cuts off the replay, because you're not putting yourself on trial for every sentence.

Before You Go In checklist

This is the one to come back to. On the bus, in the car outside, in the hallway before you knock. You're probably nervous. That's allowed. The nerves can come with you.

☐ **Pick one opener.**

How do you know the host?

Mind if I join you? I don't know anyone here yet.

Mine: _____

☐ **One small thing for tonight, and a rough time to leave.**

A time on its own can turn into standing by the wall, waiting out the clock. Once you've done the small thing, you've actually been at the party.

I'll stay until about ten, and I'll talk to one person I don't know.

My small thing: _____ **Leave around:** _____

☐ **And your exit line.**

I'm going to grab a refill. Good to talk.

Mine: _____

☐ **Say all three once. Out loud if you can. Then stop.**

"That's enough. I'll find the rest there."

Then knock.

Say "Out" to the doormat if it helps. If you've done your small thing and you're near your time, go, nerves and all.

The arc of a night

Read the shape, step in with one line, leave on purpose, and if something good happened, make a plan.

The three openers

Three shapes, not three approved scripts. The first line only opens the door. Once the door's open, nobody looks back at the handle.

1 The shared situation

Comment on something you're both experiencing right now. None of them are clever. They're just true, and they're shared.

- **How do you know Maya?**
- **Is the coffee machine broken again, or is it me?**
- **This line has not moved in five minutes.**

Mine: _____

2 The honest ask

Ask for a small opinion or a bit of help. A small ask has an easy answer, and their answer hands you your next line.

- **What are you drinking? It looks better than mine.**
- **Have you been to one of these before? I have no idea what happens next.**
- **Do you know if there's anything good to eat near here?**

Mine: _____

3 The simple introduction

Tell them who you are. When they say their name, say it back once. Then add one small thing about how you got here.

- **Hi, I'm Leo. I don't think we've met.**
- **Jess. Nice to meet you. I came with my sister.**
- **Hey, I'm new. I'm Ana.**

Mine: _____

The short-answer rule

Short answer? Make one more genuine try, then release. **"Oh, what kind of work?"** If someone shows you they're done, release right away. A short answer is information about this moment. It isn't a ruling on you.

When it lands flat

"Ha, fair enough. Enjoy your night."
"Fair, it's a weird question."
"Oh! Well, that's the best answer I've had all night."
A friendly line said nervously is still a friendly line.

Where to stop

Say each shape once. A few times out loud on the walk over, then stop. A line polished until it's flawless snaps when the moment shows up different, and a rough shape bends.

This week

Use one opener, once, anywhere. The barista, a coworker, the person next to you at a bus stop. It counts whatever the response. Too much right now? One comment to a cashier. **"It's freezing out there."**

Exit lines

Ending a conversation is a normal, kind skill. It frees both of you to talk to other people. The best moment is a little before it runs dry, while it still feels warm. Right after a laugh works too.

1 The honest exit

You just say what you're doing.

I'm going to do a lap. Really nice to meet you.

Mine: _____

2 The purpose exit

You have a small, real errand.

I'm going to find the host before she disappears. Lovely chatting.

Mine: _____

3 The bridge exit

The one worth practicing. Connect them to someone else, actually make the introduction, and give each of them one thing to start with.

Theo, have you met Nina? Nina just started climbing. Theo's been going for years and knows every gym in the city.

I'll leave you two to it. I'm grabbing a refill.

Name, have you met _____ **One detail:** _____

No excuse needed

No fake phone call. No made-up emergency. A friendly line, a smile, and you're on your way. Then actually go.

Leaving the party

Leaving early is completely fine. When you can, say a real goodbye. **"Thanks for having me. This was lovely."**

A smaller step

Use an exit line on a short, low-stakes chat. **"Okay, I'll let you go. Have a good one."**

LEAVING EARLY, ON PURPOSE

A loose plan with two parts: a rough time, and one small thing to do before it. Then decide and go. The thing to skip is standing by the coats, auditing yourself.

I'll stay until about _____ **and I'll** _____

The phone script

Not dialogue. One line and a few facts. A fact list helps whatever they say. A script only helps if they say what you predicted, which they never do.

THE ONE-LINE AGENDA FOR THE CALL

Goal: book a cleaning, any weekday after four.

Goal: _____

Facts I might need. An account or reference number, my date of birth, the date and amount on a bill, the days I'm free.

_____ _____

_____ _____

"I know what I want. I'll find the rest on the call."

1 **Open the call with your one line.**

Good afternoon, Lakeview Dental, this is Rosa.

Hi, I'd like to book a cleaning, please.

If they transfer you, you just say your one line again.

2 **The curveball. Said the wrong thing? Fix it, without hanging up.**

And are you a new patient?

Yes, Tuesday. Sorry, I mean yes, I'm new.

And notice that the call is still going.

3 **Confirm the time and say goodbye. Short is plenty.**

Great, Thursday at four-thirty. Thanks, bye.

A goodbye on a call is usually that short, and nobody on the other end wants a longer one.

THE CALL I'VE BEEN PUTTING OFF

Who: _____ **By when:** _____

☐ wrote my one line ☐ made the call ☐ left a voicemail or sent a text

When the call goes off script

A CALL TO A TEAMMATE

Open with an availability check. Asking first gives them an easy way to say "not now."

Hi Sam, got two minutes? I've got a quick question about the client deck.

Can I call you back in ten?

Sure, talk then.

WHEN YOU BLANK

A truthful stalling line covers it. You don't need a cover story. Needing a second is normal, and people on phones hear it all day.

Sorry, give me a second to think.

WHEN NOBODY PICKS UP: A VOICEMAIL HAS THREE PARTS

1. Who you are _____

2. Why you're calling _____

3. How to reach you _____

Hi, it's me, calling about the apartment on Hoyne. I'm free after five. My number's…

Then your number, said slowly. Rambling after the tone? **"Sorry, long message. Short version: please call me back."** Or skip the message. For a business, trying again tomorrow is a fine plan. For a friend, a text works: **"Tried you. I'll call later."**

SAYING NO, ON THE PHONE OR ANYWHERE

The clean no

I can't take that on.

The no with warmth

That sounds really fun. I'm going to sit this one out.

The not-now

Not this month. Ask me again in May.

Say one sentence, with a reason if it helps them, then stop. If they push: **"I hear you. It's still a no for me."** Saying no is a skill. It gets easier with reps.

WHEN IT'S YOUR MANAGER: LESS A NO, MORE A QUESTION ABOUT PRIORITIES

1. Name your plate

I'm on the April study through the end of the month.

2. Ask which should move

If this comes first, what should slip?

3. Confirm what you agreed

Okay, so I'll pause the survey and start this Monday.

The one-line meeting agenda

You don't need the perfect moment or the perfect point. You need **one sentence, out loud,** a little earlier than feels comfortable. Once your voice has been in the room, even for one sentence, the next one is easier.

MY AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING

Meeting: _____ **When:** _____

My one sentence: _____

☐ said it out loud ☐ said it early ☐ posted a real point in the chat instead

Three low-stakes ways in

BUILD ON A POINT

Adding to what Priyanka said, the same thing happened with the spring order.

ASK TO CLARIFY

Just to check, is the deadline the fifteenth or the end of the month?

SUM IT UP

So it sounds like we agree on the design, and the open question is who owns testing?

The harder one: an actual idea

What if we tried a two-week pilot first?

"What if" makes it an offer, not a demand. It leaves room for people to add to it or poke at it.

What if _____

On a screen, and when you get talked over

Unmute a little early when the topic heads your way, or open with **"Quick thought."** Hide your self-view if you can.

"I'd like to finish that thought." Or afterwards: **"I didn't get to finish my point on budget. Here it is."**

This week

Say one thing out loud in one meeting. At the start, in the middle, or at the very end, whenever feels workable. A question counts. So does a summary, or a "What if." If speaking feels like too much right now, post one real point in the chat instead. Skip the thumbs-up and write an actual thought. A mixed result from speaking up is worth far more than a perfect idea that never left your notebook.

Closing the Tab routine

For the midnight rerun. You don't have to win the argument with it. You just have to close the tab and let the night be yours again.

1. **Find somewhere to sit or stand still.**
   Your bed, a bench outside the bar, the bathroom at home. If you're driving, cycling or walking, save this for when you've stopped somewhere safe.

2. **One slow breath.**
   In. Two. Three. Four. Out. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. If counting feels uncomfortable, skip the numbers and just breathe the way you normally do.

3. **Name one thing that went okay.**
   It can be tiny. "I showed up" counts. "I said hello to one person" counts.

4. **One thing you might try next time. One. Not a list.**
   "Ask one follow-up question." Or simply "nothing to fix," which is a completely valid answer.

5. **Picture a browser tab with the name of the evening on it. See the little X in the corner.**

   Tuesday meeting × | Maya's party ×

   "Closed for tonight."

When it comes back

An hour later, the next morning in the shower, two days later in the elevator. That's normal. Say it once, then go back to the toast, the email, the shower.

"Noted. Already closed."

Kind, out loud

What a good friend would say. Both halves are true. You're allowed to keep both.

"That was a bit awkward, and you went anyway."

THE EVENING	ONE THING THAT WENT OKAY	ONE THING TO TRY NEXT TIME	CLOSED
			☐
			☐
			☐

The 30-day reps tracker

Plan one deliberate rep a week, something you choose on purpose that stretches you a little. In between, use ordinary life. If you miss a week, don't double up. Restart with something easier, a hello or one comment to a cashier.

Week 1
DAYS 1 TO 7

My deliberate rep: _____

When: _____ **One thing that went okay:** _____

Next notch, if it felt almost boring: _____

☐ did it ☐ part of it ☐ restarted smaller

Week 2
DAYS 8 TO 14

My deliberate rep: _____

When: _____ **One thing that went okay:** _____

Next notch, if it felt almost boring: _____

☐ did it ☐ part of it ☐ restarted smaller

Week 3
DAYS 15 TO 21

My deliberate rep: _____

When: _____ **One thing that went okay:** _____

Next notch, if it felt almost boring: _____

☐ did it ☐ part of it ☐ restarted smaller

Week 4
DAYS 22 TO 30

My deliberate rep: _____

When: _____ **One thing that went okay:** _____

Next notch, if it felt almost boring: _____

☐ did it ☐ part of it ☐ restarted smaller

Pick from the book's reps for the week

Listen fully to one sentence and catch the word that pulls at you. Use one opener, once, anywhere. End one conversation on purpose, with an exit line. Say one thing out loud in one meeting. After one social event, do the Closing the Tab routine once. And when a rep starts to feel almost boring, turn the dial one notch.

Thirty days, one word at a time

Tick the day if you did any rep at all. It counts whatever the response: a big smile, a one-word answer, an earbud going back in. If you like, jot down the one word that pulled at you. The word is enough.

1 WEEK 1 ☐ THE WORD	2 ☐ THE WORD	3 ☐ THE WORD	4 ☐ THE WORD	5 ☐ THE WORD
6 ☐ THE WORD	7 ☐ THE WORD	8 WEEK 2 ☐ THE WORD	9 ☐ THE WORD	10 ☐ THE WORD
11 ☐ THE WORD	12 ☐ THE WORD	13 ☐ THE WORD	14 ☐ THE WORD	15 WEEK 3 ☐ THE WORD
16 ☐ THE WORD	17 ☐ THE WORD	18 ☐ THE WORD	19 ☐ THE WORD	20 ☐ THE WORD
21 ☐ THE WORD	22 WEEK 4 ☐ THE WORD	23 ☐ THE WORD	24 ☐ THE WORD	25 ☐ THE WORD
26 ☐ THE WORD	27 ☐ THE WORD	28 ☐ THE WORD	29 ☐ THE WORD	30 ☐ THE WORD

Lines worth stealing

One clear repair, then move on. None of these have to sound smooth. People hear the courtesy. They don't grade the delivery.

BEFORE YOU GO IN

That's enough. I'll find the rest there.

YOUR MIND GOES BLANK

Sorry, I lost my thread. Can you say the last part again?

A SENTENCE FALLS APART

I've completely lost where that was going. Anyway, you were saying?

YOU TALK OVER SOMEONE

Sorry, I cut you off. Go on.

IT COMES OUT WRONG

That came out wrong, sorry.

YOU FORGOT THEIR NAME

I'm so sorry, tell me your name again?

THE QUIET KEEPS GOING

Wait, you said you taught Maya to drive?

YOU NEED A SECOND

Sorry, give me a second to think.

YOU GET TALKED OVER

Sorry, one more second, I'm almost done.

SOMEONE PUSHES ON YOUR NO

I hear you. It's still a no for me.

THE RERUN STARTS TONIGHT

Noted. Not now.

IT COMES BACK TOMORROW

Noted. Already closed.

The test for anything you want to say

Is it kind? Is it roughly on topic? If yes, it's good enough to say. Say the seventy-percent version. **"Kind and on topic is good enough."**

One clean sorry

If you apologize three times, the other person has to start looking after you. One clean sorry is kind. Three is a job you're handing to them.

When it was more than a slip

Name what you did, plainly, then listen. **"I've been thinking about what I said about your job. That was thoughtless. Sorry."**

FROM THE CONCLUSION

Your own door



Text one person a specific, low-key suggestion. A day and a place. Send it once. Put the phone down. Or go to one public thing on your own, and decide your first small move before you leave. If that's too much, start with the hello.

I'm getting coffee at the place on Damen Saturday morning. Want to come?

My plan: _____

THE KIT PAGE, FREE

kalderno.com/smalltalk

Scan it to get this kit again, to print a fresh copy, and for more from Mariah Renner. If the book helped you, a rating on Spotify helps the next listener find it.

One honest note. If your anxiety is persistent, if it causes you real distress, if it's keeping you from things you care about, or if it comes with panic, it's worth talking to a doctor or a therapist. And if you're ever in crisis, or having thoughts of harming yourself, don't wait for an appointment. Call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US. This kit can sit right alongside that kind of help. It doesn't replace it.

OUT

Where your attention goes. Back to their words, and the next one that pulls at you.

CURIOUS

The question you're asking. Not "How am I doing?" but "Who is this person?"

KIND

How you treat yourself while it's happening, and after. Look once, then close the tab.

So take the nerves with you. And knock.