

Quick Guide: Don't blurt it out!

You know how it goes – your brain thinks it, and out it pops before you realise it. Sometimes it can be difficult to “bite your tongue”, especially if you aren't in the habit! But that's all it is, really, a habit. Luckily, there are some techniques you can use to break the habit, so here are the **top ten tips** to help you stay in control:

- 1. Pause. (The hardest bit.)** Start listening to your inner self and when that thought or “smart comment” comes into your head, pause. The pause should give you just enough time to say to yourself “Think! Do you really want to say this out loud?”.
- 2. Re-frame what the other person has just said.** Often, if we simply repeat what they have said, they will keep talking and we can be quiet, giving us time to reframe what we want to say.
- 3. Soften your voice,** so you sound gentler and less emotional. Often our emotions take hold and we can sound sarcastic, whiny or shrill – depending on our voice and what emotional baggage we are carrying around with us.
- 4. Find a constructive reason to move away,** perhaps to find some information or a file, or to speak to someone else.
- 5. Ask for time to respond.** Sometimes we think an immediate answer is required, yet often that “on the spot” answer isn't the best one. Consider asking for a minute (hour/day) to think it through before getting back to them. This then gives you time to think more clearly and formulate your response.
- 6. Write it down.** You become more objective when you read your own words. It's as if you were a neutral observer, and puts some distance between you the writer and you the person. This distance makes you more detached and better able to handle the situation more calmly.
- 7. Consider your options.** Write down, or at least think through, at least four possibilities. Then consider the consequences of each, and which one you want to go for. If you are writing this down, it will re-engage your left brain (language) and allow your right brain (emotion) a chance to slow down.
- 8. One of your options may be to do nothing.** This is a perfectly fine response. Sometimes it's the best response.
- 9. If you decide to say something** and it doesn't have the desired effect, don't beat yourself up – you gave it a considered, calm approach!
- 10. Remember** that you can always choose to say tomorrow what you didn't say today, but you can never “un-say” what you have already said.

Compiled by Des Whitehorn