

Keynote

The hidden power of smiling, Ron Gutman

B1–C2

Discussion

1 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- 1 How much do you smile? Do you think other people think you smile a lot?
- 2 What (or who) makes you smile? Why?
- 3 In what professions is someone's facial expression – including their smile – particularly important?
- 4 Is it possible to smile too much? Why / Why not?

Key words

2 Work in pairs. Follow the instructions.

- 1 Student A, try to make B smile. Student B, try to **suppress** your smile. Swap roles.
- 2 Student B, try smiling in different ways. Student A, try to **mimic** your partner's smiles. Swap roles.

3 Work in pairs. Choose the best motivational message(s) for the staffroom of a customer service department. Discuss the reasons for your choice.

- a A smile is **contagious** – pass it along!
- b Customer service is an attitude. Customers can tell a **fake** smile from a real one.
- c Every human culture **expresses** joy by using the same language – the language of smiling.
- d Given a choice between a smiling person and one who is **frowning**, who would you approach?
- e Your level of customer care is measured in the **span** of your smile.

4 Match the words in bold in Exercises 2 and 3 with these definitions.

- 1 false _____
- 2 spreading quickly from one person to another, like a disease _____
- 3 copy someone's behaviour, voice or facial expression _____
- 4 length _____
- 5 shows _____
- 6 showing unhappiness, anger or concentration by bringing your eyebrows down and closer together _____
- 7 stop yourself feeling or showing an emotion _____

Comprehension

5 Watch Ron Gutman's TED Talk, *The hidden power of smiling*, on TED.com. Then decide if these statements are true or false.

- 1 When he was a child, Ron Gutman wanted superpowers. _____
- 2 A study in California looked at the relationship between people's smiles in their old college yearbooks and their future success. _____
- 3 Baseball players who didn't smile in their pictures lived longer than players who had big, beaming smiles. _____
- 4 According to Gutman, we learn to smile from our parents. _____
- 5 Different cultures use smiles to express different emotions. _____
- 6 Children smile on average more than adults. _____
- 7 If you put a pencil in your mouth it is harder to judge whether another person's smile is real or fake. _____
- 8 Smiling shows happiness, but Darwin suggested that smiling can make you happy, too. _____

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9 According to Gutman, studies have found that one smile stimulates the brain almost as much as a bar of chocolate. _____

The big idea

6 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- 1 Ron Gutman's claims that smiling is a superpower. In what ways is it a superpower?
- 2 Look at the following pieces of evidence that he uses to support his point. Which are the most convincing, in your opinion?
 - a the research comparing people's smiles and their later lives
 - b the information about babies smiling
 - c the information about smiling in different cultures
 - d the information about how often people smile
 - e the research about how smiling affects other people
 - f the evidence that smiling stimulates the brain
- 3 Overall, are you convinced by his argument that smiling is so 'super'?

Language focus – talking about smiling

7 A customer service manager wrote the following notes while listening to the TED Talk. Watch the talk again from 1.54–4.52 and put the notes in order (1–6).

- a If we're having a bad day at work, we can make ourselves feel better if we try to smile. _____
- b It will be harder for customers to frown if we smile. _____
- c If our customers smile, it usually means they are satisfied with our service. _____
- d Smiling is an effective way of communicating with everyone, no matter where they are from. **1**
- e People who work in customer service could learn something from children. _____
- f We can use smiling to help us understand how our customers are feeling. _____

8 Complete the sentences with a word from the TED Talk. The first letter is given for you.

- 1 Baseball players with b_____ smiles lived an average of almost eighty years.
- 2 Smiling is one of the most basic, biologically uniform e_____ of all humans.
- 3 We use smiles to express j_____ and s_____.
- 4 It's difficult to f_____ when looking at someone who smiles ... Because smiling is evolutionarily c_____.
- 5 Mimicking a smile and experiencing it p_____ helps us understand the emotional s_____ of the smiler.
- 6 It's hard to determine whether a smile is r_____ or fake while holding a pencil in your mouth. The pencil represses your own smiling m_____.
- 7 The a_____ of smiling itself actually makes us feel b_____.

9 Check your answers with the transcript.

Speaking

10 Read about the customer service training at the Blue Water Spa. Then discuss the questions in groups.

The Blue Water Spa is an oasis of good customer care, where our clients can expect the highest level of service throughout their stay. Employees are regularly coached in developing their people skills. They practise being friendly and courteous – at reception, on the phone, and in all client interactions. One simple trick we use is to put mirrors in front of phones so that employees can see themselves when they talk to customers, raising awareness of body language and facial expression. Staff also have a list of 'cue words' that they learn to say with a smile on their face, such as 'Good evening!',

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'Thank you', and 'Certainly'. Here at Blue Water we understand that in the caring industry customers value care above all.

- 1 Which industries require particularly 'smiley' customer care?
- 2 Do you think you and your colleagues smile enough? Why / Why not?
- 3 What other 'people skills' are required when dealing with customers?
- 4 Is it possible to train employees to smile more? If so, how can companies encourage it? If not, why not?
- 5 Which 'cue words' would it be useful to identify in your work life where you could smile?
- 6 When is smiling inappropriate?