



# Spark Up the talk. yourself.

## Why is in-person interaction important?

Face-to-face contact triggers the release of the hormone of trust oxytocin and reduces the levels of cortisol resulting in better stress control in the long run.

Susan Pinker, a renowned psychologist, claims that social integration plays a very significant role when it comes to our overall happiness and longevity. The key lies in combining close relationships with more casual encounters (e.g. talking to the shop assistant, postman, neighbor etc.).

## Should I completely avoid online communication?

Understandably, some of us prefer online meetings and texting for its efficiency. It is easier to come straight to the point in an online communication than in a face-to-face interaction.

It is desirable to opt for offline communication if we can. That, however, is not always possible and there are situations where one way is more suitable - e.g. a quick work request through email is often more time efficient.

When it comes to longer meetings (personal or professional) a physical meeting is worth considering.

The vast majority of human communication is represented by non-verbal cues. These are obviously omitted during online communication which can lead to miscommunication that could have been avoided in face-to-face interaction. Additionally, it is far easier to form a trust bond in person.

In case the time factor plays a big role for you, here are some tips on how to keep an in-person meeting efficient:

- **Prepare beforehand** (figure out what you want to talk about, what is your stand)
- **Think of the reason why you are meeting** (what is it you want to achieve)
- **Set expectations** (approx. how long are you planning to meet)
- **Listen** (actively, ask appropriate questions)
- **Limit unnecessary chatter** (applicable mostly for work-related meetings)

## Body language signals to remember

### Handshake

Weak, overly strong or awkward handshake does not leave a positive impression. Instead, follow these rules to master the perfect handshake technique:

- Good eye contact
- Genuine smile
- An extended arm with a slight bend at the elbow
- Fingers pointing downward while approaching the other person's hand
- Steady and confident (but not too strong) grip of the other person's hand
- Slight forward lean
- Release after 1-2 seconds





### Mirroring

This type of body language happens when the other person unintentionally repeats your movements, posture, gestures. This implies the person's interest in you and creates the impression of similarity and understanding.

### Eye contact

People tend to blink less when they observe something interesting, therefore longer eye contact indicates attention and curiosity. However, be aware that extremely intense eye contact shows aggression and territoriality.

### Tilted head

By tilting the head we expose our neck, which is one of the most vulnerable parts of our body. This movement indicates, that the person is very comfortable in our proximity. Especially women use this body language to show they are attracted to someone.

### Crossed ankles (sitting or standing)

This position usually means closedness and discomfort. However, one exception to this is sitting with fully outstretched legs and having crossed ankles. This, on the other hand, is a relaxed posture.

### Hand clasping

This behaviour is connected with seeking comfort. It is a reminder of the feeling when we held hands with our parents as kids. Therefore, we usually clasp hands if we feel anxious or nervous.

### Neck rubbing

People tend to rub their necks when they feel stressed or insecure. For some, it is a way to relieve stress. Additionally, those who do this habitually, supposedly tend to be more negative and critical.

### Rubbing eyes

Rubbing eyes can be observed as a quite subtle or a more obvious gesture. It helps people to calm down, therefore we can see this in stressful, difficult situations. However, be aware that this gesture is also quite natural sign of fatigue. It is also more common for men because women might avoid it to protect their eye makeup.

Obviously, the topic is way more extensive than this. Find further information here:



### How to spark up the conversation?

#### At an exhibition:

**„Hello, sorry to interrupt, but I was just wondering...“**

- What brings you to this event today?
- Do you know a lot of people here?
- I really like this project. What do you think about it?
- I think the theme of the exhibition is very creative..
- What is your favourite project here?
- How did you hear about the event?
- Did you try the kombucha (or other appropriate drink) here? I love it..
- What's your favourite drink?
- Have you seen the previous year's exhibition?
- I love your outfit, where did you get it?
- How do you know PCU?
- Can you recommend/did you try any of these drinks?
- What do you study/what's your occupation?
- Have you seen the student presentations prior to this?
- Which project has had the biggest impact on you?
- Are you a designer yourself?
- Who is your favourite graphic designer? I love...
- What is your favourite part of your job/degree?
- Did you hear about the [insert fitting news]?
- Do you study here at PCU?
- Do you know the author of this project?  
I think they did a great job!
- What a nice event tonight, don't you think?
- Have you seen \_\_\_\_\_ project? It's really cool.
- What do you think about the message of this project?
- Are you originally from Prague, or did you come because of work/school?



**More universal/silly conversation starters:**

**Excuse me, I have this silly question to ask you:**

- Do you ever sing in the shower?
- Who is your favorite comedian?
- If you could move anywhere, where would you go?
- What’s your favorite restaurant around here?
- What is one thing that made you laugh this week?
- Are you a morning person or a night owl?
- Which song would you make you dance immediately?
- What’s your best cooking tip?
- What’s the weirdest thing in your fridge right now?
- Where is your favorite place to shop?
- What’s your favorite movie that you could watch over and over again?
- If you could do anything illegal without getting in trouble, what would it be?
- What’s the weirdest dream you’ve had recently?
- What superpower do you wish you had?
- Would you ever try bungee jumping?
- Where is the most beautiful place you have been?
- What’s your favorite season? Why? I like..
- What would you choose: a luxurious car or house of your dreams?

**Side effects**

- Getting bored less often as a result of finding new friends
- Initial anxiety (should gradually retreat)

**Benefits**

- Better stress control in the long term
- Gradual improvement in:
  - ✓ Confidence
  - ✓ Spontaneity
  - ✓ Creativity
  - ✓ Empathy
- Quicker emotional connection with the person you are talking to
- Quicker formation of trust
- Higher susceptibility to non-verbal cues
- Better mental health as a result of positive hormones and neurotransmitters released in your brain
- Longer life
- Formation of new relationships
- Enabling easier persuasion

**In case of major topic shortage**

- Talk about the Spark Up project

**Icebreaker games**

Activities



Purchase inspo

