

WomenSpeak Negative Patterns

Don't fall into these **WomenSpeak patterns** that can weaken your credibility & commitment to your message:

1. **Upspeak**-putting a question at the end of a statement. "The budget estimate is \$10,000?" Instead, the budget estimate is \$10,000.
2. **Overusing the word "try"**. "I'll try to get the budget to you by 11am tomorrow." Instead, "I'll have the budget to you by 11am tomorrow."
3. **Negative Qualifiers**. Words or word groups that limit or diminish the meaning of another word, or phrase such as: *may, might, could, probably, possibly, doubtful that, not 100% sure*, making you sound unsure and weak.
4. **Disclaimers**. Phrases stating an excuse, explanation or need confirmation of understanding: "You're not going to like this", "This is probably a stupid question" (no question is stupid, or dumb), "I didn't want to tell you this, but..." Introductory negative phrases like these show lack of confidence and uncertainty.
5. **Endless apologizing**. Saying the words "I'm sorry" when you wronged someone, or something is your fault and you want to apologize is certainly appropriate. Women, however, have put this/these words into everyday use excessively and it carries over into your work. Don't apologize for your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. And, don't apologize if someone bumps into you—that's not your fault!
6. **Excessive agreeing "head nod"**. Women tend to nod in agreement in meetings, audiences, classes, and social settings more out of habit than really agreeing with what is being said. Men come to expect it and use it to their advantage.
7. **Belittle yourself**. You're asked how you thought your presentation was received and you say, "I don't know. I did my best but I'm not sure it was enough." Instead, say "Good, it was well received."
8. **Using fillers**. We all use "like", "um", and "uh" at times. But, too frequent use can indicate lack of preparation and uncertainty.
9. **Laughing at inappropriate times**. Some women habitually laugh at the end of their statements. This can signal nervousness, uneasiness and/or lack of confidence.
10. **Avoiding eye contact**. Good eye contact is a non-verbal good handshake. Look the person in the eye while you're talking.
11. **Distracting hand gestures**. Natural gestures are an important part of effective communication and using them to make a point or motivate someone is a powerful way to enhance your speaking. However, twirling your hair, wearing noisy bracelets, pen twirling, among others can diminish the strength of your delivery.
12. **Male "genderizing"**. Male "genderizing" occurs when you address an entire group of women, or a group including women, as "You guys"! Instead, use "everyone"/"everybody", Hi, Ok, etc.