

#4 Aren't I Smart and Aren't They Stupid?

This simple tool will greatly enhance your productivity and it involves very little effort.

by **Marshall Goldsmith**

As you work your way through my video series and written blogs, you are going to hear about a number of personal flaws that none of us are immune to. In the course of reviewing this material, you may recognize yourself. You may say, "That's me!" or "I do that all the time. I had no idea I was coming across that way."

Some of these bad habits are hard to admit to ourselves, but if you get a little nudge of self-recognition, that's a good start. Even better is to admit it might be a problem. Not many people do this as a rule, but if you're watching this blog series and reading these articles, you may be one of the few. Better still is to take corrective action to mend your ways. These are the gold star people. These are people who are on the fast track toward becoming even better leaders.

The bad habit I'm going to discuss now is another variation on our need to win. It is telling the world how smart we are, how dumb someone else is, or listening to someone else do this. A question I've asked more than 100,000 people is: What percent of all interpersonal communication time is spent on a) someone talking about how smart they are or listening to someone else do that plus b) talking about how stupid someone else is or listening to someone else do that? The answer? Right about 65 percent!

Now here's the real test: How many of you feel more busy and under more pressure than you've felt in your whole lives? Most people answer this question with a resounding "I do!" Not to

worry, you are not alone. Most of us feel this way. If I were to give you a productivity enhancement tool that would help you save some time and that would definitely increase your efficiency, would your ears perk up? I bet they would.

Here is the productivity enhancement tool – REDUCE THAT NUMBER! How much do you learn talking about how smart you are? Nothing. How much do you learn listening to somebody else do that? Zip! How much do you learn talking about how dumb everyone else is or listening to someone else do that? Absolutely zero.

If you can stop yourself in these seemingly minor moments with someone who works closely with you and presumably knows you well—in other words, when nothing is at stake and you don't have to flex your "I'm a winner" muscles—you have the skill to stop telling the world how smart you are. And, if you can say, "Excuse me" when the gossip and ego-stroking starts, and get back to your desk, you are well on your way to reducing that number.

Dr. Marshall Goldsmith was selected as the #1 Executive Coach in the World by GlobalGurus.org, and one of the 10 Most Influential Management Thinkers in the World by Thinkers50 in both 2011 and 2013. He was also selected as the World's Most Influential Leadership Thinker in 2011. Marshall was the highest rated executive coach on the Thinkers50 List in both 2011 and 2013. What Got You Here Won't Get You There was listed as a top ten business bestseller for 2013 by INC Magazine / 800 CEO Read (for the seventh consecutive year). Marshall's exciting new research on engagement is published in his newest book Triggers (Crown, 2015).

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