

SPEECH ACTS

I. Language is Action.

"Language is action – to speak is to act." – Chalmers Brothers, *Language and the Pursuit of Happiness*.

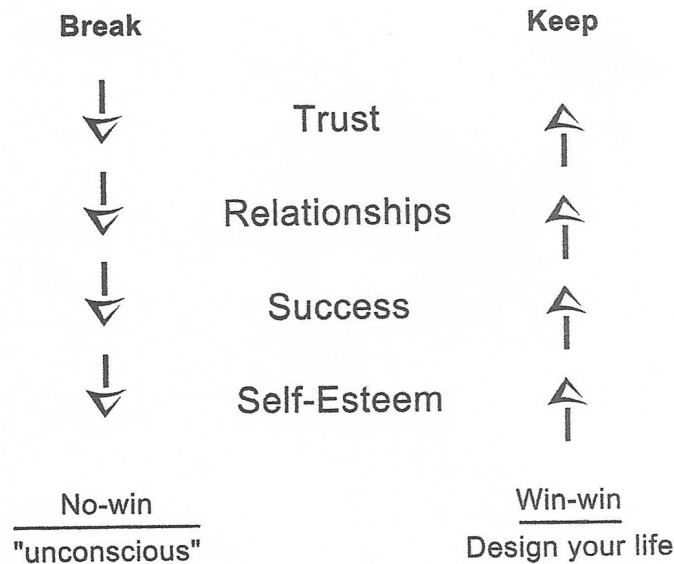
Language is how we coordinate action, and so it is also coordinated action. It not only conveys information but also commitment. (pp. 29-31)

II. Speech Acts.

- **Assertions:** a fact, true or false, black and white. Example: "I am a woman."
- **Assessments** (a special type of declaration): subjective statements, opinions, judgments. Assessments reveal how the speaker relates to the world or a specific event. Neither true nor false. Example: "The room is spacious."
- **Declarations:** Out of nothingness, the speaker brings forth a new world of possibilities, a new way of seeing things, a new playing field on which to play. Example: "America will put a man on the moon within this decade." – JFK.
- **Requests and Offers:** A creative act, because it puts into motion new actions and new commitments. Elements of an effective request (or offer, see below):
 - **Committed Speaker** – Be grounded in your request, and start by saying, "I have a request I want to make," to give the listener/receiver and verbal cue.
 - **Committed Listener** – Giving full attention and ready to receive the request.
 - **Future Action and Conditions of Satisfaction** – Stating clearly and in detail exactly what you want and how the listener will know if the request is fulfilled. Not insulting their intelligence with too much information. A balance.
 - **Timeframe** – A clear statement of when you would like the request to be fulfilled.
 - **Mood of the Request** – The right conversation in the wrong mood space is the wrong conversation. How we state our request, as well as what is happening internally, effect the effectiveness of the request.
 - **Context** – A brief bit of background information that allow the request to be framed.

- **Promises, Commitments and Agreements:** When a request or offer is followed by a declaration of “Yes”. It’s not possible to keep 100% of the promises, commitments, and agreements that we make. DON’T ignore a broken promise. Openly acknowledge what has occurred. Broken promises can erode relationships.

Agreements



- **“Be Impeccable with Your Word”** – From *The Four Agreements*. Don Miguel Ruiz. In this context, being impeccable doesn’t mean that we should keep every promise. It does mean that we take responsibility and actively manage our commitments.
- **Be strong in your responses.** Effective responses will be one of the following:
 - **Accept** – yes, a promise
 - **Decline** – no, no promise made
 - **Commit-to-Commit** – replying within a specified time. “Let me pray on it. I’ll get back to you by Tuesday.”
 - **Counter-offer** – a decline of the original offer/request with the original conditions coupled with an offer to accept if certain conditions change. “I don’t want to chair the committee, but I’d be happy to be treasurer.”