

# THE ART OF ACCEPTING COMPLIMENTS

IT'S TIME WE ALL LEARNT HOW TO ENJOY AND RECEIVE THE GIFT OF A KIND COMMENT



WORDS: JOANNE WILSON

**Y**ou must be feeling incredibly appreciated, astonishingly good looking and, oh, so fabulous today.

I bet that spring in your step is just a little bouncier today and your grin even wider than Luna Park.

I can't imagine how fulfilled and contented you must be just for knowing you're acknowledged for the stamp you're making on this world.

Why on earth would that be? Why, it was World Compliment Day yesterday.

I'm assuming you also surprised and delighted your fellow human beings as you shared the beautiful feeling of well-being.

Who thinks of a World Compliment Day?

Some guy in the Netherlands thought it was a good idea to come up with the most positive day in the world. If that's true, good on you, Hans – I'm all for it.

There's nothing I like better than positive reinforcement to rock my world.

It could be that lovely Helen at the local pool telling me she read and liked my article, my husband saying I look really pretty in that dress or my little tykes exclaiming their spag bol is amazing.

I just want to do a massive "Oh what a feeling" Toyota jump on those days.

I then find myself generating even more tributes to others, too. It has a ripple effect.

Yet so many of us at times in our life have enormous difficulty and feel incredibly awkward receiving the verbal gift of a compliment.

It's no different to my bestie carefully selecting a well-thought-out gift of a book from my favourite author and wrapping it beautifully.

Excitedly she presents it, and I despondently say, "No thanks, take it back."

What the heck? How hurt and disappointed would she be?

How can we learn to enjoy and receive the gift of a compliment to practise for next World Compliment Day and the 364 in between?

Firstly, reasons why we deflect them include lack of self-acceptance from low self-esteem, shame and guilt, anxiety,



depression, perfectionism and narcissism.

We can suffer some real hard knocks and make some ridiculous choices in quick succession.

Some people were raised hearing the theme, "You'll never be good enough". No wonder, then, you'd have trouble believing there's something worthwhile to say about the person you so often dislike: you.

We go to great effort to deflect compliments such as denying them, arguing the case, diluting them, insulting ourselves in response or transferring the credit to someone else. Some even question the sincerity of the compliment-giver.

You know you secretly relish the thought of praise for that delicious lemon cake you made, the new contract you signed off at

work or for scaling Mt Coolum five times in a row.

With thanks to the Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors, they suggest we try this instead:

- Smile graciously, return eye contact, and say, "thank you".
- Relax and breathe: it might be uncomfortable at the start, but intentionally breathe your way through it as you gain confidence.
- Add some additional relevant intel: "Thanks, I got the recipe from..."
- Avoid a "boomerang" compliment in return as may seem insincere and de-values the gift you've just been given.
- Value-add: After your "thank you", convey your appreciation for them saying that.

● Be honest and optimistic. So what if your praised project isn't finished? Don't focus on what it's not yet but what it will be.

● Ask a question. Why not genuinely ask what specifically they like about your outfit?

● Practise dishing out compliments: Intentionally notice the wonderful attributes in others and share it in a timely fashion. It's likely they'll remember it for a long, long time.

Here's your first chance to practise: I love the way you read my article.

*Joanne is a neuropsychologist and relationship specialist of TheConfidante Counselling. Contact Jo at [www.theconfidantecounselling.com](http://www.theconfidantecounselling.com).*