

Working Against Hostility

1. If you are overly hostile, certainly the most important measure you should adopt is one in which you remind yourself that you are hostile. Being forewarned, you are far less inclined to flare up at any stimulus short of one that would induce hostility in anybody.
Try throughout the day to enhance your awareness of the wants and needs of your friends as you simultaneously strive to diminish your own sensitivity to possible affronts. No one who is him/herself certain of security wishes to undermine the security of another, remember that as you develop your sensibility and reduce your sensitivity, your hostility will gradually fall away.
2. Begin to speak your thanks and appreciation to others when they have performed services for you. And do not do so, like so many hostile people, with merely a grunt of thanks. Take the time to look the person who has served you well full in the face and then in full and gracious sentences let them know how grateful you are.
This may be a difficult task for you to perform. You may not be grateful for a favor, or you may feel too “shy” to express your appreciation. It is under these latter circumstances that you should probe for the causes of such reluctance. You might begin to realize that part of the reason for your hostility springs from your own inability to believe in the innate goodness of others.
3. Quit talking about your ideals and your disappointments in finding so few ideals in other people. Most so-called “idealists” are frustrated and hostile little gods who have taken it upon themselves to draw up their own “rules” for life’s living and get angry when other people pay no attention. So, if you pride yourself on your “idealism” and have condemned other people for their lack of it, go back and reread item 1. After having done so, if you still find you have some glorious rules to live by call them principles and stop inflicting them on others.
4. Begin to smile at as many people as often as you can. Begin first to smile regularly and frequently at the persons you meet in corridors and elevators of your building. Simultaneously begin to smile at people whom you may encounter while walking in the city or in your own neighborhood. This may appear to you to be contrived, but that will be true only if you fail to find the qualities in other people that might command your respect, admiration, or affection. Of course, the more often you succeed in this, the freer you become of the tyranny of your own hostility. We can’t explain precisely why sincere smiling so effectively appeases the wrath of hostile people; we only know that it does.