

“THIS IS A GREAT BOOK!
Tongue Fu! puts a new twist on
communication. Everyone should read it!”

JOHN GRAY,
Author of *Men Are from Mars,*
Women Are from Venus

Tongue

Fu!



Get Along
Better With
Anyone,
Anytime,
Anywhere.

Sam Horn

Author of *What's Holding You Back?* and *ConZentrate*

TONGUE FU!®

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Sam Horn

FEEDBACK TO *TONGUE FU!*®

“Sam Horn is a verbal black belt who knows how to counter oral attacks . . . *Tongue Fu!*® doesn’t explain how to defeat opponents with linguistic karate chops. Instead, it teaches how to kill conflict with kindness.”—*The Seattle Times*

“This self-help book focuses on communication—specifically, how to see through your anger, embarrassment, and frustration to deal constructively with other people. Anecdotes and action plans... enliven the book.”—*Honolulu Star Bulletin*

“By focusing on real-life responses to verbal challenges instead of theories and platitudes, the author has delivered a convenient handbook for the mental martial art of verbal self-protection. Horn’s book is a lively, positive guide that can be returned to time and again. A popular title for all public library collections.”—*Library Journal*

“Looking for just the right words to cut your opponents off at the knees? Ms. Horn will probably convince you there’s a better way. She teaches tactics for handling bullies, complainers, rude children, and angry people of every stripe. Her weapons are kindness, empathy, and a bit of detachment. Her anecdotes get to the bottom of conflicts with the same humor she urges on her readers.”—*Dallas Morning News*

“If you use the strategies outlined by Horn, *Tongue Fu!*® will change your attitude and the attitude of others. It will also change the way others treat you. This book is filled with diplomatic ways to deflect conflicts.”—*Foreign Service Journal*

“*Tongue Fu!*® is practical and sensible, frequently reminding the reader that it’s often not what you say, but how you say it. It’s a guide on how to be nice in a not-so-nice world, and how to view fellow human beings as cohorts rather than competitors. With *Tongue Fu!*® your verbal conflicts are sure to be licked.”—*Successful Meetings*

“Practical, powerful, simple yet scientific strategies to correct common mistakes that create tension, turmoil, and unhappiness. Sam Horn has written an amazingly clear and concise self-help book to turn almost any personal problem into an opportunity for growth and success!” —Harold Bloomfield, M.D., author of *Making Peace with Yourself* and *The Power of 5*.

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Cool Gus Publishing



First Printing: Printed in the United States of America. For information,
address St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010.

Design by Sara Stemen

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Horn, Sam.

Tongue Fu!® how to deflect, disarm, and defuse any verbal conflict by Sam
Horn. — 1st ed. p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

DEDICATION

“When you drink the water; remember the well.” – Chinese proverb

May this book serve as a living legacy to my parents, Warren and Ruth Reed, who served as the original role model for these principles on how to live in integrity and do and say the right thing.

. . . and to my sons, Tom and Andrew Horn, who have the lights on in their eyes, who are doing work they love that matters and who are such a source of joy to me and everyone they know.

... and to my sister, Cheri Grimm for being the constant in my life. I treasure our fifty-plus-year journey together, your ever-present support and for treating me and everyone in your life with the respect and kindness we all want, need and deserve.

... and to Christina Grimm, for helping me update this book and “currentize” it with Internet, social media and millennial examples and for bringing her Doctorate of Clinical Psychology expertise to the topic.

... and to our certified grads of the Tongue Fu!® Training Institute for spreading the good word of these communication skills worldwide. I am so grateful for all you do to help people learn and use these trade-marked techniques for how to turn conflicts into cooperation and get along better with just about anyone, anytime, anywhere.

INTRODUCTION

“People treat you the way you teach them to treat you.” – Jack Canfield

Have you ever had someone mistreat you and not known what to say or do?

Not fun, is it?

Want good news?

This book is going to teach you what to say and do when people mistreat you – and it’s going to teach you how to treat everyone you deal with more diplomatically so they’re motivated to respond *in kind*.

You’re about to learn how to deal with dozens of challenging situations – from what to say when someone is teasing you - to what to say when people are complaining, arguing or blaming you for something that’s not your fault. If someone is trying to intimidate or manipulate you; you’ll know how to hold them accountable. You’ll discover how to think on your feet and keep your cool under pressure. And you’ll know how to calmly, confidently ask for what you want so you get more of what you want, need and deserve.

Where Did Tongue Fu! Come From?

“Just because you know what you want – doesn’t mean you know how to make it happen.” – Dan Pink

Are you curious as to how Tongue Fu! got started?

Years ago, Dr. Ray Oshiro of UH-Hawaii asked me to present a public workshop on how to deal with difficult people. We had both noticed the same trend: people were increasingly having to deal with rude customers and co-workers ... and didn’t know how to respond. They knew what they wanted - to handle challenging situations more effectively – they just didn’t know how to make that happen.

I wanted to create original curriculum for the course, so I interviewed people from all walks of life. I asked, “What difficult situations do you face at work, at home and out and about in the community? What do people say or do that frustrates you, upsets you? How do you usually respond?”

Those interviews produced an epiphany. I now understood why many of us are woefully unprepared to handle difficult people - whether that’s a client throwing a tantrum, a boss criticizing us in front of our peers, or someone cutting in front of us in line at a theater.

We’re taught math, science and history in school – but *no one teaches us how to deal with everyday conflict*. No one teaches us what to say when someone insults us; cyber-bullies us or pulls a guilt trip. Since we don’t know what to do when someone is angry, argumentative or insensitive, we often end up RIK (Retaliating in Kind) or SIS (Suffering in Silence). Neither reaction helps.

My goal was to develop real-life responses so (finally!) we knew exactly what to say and do to defuse, deflect and disarm the stressful situations we have to deal with in our daily lives.

I wanted to develop the techniques we *wish* we’d been taught in school to confidently handle just about anything that comes up. I didn’t want to waste people’s time on ivory-tower theories that don’t work in the real world. Platitudes don’t help much when someone’s yelling or spreading gossip about you.

I knew I was on the right track one hour into that first seminar. At our morning break, one of the attendees didn’t leave his chair. He just sat there slowly nodding his head, gazing off into the distance. I walked over and asked what he was thinking about.

He said, “Sam, I’m a real estate broker. Several of my clients are extremely demanding and arrogant. They seem to think they can treat me any way they want. I’m tired of it. I took this course to learn some zingers to fire back and put them in their place. That’s not what this is about, is it?”

Glad that he had grasped the essence of the course so quickly, I agreed. “You’re right..”

He went on: “I’m a student of martial arts. I’ve studied karate, Tai Chi, aikido, and judo. What you’re suggesting is the *verbal* equivalent of kung fu, isn’t it?”

I said, “That’s true. It’s kind of like . . . *Tongue Fu!*”

We looked at each other and burst out laughing. Eureka! The perfect name.

Since then, I’ve offered thousands of workshops worldwide for a wide variety of groups including NASA, Young Presidents Organization, US Embassy in London, Amgen, the IRS, Boeing and the U.S. Navy.

Participants asked me to please write a book on the subject so they could share these ideas with their friends, family, and coworkers and refer to them again and again.

Tongue Fu®! has been translated into 17 languages (including Chinese and Japanese) and featured in *Investors Business Daily*, *Boston Globe*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Washington Post* and *Readers Digest* – **even on the TV show *To Tell the Truth***, where our *Tongue Fu*® team stumped the panel!

What *Tongue Fu*® is NOT!

“If you’re horrible to me, I’m going to write a song about it, and you won’t like that. That’s how I operate.” Taylor Swift, American Country Singer

Hmmm. Being horrible back to people who are horrible to us is not really what *Tongue Fu*® is about. This next story illustrates the philosophy *this book* is founded upon.

When *Tongue Fu*® came out originally, more than (gulp) 15 years ago, I had an opportunity to go on a media tour. I was on a flight and needed to double-check a quote in the book to make sure I had it right for a TV interview scheduled for early the next morning. I pulled out a copy of the book from my purse.

A woman across the aisle from me noticed the cover and YANKED the book out of my hands.

She said, “That looks interesting, Tell me what it’s about.”

“Well,” I said, somewhat taken aback by her brusque approach, “It’s how to deal with difficult people - without becoming one yourself.”

She harrumphed, “I could have used this book on the plane before this one. I was seated next to the most obnoxious man. I would have used your book. I would have HIT him with it.”

Hah. That is NOT what *Tongue Fu*® is about. When people are being unfair, unkind or inappropriate ... it’s not about getting back, getting mad or getting even.

It’s not about putting people in their place. It’s about putting ourselves in their place so we can respond with compassion instead of contempt.

It’s not about giving people a piece of our mind. It’s about giving ourselves peace of mind by knowing how to handle challenges in the moment, instead of thinking of the perfect response ... on the way home.

As that gentleman pointed out in that very first workshop: Tongue Fu! ® is like martial arts for the mind and mouth.

In case you’re not familiar with martial arts: the purpose of Kung Fu (a Chinese martial art emphasizing internal development) is to deflect, disarm, or defuse someone’s *physical* attack.

The purpose of Tongue Fu!® is to deflect, disarm, or defuse someone’s verbal attack. It is a spoken form of self-defense—the constructive alternative to giving a tongue-lashing or to being tongue-tied.

The goal of Tongue Fu!® is to learn how to communicate clearly, cooperatively and confidently so you *prevent* people from becoming difficult in the first place. You’ll learn pro-active language that sets a positive precedent so people are more likely to treat you with respect.

If someone is already upset – and using you as their lightning rod - you’ll learn how to calm them down and help them see things from a more objective perspective. You’ll learn how to move them to agreement or

constructive action - instead of staying mired in a me-against-you adversarial relationship.

If someone has “gone ballistic” and isn’t listening to reason; you’ll learn how to protect yourself and not allow them to use you as their verbal punching bag. Never again will you have a mental meltdown and feel helpless in the face of verbal abuse, verbal aggression or bullying.

Tongue Fu!® is not just about handling unfair, unkind behavior. It’s much more than that.

It’s a philosophy of life; a way to get along better with just about anyone, anywhere, anytime. You’ll learn how to be a master communicator who can finesse a fight and turn conflicts into cooperation. Perhaps most importantly, you’ll learn how to *choose* to keep your cool and continue to be kind – even when others aren’t.

No one enjoys dealing with difficult people, yet it is an everyday part of life.

These ideas can help you skillfully disarm difficult people so your personal and professional relationships are less stressful and more rewarding. You’ll learn dozens of non-combative comebacks so you can speak up when people are putting you down (instead of suffering in silence)

And finally, you’ll find out how to stand on your own two feet (without stepping on other people’s toes) so you can avoid being hurt or causing hurt. These techniques can help you be a better manager, parent, team leader, coach, boss, spouse and friend. Everyone benefits when you use Tongue Fu!®

Turn These Ideas Into Actions And Results

“Good ideas are a dime a dozen, and they’re not worth a plug nickel if you don’t act on them.” – Warren Reed

I know these Tongue Fu!® techniques can benefit you – as long as you follow up and act on them. Please read *Tongue Fu!®* with pen in hand if you’re reading a paperback version of this book - or highlight paragraphs in

your e-reader if you're reading this on your digital device. When you come across a suggestion that's particularly relevant or timely, write it on a note card and post it on your mirror or bulletin board.

You've heard the saying "Out of sight, out of mind"? Do the opposite. Keep your action plans in-sight, *in-mind* so you keep them *top-of-mind*. Those visual reminders will help you apply what you've learned.

Can I Quote You On That?

"I've compiled a book from the Internet. It's a book of quotes attributed to the wrong people." - Jerry Seinfeld

Guess you can tell I like quotes :-)

Why do I feature quotes on almost every page? Because they offer profound, provocative insight in a few lines. Plus, they offer multiple points of view and break up the text of this book so it is visually appealing.

I particularly like *current* quotes. As explained in my book *POP!*, we love new insights that get our eyebrows up. Instead of using a lot of familiar quotes you've seen before; I've tried to feature newer quotes that will add fresh insight to how we can communicate more cooperatively and compassionately.

I hope you like these recent quotes from everyone from Bill Clinton to Bill Gates, from Beyonce' to Barbara Walters. Hopefully, they prompt epiphanies that add value to this book.

I've done my best to attribute these quotes to the right originator.

However, some of these quotations were submitted by workshop participants who found them online. If I have attributed any of these to the wrong person – and you know their correct source - please let me know (info@IntrigueAgency.com) so I can give credit where credit is due.

Learn From Others

"Each day learn something new, and just as important, relearn something old." Robert Brault, American Tenor

I create questionnaires for all my books and interview just about everyone I meet on my topics. So, thank you to everyone – from workshop participants to taxi drivers and airplane seatmates - who so graciously provided the examples you’ll find throughout this book.

It’s said, “A doctor is a shortcut to health; a teacher is a shortcut to knowledge.” These Tongue Fu!® contributors graciously shared their experiences so you could benefit from them and prevent trial-and-terror learning. I hope their insights will help you learn and re-learn constructive ways to deal with people, and I hope they’re a shortcut to your success in getting along better with just about anyone, anytime, anywhere.

PART I:

Don't React ... Respond

“How can a society that exists on instant mashed potatoes, packaged cake mixes, frozen dinners, and instant cameras teach patience to its youth?”

Paul Sweeney, Director of Innovation at VoiceSage

In this section, we learn how to be more patient and pro-active in challenging situations so we can handle them with poise and professionalism.

CHAPTER 1: HANDLE HASSLES WITH FUN FU!

“Perhaps one has to become very old before one learns how to be amused rather than shocked.”

Pearl S. Buck

Are you sensitive about a specific issue? Do you get feeling flustered when people tease you about it?

It might be in your best interests to learn now to be amused rather than offended or flustered. The way to do that is to become a Fun Fu! (first cousin to Tongue Fu!®) Master so you can keep perspective – no matter what. By developing a repertoire of witty comebacks to dreaded questions; they’ll no longer have the power to unnerve you.

Rest assured – we will get into more serious issues of intimidators and manipulators later in this book. I wanted to begin with a “lighter” chapter so you know we won’t be dealing exclusively with the “dark side” of human behavior. Why don’t we learn, first, how to keep a sense of humor – no matter what? It can be our saving grace.

This concept of Fun Fu! was perfectly demonstrated by a resourceful young man I “ran into” at the San Francisco Airport. I was riding a moving sidewalk down one of the long hallways when a commotion ahead caught my attention. A very tall man was coming toward me, and several people were pointing at him and laughing. I was taken aback by their bad manners and thought they were being inexcusably rude.

As the tall man moved closer, I could understand why the people in front of me were laughing. He was wearing a T-shirt that said in large letters, **“NO, I’M NOT A BASKETBALL PLAYER!”**

As he passed by, I turned to say something and saw the back of his T-shirt, which read: **“ARE YOU A JOCKEY?”**

I had to meet this clever young man. I jumped off the people mover and chased after him. I finally caught up with him and asked breathlessly, “Where did you get that terrific shirt?”

He grinned from ear to ear and said, “This is nothing. I have a whole drawer full at home. My favorite one says, ‘I’m 6’13” and the weather up here is fine!’ ”

He went on to explain: “I grew almost a foot between the time I was sixteen and eighteen years old. I didn’t even want to leave the house because everywhere I went, people made smart-aleck remarks. My mom finally told me, ‘If you can’t beat ’em, join ’em.’ She was the one who thought these up. Now I look forward to going out because I enjoy my height instead of being embarrassed by it.”

That was one smart young man. If you have something that bothers you, doesn’t it make sense to have fun *with* it instead of being frustrated *by* it?

Are People Pushing Your Hot Buttons?

“How come my parents can still push all my hot buttons?” “That’s easy. They installed them.”—Graffiti

What causes you to lose your temper or poise? Start collecting comebacks for those not-so-funny verbal jabs so you’re no longer caught off guard.

Wouldn’t we like to have someone provide us with ready-made punch lines? That was the case when David Niven emceed the 1974 Academy Awards. The producer of the show anticipated an uninvited guest (it was the year of the stalker), so he created a quip—jest (!) in case.

Sure enough, in the middle of the program a naked man raced across the stage. Instead of being flustered, Niven was prepared with this seemingly off-the-cuff remark: “Just think. The only laugh that man will ever get is for showing off his . . . shortcomings.” Bravo!

Since most of us can’t rely on a professional joke writer to write our punch lines, we have to develop our own. The good news is, you don’t have to be a comedian, you can crowd-source your material.

In every Tongue Fu!® workshop, we brainstorm Fun Fu! responses for sensitive scenarios. A successful career woman said, “I used to dread the question, ‘Oh, what’s your degree in?’ I didn’t go to college, so that question

always embarrassed me. One time I was presenting at an industry conference, and an audience member asked where I'd gone to school. I didn't know what to say at first. Then I spontaneously quipped, 'I went to UHK.' The puzzled attendee asked, 'What's that?' I smiled and said, 'The University of Hard Knocks.' It got a chuckle, let me off the hook in a humorous way, and that's what I've been saying ever since."

An elderly gentleman admitted he resented being asked how old he was. "That offends me. My age is nobody's business but my own. Where do people get off asking such personal questions?" Our class put their heads together and came up with some tongue-in-cheek answers. Since the fellow was an active golfer, his favorite was "Let's just say I'm on the back nine."

A married couple in their mid-thirties said they had grown tired of being asked, "When are the two of you going to have children?" They liked someone's suggestion that they feign shock and exclaim, "We *knew* we forgot *something!*" They could also fend off too-personal questions with "Why do you ask?" Putting the conversational ball back in their court is often enough to let people know you consider their inquiry off-limits.

Don't Be Offended; Be Amused

"Through humor, you can soften some of the worst blows that life delivers. Once you find laughter, no matter how painful your situation, you can survive it." Bill Cosby

A premise of Tongue Fu!® is that it's sometimes in everyone's best interest to be amused rather than offended if someone says something insensitive. There will *always* be people who make inappropriate remarks. Their barbs can't needle us unless we let them. Develop a mental thick skin through humor.

I'll always remember the pain in a woman's voice when she asked, "What can I say when someone says, 'Wow, you've packed on some pounds, haven't you'?" It makes me uncomfortable when people bring up my weight."

If what the person is saying is true, you could acknowledge that with a “grin” of salt and say, “Yes, I have!,” and then change the subject. If they’re looking for a reaction, don’t give them one. You remove their power to wound you when you refuse to “accept” an insult.

You can choose to lighten up instead of tighten up by using self-deprecating humor. A friend of mine decided a long time ago *not* to be self-conscious or sensitive about her weight. If someone brings it up, she shrugs and says, “I’m saving up for a harsh winter” and then moves the conversation on to something else.

The secret is NOT to buy into insulting remarks by denying or defending them. The more emotional you get, the more they’ll know they “got” you. Simply respond with poise and switch the topic.

A woman who hadn’t lost her baby weight several months after the birth of her second child reported that she often ran into people who made such tactless comments as “I thought you already had your baby” or “Are you pregnant *again*?” Instead of being hurt, she pats her tummy, waggles her eyebrows a la Groucho Marx and retorts, “These are leftovers,” and then starts talking about something different.

Put Fun Fu! To Work - At Work

“It has always surprised me how little attention philosophers have paid to humor since it is a more significant process of mind than reason. Reason can only sort out perceptions; humor is involved in changing them.” – Edward De Bono

During a training session I conducted for the IRS, an auditor explained how he and his coworkers use Fun Fu! to counteract boorish behavior. “Just about everyone who walks in our door resents us. They see us as the enemy. They don’t want to be here. Instead of being offended by this undeserved animosity (we’re people too!), we’ve filled a bulletin board with comic strips that poke fun at the IRS, or *Income Removal Service*, as one cartoon called us.

One pictures an auditor telling a citizen, ‘The secret is to stop thinking of it as *your* money.’ These cartoons let the public know we’re human. When taxpayers read these jokes and our sign that says, ‘Sorry, we’re IN!’ their whole attitude often changes—for the better.”

You’re never too old or too young to learn the power of handling hassles with humor.

My niece, a talented softball pitcher, logged on to her Facebook account after her high school team suffered a humiliating loss. One of her “friends” had posted on her wall, “Way to go kid! What happened? Forget what team you were playing for? Maybe next time you should call in sick?!”

Yikes. Her friend was probably “joking,” but that hurtful post was visible to everyone at school. My niece is a strong young lady who knew that unless she responded immediately, the teasing would only get worse.

She replied with this tongue-in-cheek response: “It’s all part of my plan for world domination. Now that I’ve tested it at home, I can unleash my superpowers on the world!”

Her teammates greeted her the next day with high-fives and “Good one!” One said, “Next time you have a plan for world domination, can we try it out on the *other* team?” Instead of being offended, resenting the “friend” and suffering in silence, my niece took the high road of humor. As a result, it became a non-issue and everyone moved on. Fun Fu! Master.

What If Someone Says Something Truly Outrageous?

“A closed mouth gathers no feet.” - Tongue Fu’ism

What if someone makes a “loaded” accusation, (e.g., the infamous “When did you stop beating your wife?”)

Don’t dignify it with any answer at all. Why? Bob Monkhouse explained it best: “Silence is not only golden, it’s seldom misquoted.” Don’t even say, “I’m not going to answer that.” If you take the bait, they’ll have successfully hooked you with their taunt.

Instead, switch the subject or redirect the remark to a related topic. A famous movie star did a masterful job of this one evening on a late-night television talk show. The host made a rather unkind observation about her film career. “All your movies have portrayed you as a sex kitten, haven’t they?” You could tell the actress was distressed by this label and didn’t want to waste her fifteen minutes in the spotlight discussing it. She turned to the emcee, and instead of reinforcing his stereotyping her as a sex kitten, she brightly asked, “Speaking of movies, want to see a clip from my new one?” Without causing her host to lose face, she picked up on part of his comment and moved on to a more constructive topic.

Learn To Laugh At Life

“If you can laugh at it; you can live with it.” – Erma Bombeck, humorist

Jim Pelley, a friend and professional speaker from Northern California, is a Fun Fu! black belt. He travels around the country presenting programs about humor in the workplace for Fortune 500 companies. Jim has given me permission to tell one of his signature stories about a flight attendant who laughs at life and helps others do the same.

Jim describes the time he was seated next to The Original Difficult Person on a completely full coast-to-coast flight. His seatmate complained about everything: his carry-on bag wouldn’t fit in the overhead bin; he was squeezed into the middle seat of the middle row; it took almost two hours to serve lunch; and—the final insult—lunch was a light snack instead of a hot meal. (You can tell this happened years ago; what airline serves hot meals anymore?!)

Mr. Difficult took one bite of his sandwich, dropped it on his plate, and angrily pushed the call button.

The flight attendant quickly appeared and asked politely, “Yes, sir, how may I help you?” He shoved the sandwich up toward her face and growled, “This sandwich is bad!”