



Balderdash!

The “Fine Art” of Interrupting



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Why interrupt when someone is speaking?

1. To get her to stop talking
2. To correct what she is saying
3. To get to the point more quickly
4. To change the subject when it's getting old
5. So you don't forget what you want to say

These are all likely to be the reason, one time or another. They are forgivable, but they cut corners.

These interruptions not only interrupt the speaker, they interrupt the conversation. They are opportunities lost. Too much of this and you learn nothing new.

If what you are thinking makes nonsense of what you are hearing, then stop thinking what you are thinking. It's no accomplishment to perceive music as noise. Use your brain to hear noise as music.

Is there a productive way to interrupt a nonproductive conversation? The answer is no. If a conversation is nonproductive, *you* are nonproductive—no offense. Before interrupting a nonproductive conversation, try interrupting yourself.

Save an idea before it is lost

When a conversation is productive, it can productively be interrupted. For a good reason, such as to save an idea before it is lost.

People are sometimes so excited by their ideas that they release them in a steady stream. This can be interesting, but when an idea hasn't had sufficient time before the next idea steps on its heels, you can productively interrupt the stream to make room for the idea you are still on. In other words, you interrupt the interruption.

For example, "Laws are stupid. When a poor person breaks a law, it's a crime. We lock her up. Rich people commit much bigger crimes and get away with it. We shouldn't have laws. Then no one could break them. We'd all be free to take care of ourselves and each other—"

"Balderdash!"

Or words to that effect. It can be a show stopper, or an opener. It can say, "You're wrong and I'm done listening," or "That's new, I'd like to hear more."

How does eliminating laws get people to take care of themselves and each other? Clearly, it doesn't.

But it does. In some way that is apparent to the speaker, but not yet to you, there is a connection. You talk about it until what started as noise begins to make sense. You hear ideas that are useful to you. You "cross the divide."