# **Backhanded Compliments**

#### **Part One**

## What is a "Backhanded Compliment"?

Backhanded compliments (also known as "left-handed compliments") aren't really compliments at all. In fact, they're insults in disguise. A statement is said that appears to be a compliment, but actually contains an insult or criticism.

When someone gives you a compliment, it makes you feel good. A backhanded compliment, however, can have the opposite effect.









### A "Backhanded Compliment" - An Example

"That necklace is nice. My grandma would love it."

At first it seems as if the person is complimenting you for wearing such a nice necklace. However, the person is also insulting you by saying that the necklace is old-fashioned, and is not something young people wear today.

### A Few Recommended Ways to Respond to a "Backhanded Compliment"

Here are some effective ways to respond:

Focus on the positive part of the sentence and ignore the insult. By doing so
the speaker will see he/she did not succeed in hurting you.

"I'm glad you think the necklace is nice, too!"

Naomi Epstein's

1 A / - ..l . - l - - - ± -



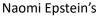
- 2. **Respond with humor**. By doing so you will surprise the speaker and diffuse the tension between you. :Where is your cell phone? Let's call your grandmother and tell her you are buying her a present!"
- 3. **Change the subject** when you do so the speaker will see he/she did not succeed in hurting you.

#### Part Two

Read the examples of backhanded compliments appearing on the next page. Then follow these instructions:

- 1. Choose five examples of backhanded compliments. Explain what the compliment and insult is in each one.
- 2. These examples were written by adults.
  - a. Add at least five examples of backhanded compliments that a teenager might say.
  - b. Do you frequently encounter use of "backhanded compliments" in your school?
- 3. Choose six examples and write a response to each one. It can be a response focusing on the compliment part of the statement, or using humor.

Think about your responses carefully - make sure that you aren't responding with another backhanded compliment!



141-------



- 1. You look great today! It's amazing what a little make up can do.
- 2. Your haircut makes your nose look smaller.
- 3. You're so independent. It's no wonder you haven't found a partner yet.
- 4. You actually look attractive in this light.
- 5. That's a beautiful photo of you. I didn't recognize you at first.
- 6. Wow, how surprising! This food really tastes good!
- 7. I never expected you to have such a tastefully decorated apartment.
- 8. You're not as dumb as you look.
- 9. Your Instagram makes you seem so fun!
- 10. I didn't expect you to get the job Congratulations!
- 11. You organized the files so well I never guessed that you had done it.
- 12. You seem to nice to be a teacher.
- 13. I never expected your children to be so well behaved.
- 14. You are so charming when you make the effort.
- 15. You are so pretty on the inside.

Naomi Epstein's

1 A / - ..l . - l - - - ± -

