

Karin Kuschik

## 50 SENTENCES THAT MAKE LIFE EASIER – A Compass for More Self-Confidence

*50 Sätze, die das Leben leichter machen*

- Small sentences with a big effect!
- More than 400,000 copies sold!
- No.1 of the *Spiegel* bestseller list for many weeks and under top 5 for years now!
- English sample translation available.



March 2022 · 320 pages

### Coaching to go: finding calm at work and at home and setting boundaries.

Sometimes a single sentence can very easily resolve a situation – at work or at home. In this book Karin Kuschik has gathered together 50 such small sentences with a big impact, drawing on her wealth of experience as a business and life coach. With vivid language and numerous practical examples, she shows us how powerful words can have a freeing effect, how they make us strong, confident and self-determining. A treasure trove of fascinating, clear and realistic tips.

*"This woman hits the mark immediately! And so suddenly, armed with smart, applicable tools, I'm jumping off the 10-meter tower of my life as if I've always done it."* Wolfgang Eissler, Director

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The common thread that runs through **Karin Kuschik's** multi-layered career is called Story Telling: journalism studies, film academy, moderator, media trainer, speaker, songwriter, keynote speaker. She has worked in front of and behind the camera. Since 2000 she has been advising top decision-makers and celebrities as a business coach. In her first book, she makes her expertise accessible to a broad audience for the first time. Karin Kuschik lives in Berlin.

Foreword 9 / Introduction 12

1 I still decide who annoys me 17

2 I'm not doing this against you, I'm doing it for me 22

3 Apology 27

4 I'd rather not promise you that 32

5 Wanting is like having to, only voluntary 38

6 I don't feel responsible here at all 44

7 I admire that a lot about you 51

8 I understand you absolutely, and I would like something else 57

9 I'd best forgive myself for that 62

10 I don't know 66

11 I'm just realising that I'm not really interested in the subject 72

12 Get well soon 78

13 I'm not sure what that means 82

14 I'd rather be by myself right now 88

15 Those who point fingers at others are pointing three fingers at themselves 95

16 I can't afford not to 100

17 I think this is your issue 106

18 As I said 112

19 Worry is pointless 117

20 I think that says more about you than it does about me 123

21 Let's agree to disagree 129

22 "I don't know" always means no 135

23 I'm sorry if I gave you the impression that you can talk to me like that 141

24 It all sounds logical, but my gut tells me otherwise 146

25 I don't want to take time for this now 151

26 I was wrong	157	
27 I'll finish this first	163	
28 I have heard	169	
29 I have changed my mind	174	
30 It is what it is	180	
31 We just don't fit together	185	
32 At the moment I prefer to meet with myself	191	
33 I can understand that	197	
34 I would like to be happier for you	203	
35 I won't give you that privilege	209	
36 Then I'll take this	214	
37 Fortunately	220	
38 I'd rather stay professional	226	
39 I misjudged the time	232	
40 Thank you for the compliment	237	
41 I'm much too ...	243	
42 I'd rather not take that personally	249	
43 I prefer to talk to people rather than about them	254	
44 My best only makes sense if you also give your best	259	
45 I have no idea, so I'm going to do this	265	
46 I don't want to support you in your weaknesses	269	
47 You always have a choice	275	
48 You are right	281	
49 Well, then I'll take you at your word	287	
50 Then I'd rather take it easy	293	
Appeal / 298 Acknowledgements	305 / Appendix	309

## **„50 SENTENCES TO SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE“ TRANSLATION OF FIRST CHAPTER**

**„Wer mich ärgert, bestimme immer noch ich“**

**Sample translation: © Ben Posener**

### **I’LL DECIDE WHO MAKES ME MAD!**

The atmosphere in the Berlin recording studio is frantic. The manager of a well-known folk singer is shouting at the producer and he’s barking back at him. The singer herself appears totally relaxed, sipping her Latte and leafing through a magazine. I’m there as the lyricist and when I ask her how she manages to stay so calm in the midst of all this chaos, she just shrugs and says: “I’ll decide who makes me mad!” Wow, what a great line! / decide?! I immediately resolve to add this to my list of magic mantras. And since then, it’s simplified my life and that of hundreds of my clients in wonderful ways.

“The angering thing about anger is that it’s bad for you without doing anyone any good”, the journalist and author Kurt Tucholsky is supposed to have said. That’s a good way of putting it, because anger is a totally superfluous emotion that doesn’t lead anywhere except that it makes you even angrier. Just as joy breeds joy and doubts breed more doubts, anger feeds off anger. Getting angry simply doesn’t cut it. But tell that to someone who’s on the verge of going ballistic because they feel slighted and they’re really taking it personally, or they’re feeling threatened for some other reason. Of course, in a situation like that the person is unlikely to say: “Hey, great advice! I’ll stop being angry at once. Thanks for the tip!” It’s a fact that rational reflection, knowledge or empathy very rarely lead to changes in behaviour, because such shifts are always the result of a new attitude. And that’s why my first tip for you is so powerful: it’s not about employing a rhetorical tool, it’s about an inner shift in perspective and attitude. But how do we get there? Or, rather, when do we get there? When our rational understanding of situation also touches us on the emotional level; when whatever it is that irks us makes us feel that that we absolutely wish to experience something that is totally new and different. It’s only when we are sufficiently motivated that we make a concrete decision, and from that moment on a lot of things become a whole lot easier.

I grew up in Frankfurt, so I’m familiar with the saying: “Before I get cross, I’d rather not care”. That’s pretty sound advice because (apart from reflecting a certain snugness that’s typical for the region) it’s an expression of a particular mind-set: being self-determined. In essence, it describes an attitude where problems are taken seriously, but not so seriously as to give others the power over how we feel. Why on earth should anyone permit this, especially if the “other” is someone who’s doing their best to annoy us? Why would you want someone else to be able to decide how you feel, make you lie awake at night, worrying? Or prompt you to

write dozens vengeful emails in your mind that are, in any case, destined for your mental waste bin?

All these things are senseless, ruin your mood and steal valuable time that you could be using to enjoy your life. And yet, incredibly, it happens constantly. To put it into perspective: if you could feed the energy people on this planet expend on getting upset into the electricity grid, you could probably generate enough power to illuminate entire cities, forever. And the fact is, everything we have to deal with becomes twice as strenuous when anger is involved, and even more so when we get angry about being angry. So, let's at least not contribute to this sorry state of affairs.

But isn't that easier said than done? Doesn't it depend on your personality? No. The only thing it depends on is reaching a decision. Especially if you're someone who values self-determination, freedom and self-responsibility, this chapter will enrich your life. And it will be easier to put into practice than you might think. To be clear: it's an illusion to think that circumstances determine how you feel. In reality, the way you feel is, and always has been, the result of how you, in your very own way, *react* to those circumstances. If you firmly resolve that from this point on you yourself will decide who or what angers you, you'll find that you have made a huge step in the right direction.

Make a deal with yourself, so that your new mantra "I'll decide who makes me mad!" becomes a part of your mental soundtrack, part of who you are. Because, if it all makes sense to you today but is just a fading memory tomorrow it's not going to work. Just make the decision that when a situation next arises that might get your goat, you won't immediately react. Instead, just breathe out for a moment. And when you inhale again remember the mantra, and decide if you *want* to get angry. If you don't feel like it, and you're confronted with someone, a response might be along the lines of: "There's lots I could say to that, but I've just realized I'd rather just stick to the subject. Is that ok with you?" Or: "I don't feel like getting annoyed, it's a waste of time. Let's stick to the topic, alright?" Or, perhaps: "That's interesting. But how do we move forward from here? I suggest we adopt a constructive approach?"

But it really isn't that important what you say. I'm convinced, it's never about finding the next brilliant retort, even if most of my clients resolutely promote this theory. My experience has always been that successful de-escalation has to do with the attitude we engender in ourselves before we respond. If your attitude is conducive – you're focused on being self-determined and competent, for instance – it's irrelevant how eloquent or matter-of-fact your response is. You could just as easily say nothing. But if your focus engages with that irritating itch, even the most brilliant retort won't lead to a satisfactory solution.

And if your “adversary” sticks to his guns and feels provoked by your level-headedness? What if he says something like: “Aren’t you at least going to respond?” Or: “This’ll really make you blow your top!” Well, you could just relax, sip your coffee and say: “I’ll decide who makes me mad!”

**KARIN KUSCHIK: "50 SENTENCES TO SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE"  
TRANSLATION OF CHAPTER 8 ©BEN POSENER, BERLIN**

**7 WHAT I REALLY APPRECIATE ABOUT YOU**

Shooting films in New York - a dream of mine. And a dream come true when I finally take off for the Big Apple. My radio station, where I host the morning show, has granted me a summer leave so I can take a course at the New York Film Academy. For a while I stay with Fay, a highly energetic lady with dense, pitch-black curls and with a faible for Chucks and destroyed denim dungarees. And for cups of decaf iced coffees, she's permanently attached to via a straw hanging from the side of her mouth. She lives at 2000 Broadway. TWO THOUSAND?! Are there even streets in Europe that have that many numbers? Anyway, in my twenties, in the rear of a yellow cab I feel pretty cool hollering that address at the driver.

One Sunday as Fay and I are heading for brunch we happen upon a film-like scene unfolding on 72<sup>nd</sup> Street. A red Lamborghini Diablo is parked in the sun in front of our café and a dude with a New York Yankees baseball cap is circling it. He's awestruck. Suddenly, the car's scissor doors glide upwards and a grey-haired gentleman in a casual suit chucks a briefcase onto the passenger seat. "Wow! Tell me your secret!", the NYG guy enthuses. "What did you do right, man? I admire your car!"

As a German I'm astonished, as my mind conjures up a parallel version of the incident set in the streets of Berlin - Kudamm 200, let's say, the city's main boulevard. In this version the guy, definitely not wearing the cap, retrieves a key and embellishes his disgust on the car's extremely expensive paintwork. Doing so, he mumbles: "You think you're better than us?!" Envy of the better off is a fairly pronounced trait in Germany, there is even a word for it: *Sozialneid*. There's another Germanism to add to your kindergarden and angst.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, as admiration and praise are not predominant features of the country's cultural psyche. Fortunately, that's slowly beginning to change; praise of praise is on the social agenda. A relief for most people, I would say. Especially in the workplace, where there's a lack of positive feedback. As a business coach I've always heard complaints like these: "My boss never praises me! In our company, we rarely get positive feedback, and no one is ever complimented on the work they do." I've been hearing statements like these for more than twenty years. Pretty sad. And it gets sadder still when I dig deeper: "Who have you praised this week?" "Well, I ... hm ..." It's like a vicious circle. If people never experience it, they don't do it to others - a pretty obvious conclusion when assessing praise-starved Germany. If someone *does* act differently, they're easily regarded as a bit odd.

"Not to be scolded is praise enough," says a Swabian proverb which at some point spread to the rest of the country. No wonder then that the US-typical tendency for exuberant praise and approval evokes two dialectically opposed responses in this country. Some find it liberating. Others raise their eyebrows and say: typical American superficiality.

In fact, praise is fantastic. And admiring someone is even better!

I remember a workshop I once took, devoted to personal development and abundance. The aim during those seven weeks was to create inner abundance in all vital areas of life. It was intense and there was a lot of homework. One task was a three-day exercise involving expressing honest admiration towards people - on a personal level. Saying it with flowers, perhaps, but definitely holding eye contact and being specific and clear. It needed to be heartfelt, or we'd just have to do it over again. One woman flew all the way to San Francisco because she wished to express her admiration personally to Isabel Allende. She succeeded, too. I myself didn't quite go to such lengths.

Nevertheless, we all had a similar experience, an astonishing one. We all found this task uncomfortably difficult. In fact, for some it proved to be a total comfort zone killer. Not many of us were up to it. It was like learning a foreign language some of us didn't know existed. Which was why we'd stammer around, feel embarrassed, stare at floor. But that just wouldn't cut, we'd be asked to do the exercise all over again.

The wonderful thing is, once you break through and commit to admiration you experience moments of complete happiness. If you praise others, you're also giving yourself a good feeling and you're sending a message to your system: "I can be happy for others!" Or: "I can let someone be more important than myself!" "It's your turn! I can shine again later." Or, perhaps, less euphorically: "I'm big enough to let someone else stand in the limelight." These are all boosters for our true selves. I purposefully say for our true selves and not for our ego. Because our ego is that brash part of us that is always yammering and never gets enough because it feels insignificant, constantly needs feeding and always has to be right. The ego and the healthy, true me - that's a subtle yet massively different thing. We can easily experience that difference when we listen to our feelings.

When, for instance, jealousy, resentment, or envy stand in our way everything drags, feels laborious, confining, and we might even feel a little bit soiled. We sound edgy and excitable as we're bad-mouthing others, everything takes too long, gets us nowhere and can even destroy relationships - especially the relationship with ourselves. The ego wreaks havoc.

But when our feelings prompt us to overcome - when there's reticence, coyness or fear. Then our healthy, true self is giving us the chance to grow beyond our limitations. With these feelings we're gearing up to take the leap towards a better version of ourselves. Our true self rejoices, and we immediately feel this, which is why we always feel great when we've overcome a hurdle.

So, the question is: where do you stand on this issue? Be honest with yourself. Do you find it unpleasant when others seem to have it all? When someone appears to have a sustained run of good luck? Do you compare yourself to them? Or are you happy for them and truly wish everyone the best, yourself included? Can you easily take compliments? Do you feel comfortable when praised? If so, congratulations! If not, here's your chance.

How about consciously deciding to express appreciation to someone the next time you notice something positive about them? That might be a talent, a character trait, something a person does ... You could keep it to yourself and tell someone else later. Or you could



open your heart, let yourself go and lavish someone with praise. Directly to their face.

Of course, we've all raved about people at some point, be it at their birthday party, writing a Xmas card, or at someone's wedding. And some people never find kind words. Not until they're holding a speech at somebody's funeral. Let's start sooner, rather than later. There are so many wonderful people we could give our gift of appreciation. And the joy we give proliferates when we spread this message. Spread it around and each time a bit more happiness enters the world.

Well? Have you thought of someone? Do you have the perfect recipient in mind? Or are you a person who always praises others, anyway, and you're wondering why I've devoted an entire chapter to this topic? Whatever the case, just sing your praises loud and clear in the certainty that it will ignite a light in others and reflect back onto you like an unforeseen ray of sunlight. "Do you know what I really like about you?" "No" Well, then, here we go!