

Max Paradox

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

A tongue-in-cheek guide series ;)

I Have to Call. I'd Rather Send a Pigeon

**How to Stop Putting Off Phone Calls, Prepare for
Difficult Conversations, and Get Things Done
Without Staring at the “Call” Button for an Hour**



**We've got a problem. But relax.
It can be solved—and we'll even have something to laugh about.**

I Have to Call. I'd Rather Send a Pigeon

How to Stop Putting Off Phone Calls,
Prepare for Difficult Conversations, and
Get Things Done Without Staring at the
"Call" Button for an Hour

Max Paradox

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

CONTENTS

INTRO	5
Chapter 1 - The Call Gets Bigger in Your Head	11
Chapter 2 - Why a Message Feels Safer.....	22
Chapter 3 - You Do Not Have to Sound Like Customer Service.....	35
Chapter 4 - The Worst Conversation Often Happens Before the Call.....	47
Chapter 5 - Waiting for the Perfect Moment Is Still Waiting.....	61
Chapter 6 - Preparation That Never Ends	73
Chapter 7 - What If They Do Not Answer?	88
Chapter 8 - Stop Apologizing for Having a Reason to Call.....	102
Chapter 9 - The First Thirty Seconds	117
Chapter 10 - Keep the Call from Wandering into the Woods	129
Chapter 11 - When Someone Says No	144
Chapter 12 - You Do Not Have to Answer Immediately.....	158
Chapter 13 - Have the Difficult Conversation Without Starting a War	174
Chapter 14 - Complain Without Turning It into Judgment Day	189
Chapter 15 - When the Call Goes Bad	205
Chapter 16 - The Call for Days When You Have Nothing Left.....	219

Chapter 17 - When It Is More Than Ordinary Reluctance	233
Chapter 18 - Do Not Grow a Pile of Calls.....	246
Chapter 19 - Build Your Own Phone Rules	262
Chapter 20 - Make the Call and Get Back to Your Life	278

INTRO

Your phone is already in your hand. The number is on the screen. You know exactly why you need to call. This is not a diplomatic summit, a marriage proposal, or a live televised confession involving tax fraud. You need to move an appointment, ask why a charge appeared on a bill, confirm whether something is ready, or tell another human being that Thursday no longer works.

Estimated call time: four minutes.

Time already spent not making the call: forty-three.

First you check whether the place is open. It is. Then you check again because perhaps opening hours have changed during the twelve seconds since you last looked. You take a sip of coffee. Too hot. Better wait. You open the email connected to the issue, although you have already read it enough times to qualify as a minor scholar in its field. Then you notice the clock says 10:17, which somehow feels like an odd time to call. Ten thirty would be cleaner. More professional. A respectable, round half-hour.

At 10:29 you prepare.

At 10:31 you have missed the window.

Eleven seems sensible.

The call remains four minutes long.

By lunch, it has acquired a backstory, a soundtrack, and the emotional budget of a mid-range disaster film.

This book is for people who know that feeling. People who can run meetings, solve problems, answer emails, organize trips, deal with children, clients, contractors, colleagues, relatives, deliveries, passwords, broken

appliances, and the mysterious drawer containing seventeen cables no device in the house has used since 2014 - but who can still spend half an afternoon avoiding one phone call.

It is also for people who do make the calls but pay for them in advance with unnecessary stress. You call eventually, but only after rehearsing the opening line six times, preparing answers to questions nobody has asked, and imagining three possible conflicts, one humiliating silence, and a conversation in which the receptionist somehow exposes your entire lack of moral character because you forgot your reference number.

The strange thing is that the telephone is usually not the real problem.

You probably know how to speak. You know how to ask questions. You can tell someone your name without professional assistance. If a friend called and said, "Can you remind me what time we're meeting?" you would not require a strategy session, a legal pad, and a breathing exercise before answering.

The difficulty is what a live call removes.

Time.

Editing.

Distance.

Control.

When you write a message, you can stop. Delete. Rewrite. Replace "This is unacceptable" with "Could you please clarify" before accidentally starting a regional conflict over a delayed parcel. You can stare at one sentence for eleven minutes and decide whether "Thanks" sounds warmer than "Thank you." You can send the message and place the

phone face down as though you have released a small animal into the wild.

A call gives you much less shelter.

Someone answers now.

They may ask something you did not predict.

They may say no.

They may misunderstand you.

They may sound impatient.

They may put you on hold and return after three minutes, by which point you have forgotten your own surname.

You cannot edit a sentence after it leaves your mouth. At best, you can say, "No, that's not quite what I meant," which is one of the great emergency exits of human communication and deserves far more respect than it gets.

That uncertainty is why "just call" is such useless advice.

"Just call" belongs to the same family as "just relax," "just be confident," and "just go to sleep." Excellent. Thank you. Problem eliminated. Entire professions may now close for the evening.

If calling were simply a matter of pressing a button, you would already be doing it.

The real work is smaller and more practical. How do you begin when the first ten seconds feel awkward? What do you prepare, and when does preparation turn into a sophisticated form of hiding? What do you say when someone refuses? How do you stop a conversation from drifting into five irrelevant topics while your original question quietly dies in a ditch? How do you complain without turning

into either an apologetic puddle or a person demanding to speak to the United Nations about a toaster?

And what do you do when the problem is not information but discomfort?

You need to tell someone no.

You need to ask for money owed.

You need to explain a delay.

You need to challenge a mistake.

You need to call a person whose reaction you cannot control.

Those calls are different because sometimes the tension is not imaginary. The other person may genuinely be disappointed, annoyed, defensive, or unwilling to give you what you want. This book will not pretend that every difficult conversation becomes pleasant if you use the correct seven-word phrase and maintain adequate posture. Some conversations are uncomfortable because the subject is uncomfortable.

The goal is not to eliminate that fact.

The goal is to stop adding an extra layer of suffering before, during, and after the call.

Before: three hours of anticipation.

During: trying to sound perfect, agreeable, intelligent, calm, decisive, flexible, warm, firm, and somehow also completely spontaneous.

After: replaying one sentence from minute two and wondering whether the slight pause before the other person's "okay" meant they now hate you.

That is an expensive way to spend four minutes.

You do not need to become someone who loves phone calls. This is not a conversion program. Nobody is going to take away your messaging apps and issue you a rotary phone as part of the final exam.

You are allowed to prefer written communication.

Sometimes writing is genuinely better. It creates a record. It gives everyone time to think. It works beautifully for simple information. Some people have accessibility needs, language needs, work patterns, or personal preferences that make other forms of communication more suitable.

The point is not to choose the phone because it is somehow morally superior.

The point is to be able to use it when it is the simplest tool for the job.

A five-minute conversation can sometimes replace twenty messages, three misunderstandings, and one email beginning, "Just to clarify my previous clarification..."

That is useful.

And usefulness is where we are heading.

You will not need a new personality. You will need a few reliable ways to reduce the size of the task. A way to know what to prepare. A way to start. A way to pause without panicking. A way to ask again when the answer did not actually answer anything. A way to hear "no" without either collapsing or beginning a courtroom drama. A way to end a call knowing what happens next.

Most importantly, you will learn to separate two things that avoidance loves to mix together: "I do not want to do this" and "I cannot do this."

They feel similar.

They are not.

You can dislike a call and make it.

You can feel awkward and still ask the question.

You can be nervous and still say no.

You can lose your train of thought, restart the sentence, and somehow civilization continues.

That is the standard we are aiming for.

Not elegance.

Not fearless charisma.

Functional adulthood with considerably less staring at the screen.

For now, think of one call you are postponing. Do not make it yet. Do not build a twelve-point plan either. Just ask yourself one question:

What exactly am I hoping to avoid?

The opening?

The possibility of rejection?

Having to think quickly?

Conflict?

Sounding foolish?

Being told something you do not want to hear?

The answer matters because "I hate phone calls" is a fog.

"I don't know what to say if they refuse" is a problem.

Problems can be worked with.

Fog mostly makes you stand there holding a phone.

And if all else fails, yes, the pigeon remains available.

But let's try the call first.

Chapter 1 - The Call Gets Bigger in Your Head

At 9:14, you remember that you need to call the clinic.

At 9:15, you decide to make coffee first because no responsible adult should enter a scheduling conversation without adequate hydration and at least a vague sense of consciousness. At 9:24, the coffee is ready. You find the number. Then you realize your calendar is in another room. You get the calendar. Now the phone battery is at 18 percent, which is more than enough for a short call, several videos, and possibly a small expedition across Western Europe, but suddenly it feels irresponsible.

You plug the phone in.

By 9:41, everything is ready.

Number.

Calendar.

Pen.

Water.

Charged phone.

A small emotional support infrastructure.

Only one minor task remains.

Calling.

And this is the moment when the call starts to grow.

Five minutes ago, it was a practical job. Now it is becoming a test. A performance. A possible confrontation. A situation in which another human being may ask an unexpected question and require an answer before you have