

# The Business Connector

A Quarterly Newsletter from AmSpirit™ Business Connections

## *You Can't Tickle Yourself*

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We all have a ticklish spot somewhere on us. Whether we are willing to admit it or not, we do. For some of us, it is just above the knee, for others it's the back of the neck, and still for some of us it is our sides.

Scientists have discovered that the feeling experienced when we are tickled causes us to panic. They theorize that it is a natural defense to the days when little creepy crawlers like spiders and bugs could cause us serious harm. It is simply our body's way of letting us know that something foreign is on us.

It is well established that someone else's touch can tickle us. It is also well established that we cannot tickle ourselves.

Why does the touch of another potentially send us into a ticklish fit, and our own touch does relatively nothing?

While much of the explanation for this question is still unknown, a part of the brain prevents us from self-tickling. This part of the brain distinguishes between 'expected' and 'unexpected' sensations.

An expected sensation, for example, takes place when your fingers touch something. An unexpected sensation, on the other hand, occurs when someone sneaks up behind us and taps us on the shoulder.

Generally, the brain diminishes the sensation of touching something, as your brain anticipated the contact. However, it focuses a lot of attention to someone tapping us on the shoulder. The difference is a built-in response, which probably developed in early human history to detect predators.

Therefore, we are not aware of many of the sensations generated by our movements. For the same reason, we cannot tickle ourselves.

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So what does the operation of the brain in preventing us from tickling ourselves have to do with altruism? Altruism is about creating joy in the heart of another by our contribution, deeds or comments.

To that end, the most impact we can have through our altruism are the things we do when no one expects it. Just as we cannot tickle ourselves, we cannot convey true altruistic joy on another if they know that it is coming.

Is there not a limit to the amount of altruistic joy we can share if someone must ask for it or knows it is coming? For example:

- We completely undermine the genuineness of our compliments if the only time we give them is when someone asks us to do so.
- The referrals, business contacts and other information we share is not nearly as special to those we give it to if they need to continually solicit it.
- Our words and deeds of thanks and appreciation ring hollow if someone needs to coerce us into giving them.

Just like being tickled, our altruism is most effective when we surprise others with it.

Our compliments have a special meaning when we give them without any sort of solicitation.

Likewise, the referrals we give and the business contacts we create for others become extraordinary acts of altruism when we do them without any sort of prompting.

The principle behind altruism is less about 'what we give' and more about 'the spirit that moves us to give'. So to truly embrace the notion of altruism, get out there and go tickle someone – figuratively speaking, of course. ✓