

Helpful Communications Practices for Getting Stuff Done while Maintaining Healthy Relationships

by Drue Warner

5-21-14

Often times, the way that we communicate with others can interfere with the purpose of our communications. We may have a conversation or send an email that is 95% informative, respectful and considerate, but then we let our emotions get the best of us, even by including one small, snide or “smart” remark, the whole effectiveness of our communication is ruined.

When we communicate to others through negative emotions (i.e. hurt, anger, bitterness, resentment, frustration, etc.), we put the recipient into a defensive position, which results in their reacting (often negatively, in return) rather than responding positively to our request. The reality is that a single drop of blood taints the entire jar of water. Communications and how we treat people can make all the difference in the world. The way that we communicate with others can make or break relationships, result in being promoted or fired, and may even be the difference between life and death!

The following information is intended to help us all in our communications effectiveness, such that action happens in a spirit of mutual respect and neighborly kindness.

Solutions for Healthy and Effective Communications

- 1. ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIP:** Invest the time (even just a few minutes) to get to know one another personally (i.e. where you’re from, what brought you to this location, career and professional interests, what you enjoy doing, about your family, etc.) over a cup of coffee, lunch, or a brief phone conversation. Whenever possible, face to face conversations are best, as relates to establishing a foundation for relationship.
- 2. BE UNDERSTANDING:** Understand the reality that all people have unique personalities and wired differently. It’s often tempting to project my personality onto other people and expect them to be like me. When they are like me, it’s great, but when they’re not like me, it can feel disappointing, frustrating, and even hurtful. When this happens, it can often result in my assuming the worst and reading into their communications something that really wasn’t there (i.e. disrespect, inconsiderate, mean, intentionally hurtful, etc.). Don’t do that!

Examples of Differences in People

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ▪ Prefer Dunkin Donuts | Prefer Krispy Kreme |
| ▪ Back into our parking spaces | Pull straight in |
| ▪ Contemplative | Celebratory |
| ▪ Detailed | Big Picture |
| ▪ Direct (communication style) | Tactful (communication style) |
| ▪ Heart / Feelings | Mind / Thinking |

- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| ▪ Rule-following | Renegade |
| ▪ Fun | Focused |
| ▪ People | Process |
| ▪ Relaxed | Rigid |
| ▪ Organic | Structured |
| ▪ Spontaneous | Scheduled |
| ▪ Soft | Rough |

3. **ASSUME THE BEST:** Often times, our natural tendency is to assume the worst. If we assume the worst with the people that we know and love (i.e. spouse, kids, neighbors, friends, etc.), the people that we don't know and may not particularly like, don't have a fighting chance! Instead of assuming the worst, work hard to assume the best. Remember that the more you get to know someone (i.e. background, interests, life disappointments, important relationships, etc.) the easier it is to assume the best and extend grace, patience, and understanding. You may not always "like" someone, but knowing a bit more about someone enables you to respect and show kindness to them, especially in the way that you communicate.

4. **STAY CALM:** When communicating via email, it's best to:
 - a. Never send an email when you're emotionally charged
 - b. Consider if the way that I've communicated would be an appropriate way to communicate with my friends, spouse, or mother (i.e. Am I being considerate and respectful?)
 - c. Understand that I may not (and probably don't) have all the facts about the situation.

5. **PRACTICE THE GOLDEN RULE:** Treat (and communicate with others) the way that you would want to be treated (and communicated to).