

Workplace Wisdom Newsletter

A SAFE PLACE TO “LET OFF STEAM”

We’ve all had those maddening moments when we could just *scream!* And some of us have been in situations in our life that are very awkward, very convoluted...supplying no quick and easy answers for us. It’s in situations like these that we need a friend, a confidant. And Webster says the definition of a confidant is “one to whom secrets are safely entrusted”. I will add to that definition from my experience in life: It’s not just secrets that are entrusted, but also our *feelings*. When we expose our feelings to someone who is untrustworthy, we can be hurt or embarrassed or misinterpreted. So, you see, **a confidant can become a safe-keeper for another person’s feelings.**

The other night our fifteen-year old granddaughter called at 10:00 and spent over an hour talking about her frustrations. When the conversation began, she was disturbed and crying. When the hour was over, she had regained her equilibrium and was her calm, in-control self again. What was the magic of that hour? What wise council did I give? Because, gosh, to calm disturbances on a regular basis would probably make me a very healthy living!! So, let’s see...what did I do?

The answer is, “I mostly listened.” Nod on the phone; acknowledge her feelings; affirm her worth; validate her value in the family; agree that life is not fair; affirm to her that things do not always go the way we hope they will...but mainly, I LISTENED. When she prompted me with, “Grandma, what do *you* think?” She got a short response with some explanation. She did not get a long, long dissertation on “right or wrong”, “nice versus not nice”. **Don’t you often think when upset kids – or upset adults – ask, “What do you think?”, they really want to know our thoughts, but they also want to get their end of the conversation back again.**

You bet they do! A great listener is one who states their opinion when asked, but then comes back with, “How does that sound?” or “Does that make some difference?” You see, it’s not exactly *what* you say as you advise and temper tender feelings; it is that you are listening *with your heart*. What is this upset little one *feeling*, why are they so distraught, what is behind those tears and broken heart?

Many an intelligent and strategic individual has been out-paced in the journey of life by the person who brings an understanding heart to the negotiating table. There are so many, many smart people in our world today. Answers and information are available to all of us in America. But finding someone who will just let us be ourselves; just validate that we are valuable and loved for who we are...that may be harder to come by. [It is heartbreaking to find that, when we’ve entrusted someone with our thoughts and feelings, they later make a joke about us, or tell stories behind our backs, or tell people whom we never intended to hear.](#)

So let’s work on less lecturing and less holier-than-thou “I am right” stands. We’re all prone to tell someone “how it was with us”, but sometimes we go too far and the conversation gets turned into “all about us”!

And as you encounter someone who is frustrated or hurting, just take a deep breath, get focused, and prepare for a session of great *listening*.

It’s a gift that you’ll love giving – and doesn’t cost you a dime!

**Listen with your heart ... and
you’ll develop more goodwill than you can ever give away!**