

Mental Floss

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Building Positive Co-Worker Relationships

By Dr. Gary Calhoun

THE VAST MAJORITY OF US GET UP MOST DAYS AND GO TO WORK WHERE WE WILL SPEND A GOOD PART OF OUR TIME. THE TIME WE SPEND WITH CO-WORKERS CAN OFTEN MATCH OR EVEN EXCEED THE TIME WE SPEND WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES. WITH THIS IN MIND DOESN'T IT MAKE SENSE TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR CO-WORKERS?

SHOW RESPECT:

THE STARTING PLACE TO BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK BEGINS WITH RESPECT. RESPECTING OTHER PEOPLE AND THEIR TIME WILL GO A LONG WAY IN LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR A GOOD RELATIONSHIP. IT HAS OFTEN BEEN SAID THAT OUR REPUTATION IS DETERMINED NOT BY

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February is Relationship Month

By Dr. Susan Calhoun

SINCE IT IS FEBRUARY AND THE MONTH OF VALENTINES DAY I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO SPEND SOME TIME ON BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WE LOVE.

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES HAVE MANY BENEFITS IN LIFE. THEY SERVE TO ENRICH OUR DAILY LIVES AND MAKE THE JOURNEY ALL THE MORE WORTHWHILE. BUT, DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE ALSO SOME VERY PRACTICAL BENEFITS TO HAVING STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN OUR LIVES? PEOPLE WITH STRONG RELATIONSHIPS HAVE MORTALITY RATES THAT ARE TWO TO FIVES TIMES LOWER THAN PEOPLE WITH AN ABSENCE OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS. PEOPLE WITH CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS IN THEIR LIVES RECOVER MORE QUICKLY FROM ILLNESSES, TRAUMA, AND ARE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS LIKELY TO SUFFER FROM MENTAL ILLNESSES.

BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS IS NOT ROCKET SCIENCE. IN FACT THE KEYS TO A STRONG RELATIONSHIP CAN OFTEN BE FOUND IN HOW YOU COMMUNICATE TO THOSE YOU LOVE. FOR YOU GUYS THAT DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO SIT AROUND HAVING CONSTANT, LONG, INTIMATE, CONVERSATIONS.

OFTEN TIMES COMMUNICATING THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE BIG STUFF. WHEN YOUR PARTNER ASKS YOU ABOUT YOUR DAY DON'T OVERLOOK THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARING THE FUNNY THINGS THAT HAPPENED DURING YOUR DAY. THE CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER IS WHAT'S IMPORTANT.

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POSITIVE CO-WORKER RELATIONSHIPS, CONT'D.

WHAT OTHERS SAY TO OUR FACE, BUT WHAT OTHERS SAY BEHIND OUR BACKS.

WE ARE ALL UNIQUE AND WANT OTHERS TO RESPECT OUR UNIQUENESS. IN THE WORKPLACE IT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO RESPECT WHAT EACH PERSON BRINGS TO A SITUATION.

STRIVING TO SEE THE VALUE IN DIFFERENCES IS OFTEN MORE OF A GIFT THAN A HINDERANCE. BY RESPECTING AND SEEKING VALUE IN DIFFERENCES WE CAN OFTEN AVOID THE CONFLICT THAT CAN SO EASILY COME FROM DIFFERENCES.

BE POSITIVE:

NONE OF US ENJOYS BEING AROUND NEGATIVE PEOPLE. TRY YOUR BEST TO MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AT WORK AND IN ALL YOUR DEALINGS WITH OTHERS. ANOTHER ASPECT OF BEING POSITIVE IS SHOWING APPRECIATION TO OTHERS. WE ALL LIKE TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED FOR OUR WORK AND CONTRIBUTIONS – NO MATTER HOW SMALL IN THE EYES OF OTHERS.

PROJECTING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE CAN BE CONTAGIOUS AND MAKE THE WORKDAY OR TASK SO MUCH EASIER FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED. THE MORE POSITIVE YOU BECOME THE MORE POSITIVE YOU MAY NOTICE OTHERS BECOMING.

IF YOU DO HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING NEGATIVE TO A CO-WORKER ALWAYS DO SO IN PRIVATE AND IN THE MOST CONSTRUCTIVE MANNER POSSIBLE.

PITCH IN:

DON'T BE AFRAID TO WORK OUTSIDE YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION WHEN IT WILL BENEFIT A CO-WORKER OR THE TEAM EFFORT. CO-WORKERS WILL NOTICE WHEN YOU ARE WILLING TO GO THE EXTRA MILE FOR THEM AND WILL GENERALLY RETURN THE FAVOR IN YOUR TIME OF NEED. THERE ARE NO TASKS BENEATH YOU WHEN THE SUCCESS OF THE TEAM IS AT STAKE.

YOU MAY BE SURPRISED AT HOW MUCH OTHERS WILL NOTICE THE MANAGER OR SUPERVISOR WHO DOES NOT HESITATE TO PITCH IN ON EVEN THE SMALLEST TASKS. TAKING THIS ATTITUDE CAN RESULT IN CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE CO-WORKERS DON'T HESITATE TO PITCH IN AND GET THE JOB DONE!

GO THE DISTANCE:

TRY YOUR BEST TO NEVER LET YOUR CO-WORKERS DOWN. IF YOU MAKE A COMMITMENT YOU MUST DO EVERYTHING IN YOUR POWER TO FOLLOW THAT COMMITMENT TO THE END.

LETTING YOUR CO-WORKERS DOWN CAN QUICKLY ERODE ALL THE WORK YOU INVESTED IN BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS. YOU WANT TO BUILD A REPUTATION AS SOMEONE OTHERS CAN DEPEND ON AND WHOSE WORD IS A TRUSTED BOND.

ACTIVE LISTENING:

WORK ON BEING AN ACTIVE LISTENER. THERE CAN BE AN ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE IN HEARING SOMEONE SPEAK AND ACTUALLY LISTENING TO WHAT THEY ARE SAYING. WE ALL WANT TO BE HEARD WHEN WE SPEAK, BUT MOSTLY WE WANT OTHERS TO ACTUALLY LISTEN TO WHAT WE SAY. TAKING THE TIME TO LISTEN CAN BE THE BEST SHORTCUT FOR DECREASING MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND HARD FEELINGS. ACTIVELY LISTENING CAN ALSO BE A GREAT TIME SAVER AND MAKE YOUR JOB MUCH EASIER. NONE OF US HAS THE CORNER ON ALL THE GOOD IDEAS AND YOU NEVER KNOW FROM WHERE OR WHOM THAT GOOD SOLUTION IS GOING TO EMERGE.

PRESENT SOLUTIONS NOT PROBLEMS:

WHEN PROBLEMS ARE ADDRESSED TRY TO ALWAYS PRESENT THEM SERVED WITH AT LEAST A COUPLE OF POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS. YOU MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO BE PERCEIVED AS A KNOW IT ALL WITH ALL THE ANSWERS. THE IDEA IS TO BE KNOWN AS SOMEONE WHO PLACES AS MUCH EFFORT IN SEEKING ANSWERS AS POINTING OUT PROBLEMS.

IF YOU PRESENT POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS WITH AN OPEN MIND AND ACTIVE LISTENING FOR FEEDBACK, IT WILL ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO OFFER IDEAS AND THAT KIND OF COOPERATION HELPS EVERYONE.

IN CLOSING, IF IT SEEMS LIKE ALL THE RESPONSIBILITY HAS BEEN PLACED ON YOU TO BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR CO-WORKERS THEN YOU ARE RIGHT. WE CAN ONLY CONTROL OUR PART, BUT THAT IS USUALLY ENOUGH FOR MOST OF US.

ENJOY YOUR WORK AND THOSE YOU WORK BESIDE!

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FEBRUARY IS RELATIONSHIP MONTH, CONT'D.

COMMUNICATION BASICS:

COMMUNICATION EXPERTS ARE CONSTANTLY TELLING US THAT MOST COMMUNICATION IS NON-VERBAL. WITH THIS IN MIND IT IS IMPORTANT TO MONITOR WHAT YOU MAY BE COMMUNICATING IN YOUR TONE AND BEHAVIOR. FOR EXAMPLE, TURNING AWAY FROM YOUR PARTNER, READING, WATCHING TV, ETC. WHILE THEY ARE SPEAKING TO YOU COMMUNICATES A LACK OF INTEREST. EVEN IF YOU CAN DO TWO THINGS AT ONCE THAT IS NOT THE POINT. HAVING THE OTHER PERSON FEEL THAT THEY ARE IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO HAVE YOUR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION IS WHAT'S IMPORTANT.

ACTIVELY LISTENING IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL COMMUNICATION GIFTS YOU CAN PROVIDE TO SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT. AN EASY WAY TO MAKE SOMEONE FEEL THAT THEY ARE BEING LISTENED TO IS TO PROVIDE THEM FEEDBACK. BY ASKING QUESTIONS OR REPEATING BACK WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD ASSURES YOUR PARTNER THAT THEY HAVE BEEN HEARD. YOU ARE ALSO LESS LIKELY TO HAVE MISUNDERSTANDINGS IF YOU PRACTICE THESE SIMPLE ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS. BY PRACTICING THESE SKILLS YOU CAN PREVENT YOURSELF FROM FALLING INTO THE TRAP OF TRYING TO READ YOUR PARTNER'S MIND.

WHAT IS YOUR PRIORITY?

IF YOU DO NOT MAKE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS A PRIORITY THEY WILL MOST CERTAINLY SUFFER FROM NEGLECT. IN OUR BUSY LIVES IT CAN BE EASY TO LET THOSE THAT WE CARE THE MOST ABOUT TAKE A BACK SEAT TO THINGS THAT ARE REALLY OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE.

EACH DAY THAT YOU TAKE THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE FOR GRANTED IS A LOST DAY THAT CAN NEVER BE RECOVERED. THE UNEXPECTED PHONE CALL, FAVOR, OR HUG ARE REMINDERS THAT THEY ARE IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND MAKES YOUR PARTNER FEEL IMPORTANT. TO SHOW YOUR PARTNER THEY ARE THOUGHT OF EVEN WHEN NOT WITH YOU IS A SIMPLE, BUT POWERFUL GIFT OF LOVE.

MANAGE CONFLICT:

CONFLICT IS A NATURAL PART OF ANY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS. THE IDEA IS NOT TO AVOID ALL CONFLICT. THE IDEA IS TO SUCCESSFULLY MANAGE CONFLICTS WHEN

CONFLICTS ARISE. SUFFERING IN SILENCE CAN BE ABSOLUTELY POISONOUS IN A RELATIONSHIP. TAKING THE TIME TO IDENTIFY THE SOURCE OF THE CONFLICT AND WORKING TOGETHER FOR A MUTUAL SOLUTION STRENGTHENS THE INTIMACY IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

TAKING THE TIME TO TEND TO THE IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUR LIFE ASSURES YOU WILL NEVER BE ALONE AND YOUR JOURNEY IN LIFE WILL BE EASIER WALKING WITH A HELPING HAND.

RELATIONSHIPS-OF ALL KINDS-ARE LIKE SAND HELD IN YOUR HAND. HELD LOOSELY, WITH AN OPEN HAND, THE SAND REMAINS WHERE IT IS. THE MINUTE YOU CLOSE YOUR HAND AND SQUEEZE TIGHTLY TO HOLD ON, THE SAND TRICKLES THROUGH YOUR FINGERS. YOU MAY HOLD ONTO SOME OF IT, BUT MOST WILL BE SPILLED. A RELATIONSHIP IS LIKE THAT. HELD LOOSELY, WITH RESPECT AND FREEDOM FOR THE OTHER PERSON, IT IS LIKELY TO REMAIN INTACT. BUT HOLD TOO TIGHTLY, TOO POSSESSIVELY, AND THE RELATIONSHIP SLIPS AWAY AND IS LOST. ANONYMOUS

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

TIPS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF – IF YOU DON'T TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF IT IS HARD TO TAKE CARE OF SOMEONE ELSE.
- TAKE PRIDE IN BEING DEPENDABLE – TRUST IS HARD TO BUILD ON A FOUNDATION OF BEING UNRELIABLE.
- LEARN TO SAY YOU'RE SORRY – ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR MISTAKES IS A SIGN OF STRENGTH.
- OUR WAY – DEVELOP A PHILOSOPHY OF TOGETHERNESS BUILT ON GOING THROUGH LIFE OUR WAY VERSUS MY WAY AND YOUR WAY.
- LEARN TO FORGIVE – LIFE IS SIMPLY TOO SHORT AND UNPREDICTABLE TO HOLD GRUDGES AGAINST THOSE YOU LOVE.
- BE FLEXIBLE – RELATIONSHIPS NATURALLY CHANGE OVER TIME AS EACH PERSON GROWS. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN LONG TERM HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITHOUT ROOM FOR GROWTH.
- MAKE SURE THOSE YOU LOVE KNOW THEY ARE THOUGHT OF EVEN WHEN NOT AROUND.
- IF THIS WERE YOUR LAST DAY ON EARTH WHO WOULD YOU WANT TO KNOW THAT YOU CARE ABOUT THEM AND THAT THEY ARE IMPORTANT IN YOUR LIFE? NOW ACT LIKE THIS IS YOUR LAST DAY ON EARTH.
- KEEP IN MIND IT IS NOT THINGS THAT MAKE US HAPPY, BUT THE LOVE AND COMFORT WE FIND IN SHARING OUR LIVES WITH THOSE WE LOVE.

I MET IN THE STREET A VERY POOR YOUNG MAN WHO WAS IN LOVE. HIS HAT WAS OLD, HIS COAT WORN, HIS CLOAK WAS OUT AT THE ELBOWS, THE WATER PASSED THROUGH HIS SHOES -- AND THE STARS THROUGH HIS SOUL.

VICTOR HUGO