

THE EXCHANGE

SAYING "NO" MADE EASY

One of the most difficult types of communication is having to tell someone, "No." Statistics tell us that approximately 70% of the population has trouble giving rejection. There are several reasons why telling someone "no" is difficult.

- Wanting to avoid confrontation.
- Hoping to keep the person's feelings intact.
- Ensuring that the person trusts you enough to consider asking you another question.

In a time-sensitive, fast-paced society with pressured deadlines, obligations to the boss, routine meetings, and personal needs, it is easy to become over-committed. Saying "yes" might sound nice, but it may cause you to become overextended. Several mistakes can occur because we say "yes" too soon, or because we do not say "no" soon enough!

Although you may have good intentions while doing multiple projects, the limiting factor we all share is time. There will be moments when you have to tell someone no. It is possible to say no while still keeping the relationship, trust, as well as the person's ego intact. There are many ways to accomplish this.

- *Give reasons* for saying no. Instead of flatly refusing, try saying, "No, because....". Giving someone reasons for your no helps him or her to understand your negative response. It will also tell that person that your no can be conditional.

- *Be tactful* when saying no. If a person in your office has invited you to a party, but you are already preoccupied, you can say, "Thank you

very much for the invitation. I have a prior commitment at that same time, and because of it I will be unable to attend."

- *Remain available* while saying no. This only applies if you really would like to say yes. For example, "We are unable to implement this plan because our resources have already been allocated for the third quarter. I like your idea, and will put in a request today for the fourth quarter."

- *Show firmness* as you are saying no. While being decisive can save time, being uncertain can waste it! Instead of using vague words in order to spare feelings, such as "maybe," "probably," or "perhaps," state a definitive no to eliminate ambiguity. For example, "I appreciate the information that you have given me. We are satisfied with our current supplier. No thank you."

- *Be efficient* in saying no. Instead of prolonging your no to soften the blow, say it with certainty. For example, "No. We have a budget of \$10,000. Let's stay within it."

Although saying no can be difficult, treat it like removing a Band-Aid. It may hurt coming off, but you control whether it hurts for two seconds or two minutes. No is a part of life. It does not have to be as painful as we sometimes make it. Get comfortable with saying no the correct way, and watch your **yes's** become more appreciated.

Just  Say No

What Our Clients Are Saying

"I'm enjoying reading the Exchange. There was a lot of useful information in both of the issues that I've read so far, and I look forward to receiving it on an on-going basis."

David Jobe, Phoenix AZ

"There are not enough words adequate enough to tell you just how much our staff enjoyed the inservice you presented ... Various staff have made passing comments about "listening" to each other ... they are applying what you said!

Betsy Donahue, Chattanooga TN



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Disappointments should be cremated, not embalmed.

Unknown

LOOKING AHEAD:

- ◆ Get ready to laugh! Next month's issue will focus on humor!
- ◆ We are increasing contact with our clients during the first year following training. Look for emails to serve as reminders to keep you on track with your communication goals.



THE EULOGY

By Ben Cairns, M.A.



It was a balmy March day in New Orleans five years ago. The church was packed and overflowed into the narthex. There were over 450 people in attendance; all were relatives, friends, and acquaintances of my mother. She had survived four and a half years with

cancer. This was her day of commemoration; it was her funeral.

My mother had planned the entire service in advance. She picked the music, the scriptural verses, the flowers, and even the cake that we shared after the service. The Preacher rose at the key point of the service and made an unexpected announcement. "Jean's sons have asked to say a few words in place of the eulogy." He sat down.

I was stunned. This was the first I had heard of this. My brothers looked at me and I at them. Our looks each accused the other two of the sudden change. We simultaneously realized that we had nothing to do with it. "You go up there first!" my nearest brother nervously whispered. "You're the speech teacher!"

The church was hot, and my skin flushed hotter. My heart raced. I walked slowly to the pulpit. I looked out at the expectant crowd, and took a deep breath.

At that time I was a university instructor of Public Speaking. I was fully aware of the significance of the commemorative speech, and its importance in helping friends and family both grieve and remember. The commemorative speech in its finest form does honor and service to everyone who is involved. It is the most important speech about a person's life. This one was sudden and close to home.

What I said was not practiced, but in a sense, it had been prepared. When I got the call, I knew the end was very near. During the eight hour drive home to be by her side, I thought about everything. I had even wondered what things I would say if I gave my mother's eulogy. Here were some of the points that I considered:

- The eulogy is a commemorative speech.
- The purpose is to visit the most important points of a person's life, and to touch the people who were among those most important.
- For someone who suffered and was

helped, it is important to mention those who helped. It is especially important to tell how what other people did affected the person who died.

- For significant others, a special mention of what and how much they meant can be helpful.
- There are so many things to say, and you must pick the most important few.
- It's good to mention some of the fun times. Mention things that made that person unique, especially the details that only the people who knew the person would know.
- Lessons can be learned from a person's life experiences, and often from their death. This is of central significance.
- Making some sense of death can help grieving. Unfortunately, there are times when death makes no sense. Even if there is no sense, there is always meaning.
- In our Christian culture, death is a transition. The suffering has ended and a new time has come.
- A good eulogy brings people closer to their memories, helps make sense in the face of loss, connects the survivors, and makes God more important.

The actual words I used are lost in the fog of strong emotion. I do remember that I mentioned the most important people in my mother's life. I said the things I knew would have been important to her. I talked about her life and the good things. We laughed. I talked about how my mom handled dying and how I learned from her what it *really* means to die with grace and God. We cried. The reminders of what I needed to say sat and stood before me, and rested quietly on my left. My words included them all. At the end, I sat down. Then my brothers shared. My mom would have been proud of us. She would have been proud of what we said.

You never know when you might be called to "say a few words." Regardless of the purpose, being prepared by thinking ahead of time about the most important points can save the day (as it did for me!).



QUICK TIPS:

- Avoidance and procrastination only make difficult communication more difficult.
- Practice out loud the tough message you will give. Listen to your words and tone of voice.
- Keep your rate slow during difficult communications. A slower rate conveys more seriousness.



To learn more about it, click here!

BITE YOUR TONGUE

By Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.



Biting your tongue is painful, irritating, and when done at the wrong time, embarrassing. Unfortunately, it is also sometimes necessary.

The origins of the idiom "Bite your tongue" are exactly as they sound. If you ever underestimate the importance of using your tongue while talking, just hold the tip of it and try to say your name. Just holding the tongue can make speech very difficult. Now try biting the tongue and speaking. Is it easy?

Today, this idiom refers to remaining quiet rather than speaking. Forty-six percent of the population can have trouble holding their thoughts, which can lead them to say something without thinking. (Sound like anyone you know?) When the tongue is bitten, it is hard to talk. The advice to "*bite your tongue*" means it is better to remain silent.

Pause before you talk to make your statements more appreciated. It allows you to better form your thoughts. Humans think at an average of 500 words/minute. Pausing for only 3 minutes can allow you to choose up to 1,500 words properly.

- Pausing can help you to calm down when you are emotional. It is at our most emotional times when we are likely to make statements without thinking.
- Pausing will also show others that you thought about your response or answer. This will make your statements better valued.

The next time you are having difficulty communicating and you want to say something effective, remember to incorporate a pause. It is more useful and definitely less painful than "*biting your tongue*".

YOU'RE FIRED!

The American Heritage Dictionary is still a valued reference book in this age of e-knowledge. The definitions for "fire" are numerous, yet all are filled with strong language, such as "rapid," "magnitude," "destructive power," "enthusiasm," "inspiration," "torment," "exposed," or "excitement." One must be patient to reach the 29th definition that reads, "To discharge from a position." Ironically, this definition contains meager words that describe a catastrophic reaction in the mind of the individual who hears those dreaded words, "You're Fired", as well as the one who

speaks them.

Firing someone is one of the toughest communications to give. The dread can range from feeling so disappointed that the words resemble bile in the throat to feelings of vindication combined with fear that retribution will follow. If you are a manager, it is likely that one day you will have to fire someone. What can make this situation easier?

Firing is a tangle of emotions. To ease the delivery and reception of the act, step outside of the emotions and look at the behavior that caused the action. Omit personal words like "you". Instead of saying, "You did not meet the specific goals set for you," say, "The specific goals we agreed upon were not met." Likewise, avoid labels and describe the action. Do not tell someone, "This company does not tolerate bullies." Rather, say, "Yelling at employees is not tolerated at this company."

Except in extreme cases, where someone commits a blatant error such as theft, the firing is the end result of multiple steps in the process. When an individual makes a grievous mistake, make sure you communicate with them about the corrective or probationary process on a regular basis. The firing, if necessary, does not need to be a surprise.



It is usually a good idea to have another person present when the individual is told s/he is terminated. Besides providing a witness, a third party can keep the conversation on task and decreases the possibility that emotions will rise to the surface.

More common than firings are layoffs. In this case, the individual still loses employment, yet the reason may lie outside the individual's control. This does not mean it is any easier to give or receive this message. To ease giving this troublesome communication, be as prompt as possible. Rumors run rampant during these times. State the fact that this individual is being laid off. Give the reasons. Discuss the terms. Verbalize their many attributes and offer to put them in writing to be used as a reference.

Whenever someone is fired or laid-off, remember that both people are feeling negative and defensive. Plan exactly what you are going to say. This is no time to be spontaneous or speak off the cuff. Get to the point quickly. Do your job. Keep emotions out of the conversation. Tomorrow will be a better day.



Remember to . . .

- Discuss the event or behavior rather than the person.
- Send appropriate body language when giving a difficult message. Practicing in front of a mirror can help.
- Consider the behavioral style of the individual you are talking to. This can determine how much detail you give and how you approach the person.

To have courage for whatever comes in life -- everything lies in that.

Saint Teresa of Avila



In their 1999 book **Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most** (Penguin Putnam Inc.) authors Stone, Patton, and Heen discuss how to deal with the various difficult communications that we face in our lives. For Ben Cairns' review of this book please e-mail him at abc@talklisten.com.

Real difficulties can be overcome; it is only the imaginary ones that are unconquerable.

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AN OLD FASHIONED WAY TO COMMUNICATE

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, CEO

We have become accustomed to quick and to-the-point communications. What we used to send via fax now whirls through electronic space as an email. Remember when we took the time to purchase a card or stationary, carefully worded our thoughts in our own handwriting, and sent the message through the postal system or delivered it in person?

When we need to express support, encourage someone who is suffering, or apologize for a wrong committed, sometimes the old fashioned written communication is just what the doctor ordered. I think we neglect this mode of communication because it requires our most precious commodity: our time. The tougher the message, the more important it is to give our time.

In January, I pursued a life-long dream to learn to play the harp. A dear friend located a woman, Jo, who was willing to teach me, an extreme amateur. For weeks I attacked the strings hitting the wrong chords and placed pregnant pauses while my fingers groped for the correct notes. Jo was always patient and encouraging. The smile on her face reflected the love in her heart for music and those that attempted to master it.

Jo's love of life was an inspiration to me. She lost her only child, an accomplished concert harpist, to meningitis on March 4, 1999. The music room in her home, where she taught me, was filled with Jan's harps, awards, pictures – all loving memories. Jo bravely explained that she had decided to celebrate Jan's life rather than mourn her death. On their expansive property, Jo and her husband had dedicated a floral garden to Jan's memory – a garden of life.



My next lesson was scheduled for March 5th. As a mother, I could only imagine the pain of living through another

anniversary of my child's death. I felt I needed to acknowledge the feelings and empathy, yet our relationship was new so I pondered how I would approach this. Then I remembered an old fashioned way to show you care.

When I was in South Africa, I purchased some exotic flower seeds for my courtyard. For an unexplained reason, I had never planted them. They remained in my gift closet as though set aside for a special moment. I included the seeds with a penned note on handmade note cards with embroidered flowers (another gift I had been saving.) Soon, on the side of Signal Mountain in a loving memorial floral garden, the blooms of Bird of Paradise will speak volumes for me.

Life is precious and it passes quickly. For whom do you need to send an old fashioned communication? Plan it. Do it. Live your dreams!

ASK THE EXPERTS



Dear TLC,

I have a supervisor who reports to me that has body odor. Otherwise, he is a good employee. What's the best way to correct this? P.U.

Dear P. U.,

Begin corrections with an open question. In this case, take this man to a neutral and private location and ask something like, "How sensitive are you to odors?" After listening, explain that some people are more sensitive to the sensation of smell than others. Tell him that you detect body odor from him and that it may likely be offensive to people who come in close contact with him. Ask, "What can you do differently to help with this?" If his answers are plausible, ask him to implement them. If not, be prepared to give suggestions such as: daily showers with soap before coming to work, wearing laundered clothes, or seeing a physician. Be sure to follow through with a compliment when you notice a change.

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by email [tlc@talklisten.com] or phone [1-888-232-2873]. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!

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