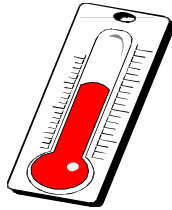


THE EXCHANGE

SECOND NATURE

By Ben Cairns, M.A.

Have you ever said something in the heat of an argument that you immediately knew you should not have said? Do you have trouble concentrating when you are stressed? After a confrontation did you later think of the perfect thing you should have said but did not? If you answered "yes" to these questions, you have personal examples of what happens to a normal person under stress.



Stress is an automatic physiological reaction to adapt and defend. For those of you who took Psychology 101 in college, you'll remember the term "fight or flight response." The body's automatic reaction to protect you from danger is the first natural level of response. In the presence of imminent physical danger, the best way to survive is either to fight for life or flee to safety.

The result of the fight or flight response is an extremely strong hormonal discharge of adrenaline that supercharges the body. The adrenaline also automatically shuts down complex thinking processes because they take time, and time is of the essence in an emergency situation. Your body is in "automatic defense mode."

At varying levels, the fight or flight response is invoked in response to perceived "danger" from events such as missed deadlines, worries, angry people, and conflicts. While fight or flight is first nature, second nature is behavior we have programmed as an automatic response through trial and error experience.

Unfortunately, our learned behaviors are not always the best reactions to conflict.

When your heart races and your emotions boil, your brain already has the message that you are in danger. It will automatically shut down the higher executive powers of thinking and prepare you to respond defensively and to be physically active. This is why you may say things you will later regret, have difficulty concentrating, or difficulty thinking of the best thing to say at the time.

Just recognizing that automatic and defensive reactions may not be the most appropriate interpersonal response is the first step. So, what do you do when you are in conflict and you are upset? Here are some solutions that have worked well for many of our clients:

- Be aware when you or the other person is defensive, upset, or angry.
- Slow things down; slow the rate of your speech and lower your volume and pitch.
- Soften your body language; lean in, smile, tilt your head.
- Decide if you need some cool-down time and take it if necessary.
- Take a brisk walk to burn off adrenaline.
- Pause before you verbalize or respond to what the other person says or does.
- Consider what you say and edit it to make it more neutral.
- Seek to understand the other person's point of view and how they got there.
- Validate the other person and focus on behaviors, facts, and solutions.
- Look for collaborative opportunities (Win-Win).

Continued on Page 2

What Our Clients Are Saying

"I enjoy having the Communication Reunions as a reminder. Revisiting our goals and seeing how much better we are communicating is confirmation we are achieving our goals."

Phil Meade, Atlanta GA

"I am really excited about your upcoming session and I hope that we will be able to work something out to accommodate the people on the waiting list!"

Angela Pessolano, Atlanta GA



JULY 2001

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...be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

James 1:19

LOOKING AHEAD:

- ♦ **The August Exchange will focus on improving written communication.**
- ♦ **Fall for Training.**



Remember to...

- Ask before you tell during a conflict.
- Demonstrate open posture during conflict resolution which sends the signals that you are both open to alternative ideas and confident of resolution.
- Keep your vocal pitch, volume, and rate down to demonstrate confidence and self-control.



To learn more about it, click here!

SECOND NATURE, continued from Page 1

- Be willing to compromise when appropriate.
- Use your Public Plan (1. Recognize, 2. Missile, 3. PowerWord).

It is natural that we have a hard time finding the right thing to say when we are upset and in conflict. That is why it is so important to be a part of the solution instead of automatically making angry provocations or responses. It takes only a little more time to slow nature down and go for the higher ground. Make your communications "on purpose." If properly handled, conflict generates solution. Make it your second nature to be more productive!

I "SEA" YOUR POINT!

Actual radio conversation released by the Chief of Naval Operations 10-10-95:

#1: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.

#2: Recommend you divert YOUR course 5 degrees to South to avoid a collision.

#1: This is the captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

#2: No. Recommend you divert YOUR course.

#1: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER "ENTERPRISE." WE ARE A LARGE WARSHIP OF THE US NAVY. DIVERT YOUR COURSE NOW!

#2: This is a lighthouse. Your call.

Source: Internet

MEET DON WHEELER

TLC welcomes Don as our new Administrative Assistant. A native of Chattanooga, he has worked in Atlanta for the last six years. His experience includes accounting, office management, sales, and customer relations. We look forward to Don growing with our team.



PERMANENT SOLUTIONS



If the constant dripping of a leaky faucet annoys you, you might place a sponge under the tap to absorb the sound. But the actual problem has not been solved. The permanent solution is to fix the drip!

In our fast-paced, technology-driven, bottom-line approach to success, we look to resolve only one or two issues at a time. This can be effective in the short term, but it does not give us a method of solving different challenges. By following practical tips that can be applied in numerous situations, we not only resolve the current problems, we develop techniques for solving potential dilemmas in the future.

You have a challenge when you know something has gone wrong and it is up to you to fix it. Follow these tips to achieve solutions:

- Ask open questions. The most open begin with "how" and "what." Use these to understand the other person's perspective and get more details.
- Ask closed questions. These begin with verbs such as "did," "is," "will," "can," and "are." There are many to choose from. So use them to confirm understanding and bring closure to the issue.
- Provide specific information such as numbers, percentages, times, and names. Do this instead of using vague words such as: "a lot," "more," "less," "later," "soon," and "they." This can prevent misunderstandings.
- Take notes. It might seem silly to say, "Let me jot this down to make sure I understand everything", but it can minimize error and increase efficiency, and there is nothing silly about that!
- Provide suggestions. Too many times corrections only focus on what someone did wrong. Provide suggestions and alternatives or ask them what they think the best approach is. By including their input, you resolve the current issue and can avoid future conflicts.

Embrace conflicts. Without them we would have little growth. View conflicts as opportunities to improve. During your next conflict, instead of going for a temporary solution, strive to permanently solve it!

NIP IT IN THE BUD

By Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.



Nip it in the bud, as it is commonly used today, means to recognize that a problem or misunderstanding has the potential to get out of hand and that addressing it immediately could prevent any further damage. So

what does that saying have to do with resolving conflicts? If you have even the slightest green thumb, you probably already know!

Horticulturists, people who study the art of garden cultivation, have been practicing a method of pruning for centuries. "Nip" refers to clipping and the "bud" is the part of the plant that produces fruit. Nipping the bud of a plant would prevent fruit from sprouting. This was a method of controlling the plant's growth. If this was not done routinely, the plant's growth could get out of control.

Even today, when "*nip it in the bud*" is used, it refers to putting an end to something that has potential to get out of hand, such as a conflict. If you are a TLC client, you know that conflicts can put you in the Red Zone, or at an emotional level that can cause anxiety. The next time you are faced with a conflict, stay out of the Red Zone by "*nipping it in the bud*."

CONFLICT: RESOLUTION OR REVOLUTION

Most people do not like conflict. It is viewed as trouble and a disruption to harmony. In business, small conflicts are often avoided. They are, after all, miniscule and the hope is that they will simply go away.

Business can learn from political science. Most revolutions start after a series of small conflicts are ignored. Look at the formation of our country. The King of England did not commit one act that caused his loyal subjects to revolt. Numerous requests went unanswered that led to discontent and eventually, revolution.

The lesson to be learned is that a lack of communication is no way to handle conflict. It seldom goes away. Rather, unresolved conflict often becomes the fuel for future

revolutions. Instead, when a conflict is suspected, a confrontation is recommended.

The meaning of confrontation means coming face-to-face to discuss ideas. To help confrontations be most successful:

- Beat the clock. Collect information as soon as you hear about the issue.
- Gather different perspectives.
- Stop yourself from becoming defensive.
- Listen to your gut instinct.
- Be open to different opinions and be able to separate them from the facts.
- Make a corrective plan that is bigger than the problem.
- Follow through with the plan.
- Complete a "Lesson Learned" review after the conflict.

Once a conflict is solved we often think we have failed when the same or similar conflict reoccurs. Change your thinking. There are constant changes in business that require us to rethink answers. The very word "resolution" broken down is **re-**resolution. Doing it again is okay as long as it is done differently and in accordance with the current environment.

The best resolution is one that is discovered before the conflict develops. Aggressively look around and ahead. Even a huge boulder in the road up ahead is manageable if you see it soon enough to change course.

Maybe you have noticed that between "resolution" and "revolution," there is only one letter that is different. One small thing can make a huge difference in results. Look for small conflicts and solve them now. Begin today and continue tomorrow. Resolution is the choice for conflict.

Welcome Back Melissa



After her maternity leave, we welcome back Melissa Smith as our editor of The Exchange. We know our readers have missed her almost as much as we have.



To reap an abundant harvest of joy, remember to plant daily seeds of kindness.

Anonymous

Never argue at the dinner table, for the one who is not hungry always gets the best of the argument.

Richard Whateley

Helpful Tips:

- **When conflict is identified, take action.**
- **Look for patterns to prevent future conflicts.**
- **After you think a problem has been solved, follow through to ensure that the solution fit the need.**



CONFLICT, "WELL" HANDLED

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, CEO

One of my guiding principles is to turn apparent obstacles into opportunities for growth and success. When conflict enters my life, behind the inconvenience of the disruption to life as I know it, I realize I am going to get smarter and will be victorious if I look for the disguised opportunity. The following story sums it up well.

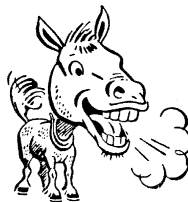
An old mule fell into a farmer's well. The farmer decided it would cost less time and money to bury the mule inside the dry well than to retrieve it. Soon farmhands began shoveling dirt into the well. As the first load of dirt assaulted his back, the mule was mortified! After his many years of dedicated service, he felt devastated that he was being attacked for making a mistake. Within minutes the mule realized that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back, he should shake it off and step up.

And so he did. He kept affirming, "Shake it off and step up!" which he followed with action. I imagined that sometimes he panicked; maybe he even faltered for a step or two. He kept affirming and taking action. I think it is important to point out that no one was cheering him on. The workers had been given a directive to bury the problem and they were determined to succeed. As they shoveled more dirt at an increased rate, the mule was able to accomplish his goal faster. Exhausted and battered, the old mule triumphantly stepped over the wall of the well. What initially appeared to be his doom, actually helped him – all because of the manner in which he handled his conflict.

What hole have you fallen into lately? What are you doing with the dirt being thrown at you?

Determine what you can do and stop focusing on what you can't do.

Never give up. Shake it off. Step up. Live your dream.



No one would have ever crossed the ocean if he could have gotten off the ship in the storm.

Charles Kettering

Temper is what gets most of us in trouble. Pride is what keeps us there.

Anonymous

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ASK THE EXPERTS



Dear TLC,

I keep telling my coworker about a better way for us to coordinate our work plans, but he doesn't listen to me. It seems like the more times I tell him what we need to do the less he hears. My intention is that we work well together, but he is making me very angry. I was almost shouting at him last week and he totally ignored me. What can I do to get through to this person? Sign me "Exasperated."

Dear Exasperated,

I have two suggestions. First, judging from the language in your letter you might be using some language that may cause your coworker to listen to only part of what is said. Using "but" in sentences has the effect of negating or reversing the meaning of the first part of the communication. So, when you say "my intention is to work well together, *but...*" all he may hear is what comes after that! Use "and" or make it two sentences to have a more positive effect.

Next, try this approach when you talk: Keep your vocal volume and pitch low and talk with a relaxed cadence. Use a "low key" approach. Ask him for his suggestions about how to work better together. Listen to his responses and avoid the temptation to respond with your own tangents or rebuttals. Give him plenty of time to share his ideas and side of things. Once he has, acknowledge his points by rephrasing them in your own words. After that he may be more receptive to listening to your suggestion!

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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