

THE EXCHANGE

This issue's featured subject is "Reducing Defensiveness."

WORDS TO AVOID

Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.



Ever put your foot in your mouth so deeply that you burped shoe polish? If you are like me, you have not only done this, but when you did it, you tried to make things better and then ended up doing it again! In communication, there are certain words that we use on a regular basis that we think

are okay or even good to use in a conversation. In actuality, these words can make situations worse.

At TLC, we call these TroubleWords,[®] because they create defensiveness in others. Let's examine three of these words in further detail.

1. But.

The Trouble: Use of the word "but" cancels out everything that was said before it and tells that person that the speaker only cares about what came after it. For example, if you said to someone, "I hear your point, but,...." What you are really saying is, "I did not hear your point. In fact I probably didn't listen to all of it. What I think is important is my own idea." Although you might not actually be using those words, that is what the person hears.

The Alternative: Instead of saying "but" or beginning your statement with, "Yeah, but, ..." pause instead. After pausing, either make your statement, or, ask them a positive question. For example, "I hear your point. I have not thought of it that way. What are your thoughts about ... [insert your idea]?"

Note: Avoid other words such as "however" that can be used interchangeably with "but." They will get you in the same trouble.

2. Never

The Trouble: "Never" makes an unconditional

statement. Few things are so definite that they will never happen. It will only take one instance to prove a "never" statement wrong. It makes it seem like you exaggerate and it reduces your credibility when you overuse "never."

The Alternative: Be specific about what you are saying. Quantify with dates, times, and specifics. For example, instead of saying, "You never agree with the team, ever. It makes me so mad!" say, "You said that the last three suggestions would fail. What suggestions might work?"

Note: Also avoid the words "always," "everyone," "no one," and "forever."

3. Must

The Trouble: Use of the word "must" turns a statement into a command.

The Alternative: Give the reasons and desired results by stating the benefits about the desired behavior. For example, instead of saying, "You must get your paper work in on time." say, "Getting your paperwork in by 5 p.m. Friday will guarantee your paycheck is in your box by 9 a.m. Monday."

Note: Also avoid the words "should," "need," "you better," "you ought to," etc.

We often get into confrontational situations by saying the wrong words. The best way to avoid those situations is by knowing what NOT to say!

For other words to avoid that can create defensiveness in others, see the book, Talk is NOT Cheap, by Beverly



November 2003

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

LOST YOUR MIND?	2
ALIGNING WITH PEOPLE	2
CATCH MORE FLIES WITH HONEY THAN WITH VINEGAR	3
THE POWER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	3
CEO CORNER: "Motion Changes Emotion"	4
ASK THE EXPERTS	4
FEATURED SERVICE: Have Money Left Over in Your Annual Budget?	4

LOOKING AHEAD:

◆ The December issue of The Exchange will focus on Relaxation.

LOOKING BACK:

◆ For previous editions of The Exchange, go to our [back issues](#).

◆ Re-read the [12/2002](#) edition: Listening.

I just wish my mouth had a backspace key.

Anonymous

What Our Clients Are Saying

The TLC class was truly a life-changing experience. Immediately, I began benefiting both professionally and personally by using my new communication skills. I have also learned a lot about myself. The trainers were incredible. It has absolutely made a difference in my life. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to take this class.

Laurie Sacchetto, Atlanta GA



LOST YOUR MIND?

By Ben Cairns, M.A.

Our bodies are set up to assure our survival. That's why the "fight or flight" response sometimes takes over. Our brains are programmed to shut down the logical and rational thinking of the left hemisphere when we are in danger so that we can act quickly. The emotional right hemisphere of our brains takes over and our actions default to automatic behaviors.



In fact, any strong emotion dulls our rationality. Have you ever known someone who missed the warning signs in a developing relationship? Just think about how people fall "madly" in love. The term is no mistake! An emotional sales approach sometimes sways people to buy things that they later have "buyer's remorse" about. And, when we argue, our words and logic escape us. We might sometimes blurt (or shout) out things we never would say in a calmer moment. The inverse relationship between logic and emotion is easily observed in literature, media, relationships, politics, and business.

Know when you or another person is functioning with one side of their brain tied behind their back. That might not be the best time to interact, make decisions, or act on the spot. Have you ever sent an emotional email you later wished you could delete? You may have more than "buyer's remorse" if you do.

Here is how to handle emotional (half brained) situations:

- 1. Evaluate.** First, be honest with yourself whenever you get defensive. Recognize limitations in yourself and others. Be aware.
- 2. Calm down.** Use the Public Plan[®] (Talk Is NOT Cheap, 1999 Bard Press). After you have recognized a defensive situation, interrupt your negative and self-limiting thoughts and emotions with a missile; immediately change your emotion with a PowerWord[®].
- 3. Decide.** Is this the best time to handle this? Is this too hot to handle right now? Perhaps a "time out" or a break is in order. Use the words "Let's take a break. I want this to be productive for both of us, and I'm not at my best right now." Come back when you are composed and can handle things calmly.

It is normal to "lose your mind" when you are defensive. Insanity is rarely a good defense, and then only in the courtroom. Avoid the traps and errors that naturally come from being defensive. Live your life using all of your powers! Control situations to make the best use of your rational self.

ALIGNING WITH PEOPLE

When striving to communicate with someone who is defensive or offensive, it is very helpful to let them know that you understand where they are emotionally. While identifying their emotion, it is necessary to remain neutral in your own feelings.

For example, if someone is frustrated with your service and s/he is quoting inaccurate data, it will not help to simply give the correct information, because that person may not be able to listen to you. Instead, align with their feelings by saying something like, "I can tell that following the written process is very important to you." The person will probably agree with you and if you listen closely, you will notice that their voice is now a little lower in pitch, volume, and rate. In other words, the person has started to calm down. Only then will they be able to fully listen to the correct information.

If you want to motivate a person who is down in the dumps, it may not be well received to approach them like a cheerleader. Instead, match their body language, ask them an open question to get them started talking, align verbally by saying, "Disappointments can really be tough to handle." Be willing to listen a little bit more, then ask a question that will get the topic on the solution to the problem, instead of the disappointment.

Most people respond more positively to someone who is willing to accept them where they are. So, meet them half-way and then raise them up to where they need to be.



Helpful Hints:

- Look for quick movements to alert you that someone is getting defensive.
- Listen for a raise in pitch, volume, or vocal rate to know they are getting angry.

People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

Anonymous



To learn more about it, click here!

CATCH MORE FLIES WITH HONEY THAN WITH VINEGAR



It was Martin Luther King who said, "It is unfortunate that we still cannot disagree about violence, without being violently disagreeable." When it comes to keeping emotions calm or saying the right things in the right way, we often become so focused on just getting the message out that

we forget that our words can cut with an edge as sharp as a razor.

Remember the advice your mother probably gave you when you asked, "How do I make friends with those who are mean to me?" Her answer may have been a very popular expression; "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." So what do flies, honey, and vinegar have to do with making friends? Let's look at the origin of this idiom.

To avoid the annoying task of chasing flies in enclosed areas, an alternative was used to lure flies to traps with little effort. Flies are repelled by sour smells such as vinegar, but are attracted to sweet smells like honey. To capture a fly, pour honey on something and set it out in the open. When a fly lands on the honey, it becomes stuck.

When people yell or get angry with us, it is our nature to want to yell and get angry in return. The result is two angry people with no problems solved, who wind up with sore throats and egos! The alternative is to keep your voice and rate low, and maintain a neutral to positive tone. Saying informative, kind, and solution-focused words is more appreciated in arguments than using opinionated, mean, and problem-focused words.

Whether bad or good, we sometimes get reactions to what we give off. If you want to be a clear and positive communicator, use sugar. Save the vinegar for the salads!

THE POWER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Have you ever heard two emotional people trying to talk over each other? Were you one of those people? If so, then you know firsthand how frustrating it can be to try to get your point across when both of you are too defensive to listen. Listening first and acknowledging the other person's emotions is a precondition for listening (see "Aligning With People" on page 2). One of Stephen Covey's seven

habits of highly effective people is to seek first to understand, then to be understood. Acknowledgement gives you the power to listen and then be understood.

Watch people who are good at acknowledging others and use their actions as a model. Here are some things you might notice when successful people do it:

- They neutrally reflect the emotion with statements like "I can tell this makes you upset."
- They listen first and avoid interrupting.
- They use pauses before answering or speaking.
- They use good eye contact.
- Their facial expressions are neutral or indicate thoughtfulness.
- Their body orientation indicates that they are engaged in the conversation.
- They ask "What" and "How" questions to get the other person to open up.
- They keep their vocal volume, pitch, and rate low and slow.
- They paraphrase their understanding.
- They avoid TroubleWords[®] like "you" and "but."

Some of the benefits of acknowledging the other person are that it:

- Validates the other person.
- Clears the way for them to release the space in their mind that was holding on to their thoughts and emotions.
- Gives the listener the advantage of knowledge before speaking.
- Creates an interpersonal dynamic based on taking turns.
- Shares the power and responsibility for the interaction.
- Encourages the other person to think, contribute, participate, hear you, respond to you, be creative, and be solution-oriented.

Sometimes emotions can get in the way of rational thinking (see "Lost Your Mind?" on page 2). Good communication is not always easy. When you strive to be a better communicator, the responsibility of controlling yourself is simply greater. Hopefully, your results will be greater, too. Acknowledge the other person to give both of you the power.



Remember to...

- **Listen without interrupting when someone is defensive.**
- **Occasionally nod your head as you listen so you get credit for being a good listener.**

The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't being said.

Two monologues do not make a dialogue.

Jeff Daly

Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge.

The kindest word in all the world is the unkind word left unsaid.



It is impossible to walk rapidly and be unhappy.
Mother Teresa

Just as your car runs more smoothly and requires less energy to go faster and farther when the wheels are in perfect alignment, you perform better when your thoughts, feelings, emotions, goals, and values are in balance.
Brian Tracy

TLC, Talk Listen Communicate, LLC

842 S Germantown Road
Chattanooga, TN 37412

Phone: 423-622-8255
Fax: 423-624-4365
1-888-BECAUSE

Email: tlc@talklisten.com
www.talklisten.com

**CEO CORNER:
"Motion Changes Emotion"**

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, MA CCC-SLP

I believe that Anthony Robbins is credited with saying that motion changes emotion. I love the expression because it is true, contains a solution to defensiveness, and is easy to remember. As a highly dominant person, it comes in handy for me quite often.

Last week, I was flying home from Washington, D.C. on a Friday. My meeting was going to end earlier than previously published in the agenda, so I opted to change my flight to arrive home in time to welcome my son home for college fall break. The earlier flight was late in leaving so I missed the connection in Atlanta and was told I was booked on the next flight over 4 hours later. While I was being told that the plane had already left, I could readily see it on the tarmac.

I am sure that running through Hartsfield Airport, dragging my suitcase to get to this connecting flight on time, and a lack of food attributed to the throbbing I was beginning to feel in my temples. Regardless of the physical strains, I was throbbing because I was frustrated. The next flight was only one gate away, but I took off walking, more ambling this time. I walked all the way to the ticket counter for my airline. By the time I got there, I was calm, focused, and determined rather than frustrated.

I got home an hour earlier than the next flight to Chattanooga and even made \$63 by cashing in my ticket and taking a shuttle home. Most importantly, I accomplished it without being angry or frustrated.

The next time you feel anger start to burn inside you, move! Walk. Stretch. This motion will use up the adrenaline, the circulating fatty acids, the restricted blood vessels in your eyes, and slow the excessive blood pumping through your veins. Our bodies were designed to handle stress by physically attacking or



retreating from the threat. So walk when you balk. Move the mood. Jump when you hit a bump. Or as Tony so aptly put it, "Motion changes emotion." Move and live your dreams.

ASK THE EXPERTS



Dear TLC,

I know that I get defensive easily and feel that this can be career limiting. Suggestions?
Career Challenged

Dear Career,

When you first feel defensive, acknowledge your feelings by saying, "I want to remain open to suggestions and corrections. What can help here?" If you still feel defensive, state, "I'm feeling defensive and I want to be open." If you don't say it with your words, your body and tone of voice will speak for you. Being up-front is the first step to managing defensiveness.

**FEATURED SERVICE:
Have Money Left Over in Your Annual Budget?**

If you have been carefully monitoring your budget throughout the year, now is the perfect time to contact TLC to conduct end-of-year training for your department. Choose a fun day of team building, or partial or full days for behavioral style training, public speaking, meeting management, listening, or stress. Call TLC at 888-BECAUSE (232-2873) to schedule.

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!

All original materials in this newsletter are the copyrighted property of TLC, Talk Listen Communicate, LLC. For reprint permission, please email a request to tlc@talklisten.com.