Lessons from the Counselor’s Couch

Communication

Communication in a relationship is essential for making it work and last. We are always communicating and we have to remember, approximately 80 percent of all communication is nonverbal and 20 percent is verbal. So, if you are saying one thing and your body is saying another, people will believe the nonverbal communication.

We may think we are good communicators, but are we really? I enjoy working with couples and practicing communication skills. It doesn’t matter how long some couples have been together, sometimes we have to “tweek” our skills. It is amazing how people yell and scream at each other and when in my office it might be the first time they have talked in a normal tone and volume.

I tell couples, if you do not call each other names, put the other person down, shame them, and if you do not try to hurt them on purpose, do not take it personal. We may need to take a break from talking about something and it is ok to walk away, knowing you have to come back at some point and discuss the issue. We sometimes become angry when the other person doesn’t do what we want them to; however, we cannot control anyone but ourselves. If we give up the idea of control, we will not get as angry.

There are many things you can find online on how to communicate to improve your skills. It might seem childish and like you are in first grade but that is ok, do it anyway. One simple way to talk with someone is to say, I feel ________ because of ________. Do not start out by accusing the other person, this may lead to a fight. Do not be afraid to see a counselor for some help. You are not a failure at anything and you are not less than anyone if you see a counselor. It can be helpful to have an objective opinion from someone who is not emotionally involved.

One question to always ask yourself, “Do I want to be right or do I want to be happy?” Most people want to be right, but if we approach a conflict or concern without having a defensive posture to start with, we may hear what the other person is communicating. Most people have a difficult time with conflict, yet if we remain patient and open minded, we may just be happy!

Tom Olson, LPCC
Supervisory Update

Handling Customer & Client Concerns

Organizations with managers who work at pleasing those they serve show a solid pattern of success over the years. And, such commitment from the top must be communicated to all employees. Make sure your employees share your vision for success, and know how they can bring that about through your own positive example.

When a customer or client calls to complain or to present a concern, make note of his or her name right away. The caller will be impressed with your attentiveness and ability to personalize the conversation. Writing the caller’s name down will also save you from asking: “And, what did you say your name was again?”

Five words to avoid when dealing with callers: “Sorry, but that’s our policy.” Instead, provide explanations that convey concern and sound credible to the caller. Referring to policies tend to cause frustrated people to become even more angry and upset.

Sometimes it’s not enough to just offer to solve a problem. Many times the caller’s primary motivation is to simply “blow off steam.” Therefore, it’s important to let frustrated people tell their side of the story without interruption.

Never argue. Even if the caller is saying things in anger that are untrue. By letting frustrated people express themselves, you’re also letting them calm down. When the anger subsides, describe your understanding of the concern to the caller. The message to convey is: “This is an important concern and I want to do what’s right.” You don’t have to admit error but show that you’re glad the person called and that you intend to respond in a professional manner.

Be sure to find out exactly what it is the caller wants and then explain what you can or cannot do. If you can solve the problem, do so promptly. If not, go to someone who can or suggest options to the caller. Never, under any circumstances, knowingly make a promise to a caller that you don’t intend to or cannot keep.

Do something out of the ordinary when you receive legitimate complaints. Usually a letter and an apology go a long way to resolve the concerns presented. If appropriate, you might also wish to offer a free service or tasteful gift to convey how much you value the caller’s association with your organization.

Follow up. Within a week, call to assure that the problem has been resolved and that the caller received what you said you would deliver. When you handle the caller’s problem quickly and efficiently, you have gone a long way in securing a positive association for the future.

The message in business today is clear. The only measure for success is performance. Whatever the roadblocks, it’s your job to remove them. If not, you’ll be perceived as one of them.
Well Done!

What would it be worth to hear your supervisor say "Well done!" about your work? Could it be worth a huge boost in your self-confidence, a raise or even a promotion? There's nothing holding you back except yourself. You can learn new skills and advance your career to new heights.

There are acceptable ways to try to impress your supervisor, and there are dead-end ways that will get you nowhere. The key is to make yourself valuable to your organization. Take the time to determine the needs of your company or agency, and then figure out how you can fulfill those needs. It’s a crucial first step, but you don’t have to take it unprepared.

Here are six things you can do to increase your potential for success:

• Be a solution-provider, not a problem-presenter. Effective employees surround themselves with others who can create solutions. Solution-providers demonstrate creativity and problem-solving skills, while making their supervisor’s or manager’s life easier.
• Go beyond your job responsibilities by volunteering to take on additional projects or participate on committees. This will show your initiative while offering exposure to others who might not normally see your potential.
• Assess your skills and knowledge and actively work toward improving your value to your supervisor and your organization.
• Ask for feedback from your supervisor regarding areas in which you need to improve. Again, this will show initiative and may open your eyes to potential areas of need for your supervisor as well as your organization.
• Be willing to take-on new challenges. And when mistakes are made, own up to them and use them as an opportunity to learn and do things differently in the future.
• Find an area that you excel in and use it to stand out from the crowd. Whether it’s your people skills or your ability to create a fantastic training presentation let others see your expertise. Don’t hesitate to share your knowledge or skills with others.
• Learning how to present yourself as a professional is an important step in a successful career.

January is Mental Wellness Month

One way to achieve well-being is to find personal balance.