

COMMUNICATION: PART 6

Your choice of words is more important than you think! And—your words are important to carry out an effective leadership role. So let us continue with our quest for many communication choices for the leader.

Giving Choices: When you require something of a person, it is wise to have options in mind. Control of a decision to do something or make a choice empowers a capable person and adds a dimension of freedom to a situation that would otherwise be stifling. The key is that you allow more than one choice and do not care what option or order the person selects. It is an excellent technique for many situations.

It is also an excellent technique for children who need to experience the opportunity to make good life choices. Life involves options and choices, and learning to make appropriate choices is part of the maturing process.

Examples---

You might have a choice to go to a dance or ride your exercise bike. The goal is to exercise, and both options meet the goal. The choice is yours.

Tim has two reports he must complete within the next 24 hours. The goal is to meet the deadline. Does it matter to you which report he completes first? The choice of what report he does first is Tim's choice—and empowers Tim in the decision-making process.

You might ask a youngster to eat either the peas or string beans, but it is necessary to eat one or the other. The vegetables are green; therefore, you might not care which one the youngster selects. A choice is empowering for a youngster.

Words of Encouragement:

Everyone likes to be recognized for the positive work they do. Recognition of a good job means you state your appreciation of the same. This verbal approval gives a person the impetus to move forward with your support.

Examples---

Encouragement could be when a person recognizes or praises a behavior or outcome that helps the company magnify the mission or philosophy. It is appropriate to acknowledge and encourage personal attributes through words of encouragement.

When a person feels that they cannot do a specific assignment or behavior, your encouragement, as an employer or friend, to keep trying might be the words that prevent a person from giving up—or (heaven forbid) committing personal harm. It helps to establish a person's feeling of individual control and worth. Usually, a person's encouragement and trust will result in saying, "Hey, I can do this!"

Recognition of Difficulty:

Difficult times and situations come to all of us! Because they do, we often do not pay attention to people's difficulties around us. However, a difficult situation for one person is not for another. One way to recognize difficulty is to show empathy—not sympathy.

Empathy means that you understand another person's feelings but do not enter into the same state of mind exhibited by that person. A full understanding of a person's difficulty might not be possible; however, at least you should try to understand how YOU might feel under the same circumstance. To remain helpful, you must remain aloof enough to maintain personal control and see the entire problem.

Sympathy (being different than empathy) means that you enter into the same emotional state of mind as the person having difficulty, SHARING, and FEELING with the same understanding of the emotions or feelings exhibited. It relates wholly to someone's problems. If you enter the same emotional state (becoming sympathetic), you wallow in the person's difficulty.

Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.