

HOME
EDITORIAL
OPINION
UAE
BUSINESS
WORLD
SUBCONTINENT
MIDDLE EAST
APPOINTMENTS
USED CARS
CLASSIFIEDS
GOLD/FOREX

WEEKEND

Jobs in UAE


[Search Now..](#)

Khaleej Times Online >> WEEKEND


Cool It!

By Carole Spiers (Pressure Gauge)

17 August 2007

Print  E-mail 

I WROTE, last week, about the importance of looking after yourself, physically, during very hot weather.

 However, it's also important to think about how you react emotionally, because as the thermometer rises, tempers get frayed and it's easy to end up saying things you may later regret.

For many of us, unnecessary conflict is something to be avoided at all costs. As a result, we find ourselves backing away from situations where we should, ideally, be taking control, and may even find our own situation compromised as a result. But conflict can often be avoided in the first place, by the use of meaningful, interpersonal communication.

We need to feel safe to explore our concerns and to be assured that we are being listened to, genuinely. It is not enough to simply be paying attention, we need to know that the other party, in addition to listening, is also fully understanding what we are saying.

Empathy

This is a term used to denote that we understand not only what someone is telling us, but also what they are feeling, by entering their world - that is by seeing things as they see them and communicating that comprehension to them - so that they feel that we are 'tuned in to their wavelength'.

This does not require you to say, "I understand exactly how you feel." The skill of just 'active listening' (and paraphrasing, in particular,) can help to show empathy, as can an acknowledgement of the person's present emotions, e.g. "I can see that has made you angry" or "I can see how upset you are."

Active listening

I've already looked at active listening in a previous article. But, by way of reminder, this consists of ensuring that the person you are communicating with can recognise by your involuntary signals, or signs, that you are paying proper attention to them.

Good eye contact should be maintained, and you should nod and use frequent, but minimal, verbal prompts such as "yes" or "I see" etc.

Paraphrasing

This involves changing briefly into your own words what someone has said and repeating it back to them. This enables you to check your understanding of what they have said and for them to correct you, if necessary.

It also allows them to actually hear that you have understood what they are saying. Paraphrasing is very powerful in establishing an empathetic relationship.

Using open questions

An 'open' question is one that cannot be answered simply by a "yes" or "no".

Open questions usually begin with the words "how", "what", "where" or "who". (Try to avoid 'why', as it might make others feel defensive).

Generally, 'open' questions have the effect of assisting people to articulate their opinion or answer and to explore any concerns, in more detail.

Summarising

A summary is longer than a paraphrase and is often used at the end of a discussion to sum-up arguments and conclusions or identify concerns.

It can be used to check that you have understood all of the relevant points, especially if someone is either confused themselves, or is confusing you.

Using silence


This is not an easy skill, as many of us feel that a silence is awkward and we usually endeavour to say anything to fill the gap.

However, silence can often be used to allow an individual or group to reflect for a moment on either what they have just said or are going to say next, and so move the discussion on in the direction that they wish.

Focusing

Individuals may need to be helped to pick out a major concern from a number of issues so that this can form the focus, or basis, of the discussion. Otherwise we can end up just moving from subject to subject, (like a bee going from flower to flower) and possibly avoiding the important issues.

We are transforming the city



Other Weekend Features

- Cashing in on Clairvoyance
- Bong sung blue
- Diet with osteoporosis
- Beauty hot list
- Fun in the sun
- Looking for a high-flying career

[Click here More News](#)

Reflecting

This involves picking out a single word, or phrase, and re-directing the same word or words back to the person, with a slightly questioning inflection.

This will often have the effect of causing the person to reconsider what has been said, thus moving the discussion on.

Challenging/reality testing

This indicates helping someone to see a discrepancy between their perception of a position and the reality of the fact,

or facts.

Sometimes people have a faulty perception of their actions or how others perceive them, and they can be assisted to examine the reality of their opinion, by careful questioning.

You may ask them, for example, what evidence there is to support their (perhaps negative) view, and so help them see things from a different perspective.

Using these skills also allow a person to express their anger/ emotion and for you to acknowledge how they feel. You will find that when conflict is dealt with constructively, people can be stimulated to a greater creativity that can lead to a wider choice of action and more beneficial outcomes.

Key learning points

- As the thermometer rises, so often do tempers and it's easy to end up saying things you may later regret.
- There are a variety of valuable skills you can learn, to allow a another person to express their anger and for you to acknowledge how they feel, including empathy, paraphrasing, silence, summarising, reflecting, open questioning, focusing and challenging.

Carole Spiers, the UK's leading Guru on corporate stress-management and organisational change, is also a regular BBC broadcaster and international author on these major, business issues. She is also a regular motivational speaker at UAE conferences. Your questions and input on this article or any related topic, is welcomed. Each Friday, we will discuss a selection of your letters or case studies. Please write to Carole Spiers at: ktwkd@emirates.net.ae. Website: www.carolespiersgroup.com



