

Be Direct with Respect® to Diffuse Defensive Behavior

Have you ever had a conversation with someone where you said an innocent remark, only to get a defensive reply or behavior in response? We've all been there. And when such a situation happens you have two options: you can either continue the defensive behavior and start a vicious cycle of yelling and infighting, or you can diffuse the defensiveness by being direct with respect®.

What is being direct with respect? It's a communication technique that helps you build rapport with others and create meaningful and productive relationships. It means being honest about your feelings without anger or accusation. When you're direct with respect, people know where they stand because there is no gray area – only black and white.

So the next time defensive behavior starts, diffuse it with these Be Direct with Respect® strategies:

- Whenever someone responds defensively to you, ask yourself, "What did I just do to cause that defensive reaction?" So often we blame others for things. But sometimes the blame rests squarely on our shoulders – we just have to admit it. So have the courage to take responsibility that perhaps you said or did something to trigger the other person's defensive behavior.
- Whenever someone says or does something that causes you to become defensive, ask yourself, "What did that person do to cause that reaction from me?" This does two things: first it helps you learn what you shouldn't do to others, and second it helps you get in touch with feelings so you can phrase your reply to the person.
- Diffuse the defensiveness with the Be Direct with Respect® statement of :
I feel _____ when I _____ because _____.
- For example, "I feel frustrated when I'm spoken to in a derogatory way because I'm a part of this team too." Such a statement is not accusatory (does not say 'you did this') because it focuses on the behavior and not the person.
- To keep defensive behavior from even starting, think of ways to give constructive feedback to the person that's positively focused. The idea is to show the other person you want to be helpful and solve a challenge at the same time. For example, a negative comment that could cause a defensive reaction could be: "Why would you put the

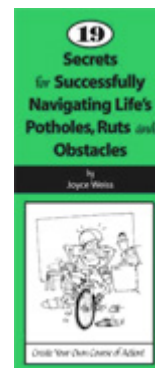
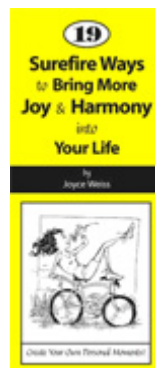
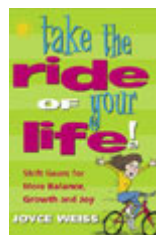
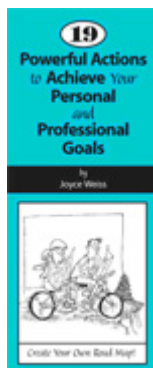
summary at the end when it's the most important part of the report?" A more positive, Be Direct with Respect® way of saying the same thing is: "It would be more effective if the summary was in the front rather than at the end of this report." Also, remember that you tone of voice can make a big difference in how someone perceives your message.

Once you implement the Be Direct with Respect® strategies into all your communications, you'll find that people's defensiveness diminishes and communicating with others becomes easier. And that's one goal everyone wants to strive for.

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