

How to Take Control of Difficult Conversations – Part 1

Communication woes plague professionals across the board: Supervisors reprimand you in front of others. Coworkers tactlessly reject your ideas. Clients lash out at people to get what they want.

Rather than pushing back, getting even, or seething in silence, you can gain control of the situation and diplomatically deal with unkind people and behavior. The solution is called Verbal Aikido, and it's a communications technique that won't get you fired.

Aikido is a Japanese form of self-defense that uses non-resistance to debilitate an opponent's strength. The aikido practitioner seeks to counter attacks without bringing harm to the attacker in order to create balance. In other words, when pushed, you pull; when pulled, you push.

This technique is just as effective with verbal attacks. It allows you to respond to a verbal attack by accepting the comment, redirecting it, and reaffirming your stance in a positive manner. Avoid being hostile and building emotional barriers!

Verbal Aikido Basics

The cardinal rule of verbal aikido is to not repeat the accusation. By doing so, you absorb the negative message.

EXAMPLE:

If someone questions a business purchase with an accusatory, "Why are you wasting the company's money?" don't respond by yelling, "I'm not wasting the company's money! I need these items to perform my job!"

Such a response reinforces the blame on you. Instead, a verbal aikido practitioner would redirect the comment by saying, "Let me tell you how I invested the company's money."

Your verbal aikido response also reaffirms your control over unneeded emotional responses, thus giving the other person nothing to push against.

EXAMPLE:

Suppose you're giving constructive criticism to a male co-worker who tells you, "What I did is perfectly fine. You're just too emotional. All you women are alike."

Instead of becoming emotional and reinforcing his claim, say, "I agree. I can overreact at times. Let me explain why I feel this way about the situation."

This response accepts the basis of the situation without absorbing the negative aspects. However, you redirect the accusation by agreeing. The response also reaffirms the other person's feelings of frustration. As a result, you diffuse the confrontation and can work toward repairing the situation.

Watch for more ideas How to Take Control of Difficult Conversations – Part 2!

Joyce can show you ways to help teams and individuals synergize their power to new levels by working through stresses and conflicts with resolutions, designed to create new levels of productivity and profitability.

As a coach, consultant, facilitator and author, Joyce has used her extensive professional experience with companies like Ford Motor Company, US Army Reserves and Blue Cross Blue Shield to provide bold solutions for individuals, corporations and associations.

Joyce attained her Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling from Oakland University and sits on the Board of Directors for the School of Education and Human Services. She maintains her certification as a "Best Practices Company."

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