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Partial Lecture notes for Free Download

NEGOTIATION SKILLS

The Only Way to Maintain Love & Mutual Respect

“How can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Amos 3:3

First of all, a relationship can never become better than the balance of power that it is born out of, so the ingredients of such a balance of power must be teased out, *before* negotiation skills can be factored in. Otherwise we are dropped back into some form of behaviorism e.g. authoritarianism, subordinationism, ‘surrendering up’ all rights etc.¹ There is no negotiation where there is no balance of power.

Empowering Question; Does a balance of power enable one to negotiate, OR does the ability to negotiate restore a balance of power? And what actually is a balance of power anyway? E.g.

- If a couple are arguing over whatever, but she has a left-over fear of ever making a man angry due to old child-hood echoes, tell me, who then has the upper hand?
- But if his Mother taught him that he is always responsible for the woman’s feelings, and that he should always back down to ‘keep her happy’, now who has the upper hand?.....
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So the balance can swing, for *power is as power is perceived*. Therefore, *prior emotional factors* such as unbearable emotions, echoes, religious beliefs and assertiveness skills must all be taken into consideration in restoring this ability. Without the ability to negotiate there’s really only two possible outcomes.....

BOUNDARY OR WALL?

One of my favourite insights is, **“if you can’t set a boundary, you’ll have to build a wall”**

– of anger or yelling or silence or distrust etc. A safe boundary is put in place by the assertive ability to *balance expectations* with each other, which constitutes the ability to negotiate. If the process is successful, we say they have reached agreement.....

‘PRETEND AGREEMENTS’

Tragically, so many people are being bruised in their work and domestic relationships because they are *pretending to have reached agreement*, without ever having properly balanced their expectations. The result is that one has their way, at the expense of the other, and the other conforms resentfully. They are in the stalemate of pretend. For example;

- Being in a marriage, but one is unwilling to resolve a sexual standoff.
- Being in a church, but unwilling to trust the leadership’s directions.
- Working in a partnership, but unwilling to share power or finance.
- trust been specified or carried out, yet trust / co-operation is being expected.
- Supporting a student spouse who never actually graduates.....

¹ In the church also, many play out the role of the powerless, often because of a wrong concept of ‘faithfulness’, ‘submission’, ‘humility’ etc, and because in some groups, peace-at-any-price and don’t rock the boat is the actual, though unspoken, creed. Such toxic religion prevents a balance-of-power, and therefore the resultant trust and personal safety from ever being established.

PERCEPTION OF POWER

The most difficult thing to really grasp is that *power is a perception*, so where one perceives themselves to have no power or influence (e.g. they need the job, are desperate for companionship, slow with words, afraid of rejection or 'rebellious') or that the other has all the power, *there can be no real balancing*. Hence the pretend agreement. One thing that all those people who find negotiation simple have in common is a reasonable authority figure from their past who allowed them to develop their verbal skills and counter-proposition.

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STEPS TO BALANCING EXPECTATIONS.

- 1) First of all, take time to identify exactly what it is you want, as well as what you will settle for. (Your wish list and your bottom line.)
- 2) Then think about what the other person wants and needs. What do you have to offer them?
- 3) Then proposition them, and consider their response. (No, it's not a verdict, unless that's how the 'victim' *perceives* it. Rather, you must learn to reinterpret their ultimatum – their verdict - as an 'invitation to negotiate'. Remember, power is as power is perceived).
- 4) The other counter-propositions. (Without cringing or bringing up irrelevancies, or surrendering to feelings of powerless helplessness and resentment.).....

(Warning; it's practically impossible to negotiate with a professional victim, because they don't know (or won't say) what it is they actually want. They will first of all need help to identify, and then accept the UBF which prevents them from saying what they need.

Can You 'Walk Away' from the unacceptable?

If both parties can move, there will be agreement.....

NOTE ALSO;

- Only when you can negotiate, can you gain a win-win situation, which might also be described scripturally as loving your neighbour as yourself. Until then, one will dominate, and one will remain resentful.
- A most dangerous (and usually subconscious) belief here is that "all comments made by a male or female or person in authority, is a non-appealable verdict". (Is this something you grew up with?)
- Negotiation takes more mental effort than the old 'quick-fix' habits of bullying / demanding / retreating, so if you are exhausted, it's unlikely you'll be bothered. Don't move the goal-posts at midnight or try to tackle the difficult issues when you are both very tired.
- Sometimes there has to be **restitution of trust**, before there can be **restoration of trade**. 'What is needed for trust to be earned?' may be the first question to be raised and clarified.....

* If one party apologizes without being specific or finding out what is wanted to restore trust, it should be considered as a proposition to recommence dialogue, not simply the whole solution. Don't be naïve.

* You simply can't be reasonable or gently assertive when you are frightened or defensive, or about to feel your most unbearable emotion, without any insights to support you. A frightened person cannot negotiate, and is evidenced by stubbornness. (Remember, stubbornness is really a symptom, not a cause.)