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## **The Art of Accountability Without Judgment**

Do you shy away from holding people accountable because you're afraid of offending them? Here are three ways to get past that fear.

The first method is to roll up your sleeves and own part of the problem, as well as the solution. For instance, if one of our facilitators waits until the last minute to make his flight reservations -- resulting in doubled costs -- I could react with anger and accuse him of wasting money. The result? He would feel judged, might become defensive and come up with excuses as to why he waited until the last minute. But instead, I could say that at the root of this problem there must be something about being a facilitator that I don't understand. I could offer to work with him in developing a feedback system so that he will book travel in a timely manner, and then we could come up with a solution together. This openness is possible because he feels I'm owning part of the problem. Even though he's being held accountable, he doesn't feel judged.

Another way to hold someone accountable without being in judgment is to develop code words with the people you have regular interactions with. I find that code words communicate feedback without creating defensiveness. One of our facilitators has a code word she uses when she feels I'm not hearing her. Being from Canada, she says, "Canada rules." Because of our predetermined code word, I am able to recognize how she feels. Even if she responsibly said, "My experience right now is that I don't feel heard," it would be harder to take than a gentle code-word-reminder.

A third means of holding others accountable without judgment is to use a communication technique, called promise and request. When communicating we often deal in generalities, especially with our spouses. But if we make clear requests and receive a clear promise in response, then accountability is more likely to take place. For instance, if someone needs an hour of my time once a month to complete a project, they might say, "George, I will call your secretary to set up an hour appointment once a month. Will that work for you?" Then I will respond with a yes or no. That is holding me accountable.

In addition to these three methods for holding others accountable, it is also helpful to notice our response when we are held accountable. Even if another person approaches a problem without judgment, there's still the possibility that we may feel defensive. But if we can respond without judgment ourselves, i.e.

consider the problem with neutrality and not take it personally, then we further the whole non-judgment process.

Using these techniques will improve your communication and help you develop the ability to hold others accountable without judgment.

# Tolerance in the Workplace



If the daily news is any barometer, we seem to be living in challenging times. There seems to be a highly polarized political climate that envelops us all like a dark cloud. We could all use a refresher in the fine art of tolerance.

Tolerance is an important life skill especially in the workplace. The best definition of tolerance is, “The capacity to accept differences in others.” These differences might be age, sex, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation. Differences may revolve around beliefs. They may also revolve around culture and lifestyle like food, habits, dress, language or customs.

Tolerance is giving the benefit of respect to others. It’s essentially the golden rule of “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. “It doesn’t mean accepting ideas we disagree with.

Tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one’s own beliefs. Rather it condemns the oppression or persecution of others.”

Tolerance also does not require us to accept racism, sexism, ageism and other forms of “isms.” Bigotry is essentially the opposite of respect. In the workplace, every employee has the right to a harassment free work environment.

Diversity in work teams has been shown to be highly beneficial, increasing innovation and creativity. Diversity brings different perspectives, new ideas and different experiences to problem solving. Like any other life skill, tolerance can be learned.

Here are some ways to practice tolerance:

- Practice respect and kindness to others
- Words matter—Be sensitive to the language you choose
- Avoid stereotypes and respect individuality
- Be careful about potentially hurtful jokes
- Be inclusive— celebrate diversity
- Focus on commonalities rather than differences
- Stand up for others if they are being treated unfairly or unkindly.

Learn more about the benefits of workplace diversity through your Employee Assistance Program. You can schedule a workshop or individual counseling to learn more about preventing discrimination, increasing tolerance, etc.



**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

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