

# 12 ROADBLOCKS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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1

That was dumb!

## **Ridiculing, Name Calling, Shaming**

Such messages can have a devastating effect on the helpee's self image. They may lead to similar responses back. Messages like this will not encourage the helpee to look at what they are doing realistically. Instead, they will zero in on the unfairness of the message to excuse themselves.



2

You're acting foolishly!

## **Criticizing, Judging, Blaming, Disagreeing**

This kind of message makes the helpee feel bad, incompetent, inadequate, inferior and/or stupid. They may respond defensively – after all, no one likes to be wrong! Evaluation such as this cuts off communication – “I won't tell you if you're going to judge me!”.

You had better...



3

## **Warning, Threatening, Admonishing**

These kind of responses bring in the threat of power. They produce resentment, anger, resistance and rebellion. They invite the helpee to do exactly what they are being warned not to do.

You should...



4

## **Preaching, Moralizing, Obliging**

Again, some vague external authority is brought into the picture. This may make the helpee feel guilty or inadequate. The helpee may really dig in their heels, preferring to resist you than solve their problem! A hidden communication in this sort of response is “You're not smart enough to know what to do yourself”. The helpee may respond to preaching, moralizing and obliging by saying “Who says?” or “Whv should I?”.

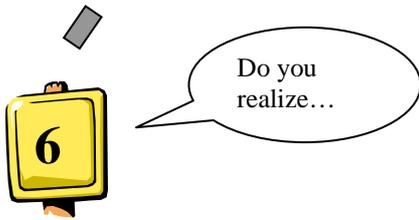


5

You will...

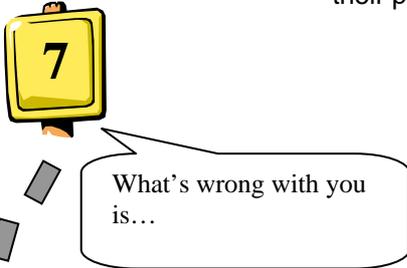
## **Directing, Ordering, Commanding**

In addition to provoking active resistance and rebellion, these responses may frighten the helpee. They may also produce resentment – no one likes to be ordered around. Either the helpee will hang up or change the subject. From the helpee's perspective it feels as if their own needs are being ignored.



### **Lecturing, Arguing, Instructing**

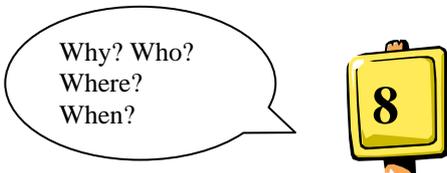
Responses like this imply that you think you are superior to the helpee. They will bring forth defensiveness and counter-arguments and they may cause the helpee to defend their position more strongly.



### **Diagnosing, Analyzing, Interpreting**

To tell someone what their 'real' feelings or motives are is threatening if you're right, leaving the helpee feeling exposed and naked, and unfair if you're wrong, resulting in resistance and anger from the helpee.

Again, this kind of response implies you think you are superior. Playing 'psychoanalyst' or 'dime store psychoanalysis' is not helpful.



### **Interrogating, Questioning, Probing**

If you ask closed questions such as who, where, what, the helpee will perceive you as being 'nosey'. The helpee will feel 'on the witness stand' and will need to defend themselves.



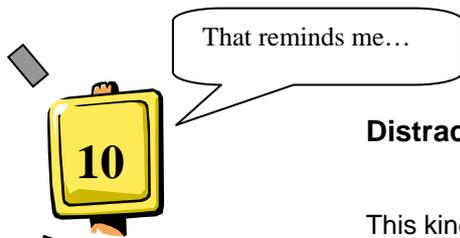
### **Advising, Giving Solutions or Suggestions**

The idea that somebody out there has the perfect solution to our problems is a very appealing one. Unfortunately, life doesn't work that way. Because words are limitations of thoughts, and often poor ones at that, and because one can never know another person's full experience, even the best intentioned advice is off base.

It is also true that often people simply do not want advice. They may need to express feelings or think through a problem out loud.

When you give advice to someone, you are implying again that you think you are superior to the person on the receiving end. Advice doesn't allow for creative thinking on the part of the helpee.

Suppose the helpee took your good advice and it didn't work. Then the helpee could blame you for their troubles!



### **Distracting, Humouring, Diverting, Withdrawing**

This kind of response communicates that you are not interested in the helpee and do not respect their feelings. It is experienced as rejection.

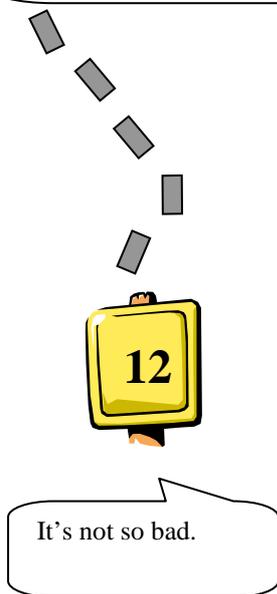
Remember – problems put off are seldom problems solved.



### **Praising, Approving, Agreeing, Evaluating Positively**

While these responses certainly are appropriate at times in our lives, they are not useful in a helping relationship. They may not have the desired effect. They come across as insincere flattery and are embarrassing to the helpee.

They again imply that the helper thinks they are superior – in the position of the evaluator. There is the implication that the evaluator may evaluate other aspects of the helpee as bad, or that the lack of a positive evaluation may imply a negative one.



### **Reassuring, Consoling, Sympathizing, Supporting**

While these responses are usually very well intentioned, the helpee will probably feel that you just don't understand. There is a hidden message here which is that you are not comfortable with the helpee's negative feelings. And, if things do not, in fact, work out, the helpee will feel you had misled them.

The helpee may respond "It's easy for you to say, but you don't understand how bad I feel" or "You're just saying that to make me feel better". And the helpee would be right!