

COMMUNICATING WITH
COMPASSION:

THE ART OF GIVING ADIVCE

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19th Annual

Bikur Cholim Conference

Turn to Me:

Faces and Phases of Bikur Cholim

Sunday November 12, 2006

Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council

A program of the Jewish Board of Family & Children's Services

212.399.2685 ext. 229 or 212

A PRAYER ABOUT SPEECH

Help me God to wisely use my tongue

That my words not cause pain

Remind me God that my words can cause joy

My words can praise, enlighten, encourage, inspire

My words can comfort,

My words can heal

Place wisdom on my lips, God

Blessings on my tongue

Honor in my heart

- Rabbi Naomi Levy

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THE ART OF GIVING ADVICE

Challenging situations

What are some concerns you have when visiting the sick, especially regarding giving advice and feedback?

What might happen that you would not know how to respond?

Two communication skills:

- A. Seven Keys to the Art of Giving Advice
- B. The “way of being” of compassion

Intention and Skills

Good advice is a valuable gift that we offer people. Yet, we sometimes find that in spite of our best intentions, our feedback is not appreciated, and perhaps even resented. The ability to offer suggestions in a positive, constructive way is an art. Here are seven steps and the underlying way of being of effective, compassionate advice.

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1. Listen first: “Seek first to understand”

“If I were to summarize in one sentence the single most important principle I have learned in the field of interpersonal relations, it would be this: ***Seek first to understand, then to be understood.***”

- Stephen Covey, Ph.D., The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, p. 237

Why is this so important?

It is often all that is needed for the other to find the solution

It establishes the connection and opens others to hear us

It provides the information that allows us to give good advice

Avoid the Listening Mistake of “Rushing to Solution”

The challenge of good listening is that the urge to quickly “fix it” or speak about ourselves is often very different from the speaker’s need to first be fully heard, understood and acknowledged, and be able to connect to his/her own inner wisdom on the subject at hand.

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2. Invite the speaker's inner wisdom, when appropriate

People's own solutions are often better than anything we might suggest

Demonstrates respect for the speaker

Empowering people has its benefits

Creates greater openness to our own suggestions

3. Ask permission/Have an invitation

Is the speaker seeking advice or understanding?

Ask for permission with neutrality

Ask without attachment!

"An experienced advisor recognizes that there is a great difference between *asking for advice* and *asking for understanding*. Do not assume that persons who tell you their troubles want you to be their advisor."

- Jeswald Salacuse, The Art of Advice, p. 33 (italics added)

"If [the wise person] sees that his words are beneficial and received, he speaks; if not, he stays silent."

- Moses Maimonides (d. 1204), Mishneh Torah, De'ot 5:7

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THE ART OF GIVING ADVICE

4. Offer without insisting

Offering advice is different from giving direction

Like the waiter in the fine restaurant who holds out the dessert tray and says to the patron, "Here, if you wish."

- Selwa Said, "Effective Communication and Relationship Building Seminars"

"Taking your advice means considering it, not necessarily following it."

- Michael Nichols, Ph.D., The Lost Art of Listening, p. 233

5. Calibrate, if needed

People can only change at a certain pace. Asking people to change too quickly overwhelms them.

Match your suggestion to people's ability to change, and to the pace of change that is doable for them.

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THE ART OF GIVING ADVICE

6. Know and honor your limitations

Give advice in areas you are qualified

Poor advice is far worse than no advice

How does one say “no” when one should not be advising?

7. Check for resonance/check for completion

Does what I’ve said fit for the other?

Does the other feel complete with this at this point?

Avoiding the “illusion of solution”

Important general guidelines

The more casual the conversation, the less we need the skills.

The more charged the conversation, the more each step is important.

Always use common sense, intuition and your own discerning in the moment.

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The foundation for all the skills

Communication skills have value when they are expressions of an underlying attitude of compassion. If not, our words are often perceived as “techniques,” and create distance rather than connection. The “way of being” of compassion is thus the foundation on which all the skills rest.

“The most fundamental and effective listening skill is not a technique or method or anything we do. Rather, it has to do with how we are inside ourselves as we listen to others. The heart of empathic listening is not about solving people’s ‘problems’ or about ‘fixing’ them. It is about how we *are* with them.”

- Drs. Ron and Mary Hulnick

University of Santa Monica, Spiritual Psychology Program

What does the above quote mean to you?

Summary of why we need both skills and the “way of being”:

Skills without the way of being: “technique”

Way of being without skills: well-intentioned but clueless

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The Way of Being of Listening with Compassion

- Seeking first to understand
- With no external agenda
- Without blaming or shaming

Compassionate Boundary Setting

Balancing caring for ourselves with caring for others

- Acknowledging the needs of the other (“I wish I could...”)
- Respecting our own needs (“...but I can’t.”)
- Respecting our abilities and limitations

The quality of “love” in the Jewish mystical tradition combines...

- Kindness, which includes empathy
- Strength, which includes boundary setting

The two, in combination, create “love”.

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THE ART OF GIVING ADVICE

About the “Communicating with Compassion” course

Communicating with Compassion is a 10-session phone conference course that covers these 12 subjects. We studied F and L this afternoon.

- A. The key to effective listening (the principle of empathy)
- B. Four skills of listening and responding with compassion
- C. Four listening mistakes to avoid
- D. The dynamics behind the listening mistakes
- E. The skill of Checking for Completion
- F. Seven keys to effective advice and feedback
- G. Affirming the dignity of the other and avoiding shame-based responses
- H. The skill of Calibration
- I. The skill of Prizing and Perspective
- J. The skill of Boundary Setting
- K. Situations that call for a different communication skill-set
- L. The “way of being” of compassion: the underlying attitudes that support these skills

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THE ART OF GIVING ADVICE

Schedule of upcoming Communicating with Compassion courses:

10 one-hour phone conference classes and one individual coaching session with Uzi
The first two sessions may be attended with no obligation

If you prefer daytime:

10 Wednesdays, Nov 15—Jan 31 (skipping 11/22 and 12/27)
1-2 PM Eastern (10-11 AM Pacific)

If you prefer evenings:

10 Mondays, Nov. 13—Jan. 29 (skipping 12/25 and 1/1)
8-9 PM Eastern (5-6 PM Pacific)

For clergy:

(For clergy, and those studying to become clergy, who prefer to be in an all-clergy class or if the timing is more convenient.)

10 Thursdays, Nov. 16—Feb 1 (skipping 11/23, 12/28)
2-3 PM Eastern (11-noon Pacific)

Year-end Tuition Special: \$365 (plus \$30 materials fee for 80-page guidebook)
Maximum 10 students. Contact Uzi (uziteaches@aol.com) to reserve your space.
There is more information on the website: www.uziteaches.com.

Instructor's Bio: Uzi Weingarten holds a Masters degree in the field of Education, and has studied communication skills and spiritual psychology with internationally acclaimed teachers. Uzi created the 10-session interactive "Communicating with Compassion" course, which is offered by phone conference. Uzi also provides individual coaching using his communication and spiritual skills.

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THE ART OF GIVING ADVICE

Notes and Reflections