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Improving Your People Skill, Part II

This is part two of an article on the wisdom of James Cockman, an outstanding business leader, who was my mentor and client. Jim's life was tragically taken in 2004 by a couple who met with him, saying they wanted to buy an SUV he was selling.

Going through a folder recently, I found a piece of paper Jim had faxed to me in 1995 with twelve insightful statements he'd written about human behavior and communication. Here are the final six statements.

1. **INDIVIDUALS HAVE ALL THE RESOURCES NECESSARY TO MAKE ANY DESIRED CHANGE.** This is true and isn't it nice to know. If you want to make a change in your life, know that you have the power within you to do it. Nothing is impossible when your desire is strong enough and you believe you can do it. Henry Ford said, "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right."
2. **INDIVIDUALS PROCESS ALL INFORMATION THROUGH THEIR FIVE SENSES.** I agree; that's why God gave them to us. Physical beings must use their sensory perceptions to learn, grow, and understand – indeed even to live in this world. And isn't it interesting than when someone loses one of those senses, others grow stronger to compensate for the loss. If Jim were alive, I would ask him what about our intellect and emotions? Don't we use our thoughts and feelings also to process information?
3. **RECOGNIZING RESPONSES REQUIRES CLEAN, OPEN SENSORY CHANNELS.** When we're bogged down with negative thoughts and emotions, how can we respond clearly and positively to what's going on in our lives or the lives of others? Sometimes we respond to situations with a knee-jerk reaction, not stopping to analyze the situation or examine what's causing our stress. When we take care of our minds and bodies we are more capable of recognizing why we respond as we do. And we are more likely to have more positive and successful outcomes.
4. **INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST FLEXIBILITY HAVE THE HIGHEST PROBABILITY OF ACHIEVING THE RESPONSE THEY DESIRE.** Recently I was sitting outside on a windy day watching and listening to the wind blow through the trees. I thought of all the times trees have been used as a metaphor for how we should live. Trees are well grounded, tall, and strong. Yet if they were to resist the wind, they would

break. It's only because they bend with the breeze that they're able to remain standing. It's hard for humans to understand that when the strong winds of life try to break us, we accomplish more by non-resistance than by fighting unpleasant circumstances. But it's true.

5. THE MEANING OF THE COMMUNICATION IS THE RESPONSE IT ELICITS. Some may argue that's not the case. You might say something that gets misinterpreted, which leaves you feeling bewildered and saying, "That's not what I meant." The bottom line is the response you get is the meaning for the person with whom you're trying to communicate. So it behooves us to think before we speak and be clear in our meaning. When we speak from our heart, we have a greater chance of having more meaningful and successful communication with others.
6. THERE ARE NO FAILURES IN COMMUNICATION, ONLY RESPONSES. Remember Strother Martin's famous line in the movie "Cool Hand Luke? "What we've got here is failure to communicate." Then he communicated – with a bang! What Jim means here is we cannot fail to communicate, and even no response is still a response. If we fail to get the response we expect or desire when communicating with others, we need to examine our communication style, learn to express ourselves more clearly, and be honest about our motivations.

As I write this article, I'm in the process of reading Eckert Tolle's book "A New Earth." I'm learning that when our communications and relationships with others (and ourselves) come from the ego, we fail to express who we really are. When we become aware of our egoic thoughts, feelings, and actions, the ego begins to fade and we are better able to come from Spirit.

Tolle says, "When you recognize the ego for what it is (collective dysfunction)...you don't take it (other peoples actions) personally anymore. There is no complaining, blaming, accusing, or making wrong." Then he says we begin to have more compassion for ourselves and others.

I feel sure that Jim Cockman has forgiven the man and woman who killed him. When those of us still living can truly "love our enemies," our relationships with all people will improve.

Employee assessments and diversity training are a powerful combination in improving communication skills and in conflict resolution skill. Annette Estes is a Certified Professional Behavioral and Values Analyst, human resource consultant, trainer, coach, and author of the award-winning book "Why Can't You See It My Way? Resolving Values Conflicts at Work and Home." Order the ebook at <http://www.resolveconflictnow.com> and get a free leadership assessment at <http://www.coachannette.com>

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