

HOW TO COMMUNICATE RESPECTFULLY: PART ONE

Karen Landsberg

In my previous article, I suggested that respectful communication contributes to successful communication. Let's look at some practical tips for communicating respectfully with others. Successful communication starts with:

- **Dressing respectfully and appropriately (fit for purpose).** One does not want to offend other people or make them uncomfortable, and one should also respect oneself. Dressing appropriately for the occasion shows confidence and respect, and can contribute greatly to a respectable image. An interesting thought to ponder: "Dress how you want to be addressed."¹
- **Being well-groomed.** Leave a positive impression by being well-groomed. "Personal grooming is about presenting yourself in the best possible way. It tells people what you think of yourself."²
- **Displaying good manners.** Good manners are probably one of the aspects about a person that speaks the loudest. "Good manners reflect something from inside – an innate sense of consideration for others and respect for self."³ "Good manners open the closed doors; and bad manners close the open doors."⁴ Here are some practical tips to display good manners:
 - Greet people properly – shake their hand if you meet them for the first time and introduce yourself.
 - Always say "please", "thank you", "you're welcome", etc.

¹ Quote by Riana Meyer, Chata Romano Image Consultant

² Anne Dreyer, The 5 Languages of Image, 2013, Colourworks International

³ Quote by Emily Post, American author famous for writing about etiquette

⁴ Mehmet Murat Ildan, Turkish author

- Eye contact shows openness and honesty in a Western business culture. In business, we restrict our view to eyes only. A social gaze includes the entire face. Looking a person in the eyes and then moving the eyes down to the body will be considered an intimate gaze.⁵
- Always be polite and respectful no matter how you feel.
- Be on time and don't make people wait. Respond to messages promptly.
- Acknowledge everyone in a conversation and never exclude anyone.
- Address people in the right manner depending on the setting, context and your familiarity with them, e.g. Sir/Mam, Doctor, Professor, etc. Address older or more senior people by their first names if you have been introduced or when they invite you to do so. If unsure, ask the person what you may call them. Be careful of addressing people as "Tannie", "Gogo", "Auntie" or in a diminutive way, for example, Johannesburg, Oliviatjie.
- Knock before entering someone's office. You could ask: "May I come in?"
- Ask permission to speak to a senior person: "May I have five minutes of your time?"
- Rather ask, don't instruct. "Is it possible for you to assist me with the following?" "May I please get your help on this?"
- Keep your promises; keep your word. Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no".
- Respect personal space. It is safest to stand an arm's length away from people. Don't be too "touchy" at work.
- Don't lose all your manners at socials – stay in control. Respect yourself and others.
- Today it is still courteous for a man to allow a lady to walk in front of him through a door, open a door for her or offer to help carry a heavy packet.
- Having proper table manners at all times are imperative.
- Cleaning up after yourself or leaving things neat in the boardroom, kitchen, toilet or at clients' offices leave a lasting positive impression. The opposite is also true. Always leave a place as you would like to find it.
- Always respect and care for your employer or client's furniture and equipment as though it is your own property.

I truly believe that when we communicate respectfully through our verbal, non-verbal and written communication this adds to the success of our interactions and relationships. In my next article, I will share more tips on how to communicate with respect.

⁵ Anne Dreyer, The 5 Languages of Image, 2013, Colourworks International

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