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solve word blunders, create world peace?

understanding how others receive your words

by michelle payton

I was working a mind/body/spirit trade show, and a retailer I didn't know very well asked me to tell her about her Astrology and Numerology. While I was cleverly giving her a personality assessment I said, "...and being with child..." and she stopped me in my tracks. "I'm not pregnant, I'm just fat." I had absolutely no come back.

Some blunders are obvious, but what about the less obvious?

For everyday communication, it's everyday usage of words that can make or break any given day. For instance,

1. My husband said to my daughter, as she was climbing up the front of his body, "Watch where you're putting your feet!" What happened?
2. My husband and I ordered fast food take-out. I ordered: "A sausage and egg sandwich only."

My husband ordered: "A sausage and egg sandwich, no cheese." I received my order exactly as requested. My husband received his sandwich with cheese. Why?

3. I talk to a customer service representative and he says, "I'll try to get that out today." I talk to another customer service representative and he says, "I'll get that out today." Which sales representative will get my request out soonest?

Answers:

1. She watched. Ouch!
2. His fault, not the order taker. She heard the word "cheese."
3. Anytime you hear "try" in a phrase it's as much as saying "not gonna happen."

While actual spoken words are less than 10% of what I'll call our moment-to-moment communication package (over 50% is body language and nearly 40% is voice), making a conscious effort to understand how your words will be acted on will create much easier lives for you and receivers. Why? Everyone has clarity and then everyone is happy! Wait a minute, have I just broken the code to world peace?!

Oh, sorry, I lost track. So it's important to understand how others interpret your words to get what you want. With point #2, my husband could go to the

order counter and say, "I said no cheese." The mind still picks up, as many other orders are buzzing through her head, "OK, cheese."

When my three kids, third grade to college age, begin wrestling and hitting each other, my first reaction is to say "Stop hitting. Someone is going to get hurt!" But what happens if I say this? Well, the kids start beating on each other even more and someone does get hurt. The operative word is "hitting." And the more effective response is "Separate now! Hands to yourselves!"

Here are some other phrases that you may not have thought were opposites:

- ☀ Calm down vs. Don't get excited
- ☀ You are so ready to close your eyes to go to sleep vs. You've got to be beat
- ☀ Don't get too comfortable! vs. Get up now!" or "Let's get going now!"

I can go on and on, but I suggest that you don't take my word for it. (Did you notice what I really said? Take my word for it.) Notice in real time what you and others are truly communicating everyday. Then consciously tweak the words to get the action that you want to create world peace. Or, at least, in the moment peace.

But some blunders you'll just have to chalk up to experience. That-not pregnant-"enlightened" retail buyer? She never ordered from me again.

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