

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS ALL ABOUT THE IMPACT YOUR WORDS HAVE ON OTHERS

By Sue Engelhart, Business Coach

Here's a familiar story. You make what you think is an innocent comment to someone—spouse, child, friend, coworker—and they take it totally the wrong way. Now they are mad at you for hurting their feelings. So naturally you feel you have to defend your innocence and, face it, you're a little mad yourself that this person could think you deliberately meant to hurt them.

You wind up explaining over and over again (perhaps more and more loudly) that you never intended to insult them or hurt their feelings. The wounded party is not buying that. The two of you keep going round and round and getting nowhere on what you originally set out to discuss. You're stuck and have no idea where the graceful exit is.

One of the benefits of having a coach is that you have neutral ground where you can vent your frustration if you need to and then develop some skills for not getting caught up in the same kind of scenario. Your coach can help you learn how to keep the conversation on track and even provide a safe environment for you to practice what you are learning.

The key lesson here is that once your words pass your lips, your intention in saying them becomes a moot point from a communication perspective. What counts is the impact your words had on the other person. If you really want to get through to this person, you're going to have to deal first and foremost with their reaction to your message.

Saying that you would like to understand *why* they feel hurt because you really did not intend to hurt them will get you a lot farther than trying to convince them they *shouldn't* feel hurt because you didn't mean to hurt them.

The words of the beautiful prayer of St. Francis of Assisi apply here: “grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; To be understood as to understand....” Now, go ahead and explain what you really intended to say.