

Smoothing Ruffled Feathers

By Rhobera Shaler

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In the world of birds, ruffled feathers is one sign of a virus. Isn't that also the case at work? Ruffled feathers can spread like a virus throughout your office, department or corporation. Depending on the influence of the 'ruffled one', that spread can be fatal.

Infected birds shed the virus by exhaling and excreting. Isn't this what happens in the workplace? Gossip and anger can quickly change the workplace environment from healthy to malicious. And, it's very contagious.

When words are involved, a high level of refinement of the virus is possible. Stories change subtly. Emphasis is given to different aspects by different people. Additions are appended.

Motives are questioned. Assumptions are made. Often, the initial act becomes entirely unrecognizable in a very short time.

What to do? Be H.I.P.!

Here are three tips for smoothing ruffled feathers as soon as you notice them. If you are the 'ruffler', implement these immediately. If you are the 'ruffled', these work for you as well.

BE HONEST

OK, you may be thinking, 'It was honesty that got me into this position in the first place!' True, you may have blurted out some unvarnished truth in a moment of frustration. That's often the fastest way to ruffle a few feathers.

Now that you have calmed down some, it is time for a different kind of honesty. First, be honest with yourself. What was your intention when you opened your mouth? Did you intend to inflict pain? Did you intend to create tension and dissention? Did you really just want to smack the other person and you did it with your words? Or, were you just a little clumsy in trying to rectify a frustrating situation?

Now, if you are completely honest, it is likely that you so wanted rid of your frustration that you

were lacking a little finesse. Right? If that is the case, you can now go to the person you ruffled and truthfully say that hurt was not your intent. Be honest about your outburst and identify it as a less than effective way of releasing your pain. Ask if you can discuss the issue and work out a solution that is acceptable to you both.

Oh, so, you really did want them to feel small, dumb and inferior? You're on your own...likely looking for a new position. Of course, if you're the boss and you did this, you're also on your own...looking for new employees!

BE IMMEDIATE

Let no grass grow under your feet. As soon as you have calmed down or thought better of your words, go to the other person and acknowledge what's going on. Take responsibility for your part in the interaction. Don't let this fester or spread.

Different people react differently to pain and stress. Some will internalize it and make themselves very uncomfortable, even unwell. Others will spread it around. This is the virus.

As soon as you can--as soon as your blood pressure is back to normal, your vision improves and the blood has returned to your centers of reason and logic--take responsibility for what you have done or said. CAUTION: At this point, there is a tendency to degenerate into sentences involving the word 'You'. This is not the time for that. Speak only about yourself and your feelings. This takes practice.

Why be immediate? Because pain swells things. You've noticed that. You need to put ice on the situation right away. It's that simple.

BE POSITIVE

When folks are upset, there is a tendency to talk about what you don't want, won't put up with and cannot stand any longer. Sure, that releases your frustration, however, it does not move the situation forward.

Talk about what you do want, what will help and what can smooth the way for a better working relationship. Be positive. Assuring folks that you want things to work is far better than screaming about what isn't working!

You don't have to put on a 'Pollyanna' approach to be positive. It is a simple flip of the mind-set. Switch from the past to the future. "Let's do it this way!" is much easier to hear than "I hate it when you _____!", isn't it? Quick rule of thumb: Before you open your mouth, run the words you are about to say through your mind. Would you be able to hear it well? Would it help move the situation to resolution? If the answer is "no", you've got time to change your words. If the answer is 'yes', then proceed with assurance that you are working to create the best consequences.

Any young duck can cruise through the pond knocking folks down. Smoothing ruffled feathers takes maturity, intelligence and willingness. Don't be a dumb duck. Learn to calm the waters and only create ripples that get you where you want to go!

Rhoberta Shaler, PhD, speaks, coaches & conducts seminars for entrepreneurs & professionals who want the motivation, strategies and inspiration to achieve, to lead and to live richly. Dr. Shaler is the creator of the Living Richly™ Programs. For further articles, free ezines, upcoming teleseminars and booking information, visit <http://www.OptimizeLifeNow.com> today! For permission to reprint this article, please contact [">mailto:Jane@OptimizeLifeNow.com](mailto:Jane@OptimizeLifeNow.com)

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