



ORTHO2

# Advice on Confronts

by **Joan Garbo**

One thing that most everyone can agree on is that people hate confrontation. This is understandable since most of us, at some time in our lives, have been confronted by someone, and usually it was an unpleasant experience. At the same time, we all know that there are things that we cannot overlook, and if we do, the problem will get worse. So, my first piece of advice is DON'T DO IT. That is, don't confront people with issues or problems. Rather, confront issues and problems with people. To enact this, you first have to eliminate finger pointing and fault finding. Look first to correct the process or system before you look to the person as the source of the problem. Asking "what didn't work" avoids the blame game and creates a collaborative approach to problem solving.

Among the most critical aspects in learning to deal with difficult or confronting situations with people is the old axiom it's not what you say but how you say it that counts. 93% of communication is non-verbal. While it is important to remember mom's admonition to watch what you say, it is even more important to monitor your tone and body language when speaking. Words comprise only 7% of the message; 38% of the message is auditory (volume, rate of speech, intonation and inflection, even accent); while 55% of the message is derived from visual aspects (facial expressions, body language, even what you are wearing or the environment you are in.) If what you say doesn't match up with how you sound or how you look when you speak, the person will think you are, at best, insincere. For example, if someone was apologizing to you for some situation, and was laughing while speaking, you wouldn't believe the apology was sincere.

The greater problem is not the external conversation you have with the person, but rather the internal conversation you have with yourself about the person or situation. This little voice in your head can be so loud, that you can't hear what the other person is saying. We don't listen to understand, but rather we listen to justify. This is especially

true when we have to deal with someone who is angry or acting in an upset or hostile way; we immediately get our defenses up rather than listen to what they are actually saying, or meaning to say. This in turn ends up influencing how what we say comes across to the other person. Thus, we may say the right words, and yet get the wrong result.

In order to be able to come across authentically with the right thing to say, we must first let go of the need to be right about our point of view and stay open to listening to what the other person is saying. For instance, regarding any complaint, the most effective shift you can make is to think of this complaint as a gift even though you may not like the wrapping paper! If you can listen to their conversation from the point of view that it is a contribution to your commitment to providing excellence in service, you will naturally create a tone of voice, body posture, and facial expression that demonstrates real interest and concern for them. You may or may not be able to give them exactly what they want, but you will be more apt to create a cooperative compromise.

There are also some phrases that will assist you in coming to an agreeable outcome: "I agree...(that this is upsetting); "I appreciate...(your willingness to tell me...); "I respect...(your commitment to your child...). These phrases communicate your willingness to listen to them. Phrases to be avoided are: "it's not possible...", using "no" to start the response; using "but" after saying you understand. In regards to the word "but", you will notice that whatever follows the "but" negates what precedes it. For example, if you were to say "I really like you but I disagree with you," the other person will not remember that you like them. However, if you were to say "I really like you and I disagree with you," your relationship with that person

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stays intact.

To summarize, don't confront people with issues, confront issues with people; look first to correct systems or processes before people; be authentic in your speaking; and speak to others in a way that shows respect and maintains their dignity. ♡

## About the Author

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Joan Garbo is a coach, speaker, and consultant specializing in effective communication skills, team building, and leadership skills. She will be presenting at the 2018 Users Group Meeting in Savannah, Georgia.