

RESPECT!

By Marlene & Bob Neufeld

“You don’t respect me!” is a common accusation that we hear in our office. We usually ask the speaker what does “respect” mean to them. They often find that hard to articulate.

According to Wikipedia, “Respect denotes both a positive feeling of esteem, and also specific actions and conduct representative of that esteem. Rude conduct is usually considered to indicate a lack of respect, whereas actions that honor somebody or something indicate respect. Rudeness is failure to behave within the context of a society or a group of people's social laws or etiquette.”

Frequently, when people are talking about “a lack of respect” they mean that you disagree with them, and/or you don’t behave by their rules and/or you don’t obey them. They may also mean that they are angry at something you have done and/or you might be angry at them. Many of us were taught to respect other people’s feelings. However, we may have translated this into a belief that “if I feel angry, then that means that you aren’t respecting me” but if “you feel angry then you also aren’t respecting me.”

Contempt is the opposite of respect. “Contempt is an intense feeling or attitude of regarding someone or something as inferior, base, or worthless”. Contempt was identified by researcher John Gottman as one of the four behaviours which could predict a relationship not lasting. For more information about these behaviours (which Gottman called The Four Horsemen of the Apocolypse) visit the articles section of our website.

Rather than respect, we prefer to talk about “good will level”. As one of our clients said, “How I am able to hear and treat my partner depends on my ‘good will level.’ When it is high, I can hear her as well as treat her with generosity.”

Now that is something we can control. We can choose to focus on our partner’s faults and short-comings and then our “good will level” goes down, or we can choose to focus on things we appreciate about our partner. That will bring our own “good will level” up.

Steve Hain, says on his Emotional Intelligence website, “On a practical level respect seems to include taking someone's feelings, needs, thoughts, ideas, wishes and preferences into consideration. We might also say it means taking all of these seriously and giving them worth and value. In fact, giving someone respect seems similar to valuing them and their thoughts, feelings, etc. It also seems to include acknowledging them, listening to them, being truthful with them, and accepting their individuality and idiosyncrasies.” Hain also says that respect cannot be demanded or forced, it must be earned. It comes back to you from showing it to others.

In that case, we are all for respect.

We challenge you, if you think that someone doesn't respect you; ask yourself how much respect you are showing them. Think of respect as:

- Expressions of appreciation
- Listening generously to them
- Revealing rather than concealing
- Speaking the unarguable truth
- Accepting and loving them just as they are, without the need to change them.

Good will and respect for others brings good will and respect back.

Marlene & Bob Neufeld practice body-centered Coaching and Therapy. They specialize in "2 on 2 couples coaching" and in experiential group playshops. For more information and/or to arrange a one-hour no-charge-to-you no-obligation introductory session call 613-594-9248 or see www.marleneandbob.com.