**Motivational Minutes on Communication from 2011-2014**

1. **Smiling**

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**Quote of the day:**

“There are no language barriers when you are smiling." — Allen Klein

**Reflection**:

There are only a few languages that transcend barriers of country and culture; music and art are two that come to mind. There is another significant one—that is the language of a smile. The simple act of smiling can put others at ease, break down barriers, dissipate potential arguments. A simple smile can not only brighten someone’s day, it can, in fact, change a life.

Do you smile often throughout the day? If not, try this fun challenge in the week ahead: Start smiling! Share a smile with others throughout the course of your day. Take note of the reactions you receive and discover what joy it brings, not only to your life, but to others.

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1. **Listening**

 

**Quote of the day:**

“I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen.” — Ernest Hemingway

**Reflection:**

One of the most important communication and conversation skills is listening.

People appreciate those who they feel like and respect them enough to listen attentively to whatever they have to say—their ups and downs, their joys and troubles. People often aren’t necessarily looking for answers or advice, but they want to be able to express their feelings and to have the satisfaction of knowing someone else understands and empathizes with them. You pay people a high compliment simply by hearing them out.

How are your listening skills?

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1. **Listening Is An Art**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Hearing is one of the body's five senses. But listening is an art.” — Frank Tyger

**Reflection:**

If you prove yourself to be a good listener, then it’s more likely that others will return the favor when you need a listening ear. Here are some specific tips on how to be a good listener:

* Give the person speaking your full attention. Make eye contact and avoid doing or looking at other things while the person is speaking to you.
* Take note of expressions and body language.
* Give little acknowledgments or signs to show your attentiveness—nodding or saying things like “That’s interesting,” or “I see.”
* Ask questions that will draw the person out more.
* Ask for clarifications when needed.
* Don’t interrupt. Be sure that the person has finished before you interject your comments or views. If you aren’t sure whether the person is finished, ask.
* Avoid comments such as “What you should do is …” or “If I were you …” unless the person specifically asked you for advice.

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1. **Arguments**

 

**Quote of the day:**

"We look forward to the time when the Power of Love will replace the Love of Power. Then will our world know the blessings of peace." — William Gladstone

**Reflection**:
Peace can never be achieved when people are fighting over power. It doesn't matter if you're trying to show your power by working your way up the corporate ladder, or fighting with your spouse about where to go for dinner.

The best way to stop fighting is to look for ways you can get along with others and to become aware of your arguments.

Try this:

Create a simple tracking sheet and start counting the amount of arguments you have every day with others. Total them up at the end of the day.

Do this for two weeks. You'll notice the arguments will start to decrease as you become more aware of the amount of arguments you engage in.

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1. **Seeing Things Differently**

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**Quote of the day:**

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.” — Anthony Robbins

**Reflection:**

It is so interesting that in most relationships there are disagreements. One valuable lesson I have learned over time is just because the other person sees things differently than I do doesn't necessarily mean that they or I are wrong. We simply see things differently. Just as a diamond looks different from different angles, so things look differently to different people. It is unrealistic to expect everyone to agree about everything.

So when disagreements arise, it is important to focus on understanding and not the issue. When we focus on seeing the problem from the other person's view point, we may find that both solutions are right and it's merely the way of looking at it. If worse comes to worse and no solution is in sight, it is much better to agree to disagree than to damage the relationship.

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1. **Open Mindedness**



**Quote of the day:**

“Let go of your attachment to being right, and suddenly your mind is more open. You're able to benefit from the unique viewpoints of others, without being crippled by your own judgment.” — Ralph Marston

**Reflection:**

When we hold on tightly to our own viewpoints and sense of being right, we miss so much that we could otherwise receive from others by being open to their ideas and views. Our lives can be enriched by other people’s experiences and lessons learned, through being open to their unique opinions and perspectives.

Do you welcome other’s opinions, or do you limit yourself by holding on to your way of seeing things as the “only” right outlook? Each person is unique and has gone through unique life experiences. How enriching it would be if we would be open to receive more from others’ wisdom!

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1. **Gentleness**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Nothing is so strong as gentleness and nothing is so gentle as real strength.” — Ralph W. Sockman

**Reflection:**

Some people can operate well under pressure—for a while. Others are just the opposite, pressure fritzes them out immediately. While some people thrive on the adrenaline rush of a pressure-cooker environment, most don’t.

If you’re a high-powered person, you need to realize that others are greatly affected by your pace and push. Stress can be debilitating—even secondhand stress. Better results are usually reached when the environment is calm and steady.

Have you ever watched a flock of birds, or sheep, or a herd of horses, or cows and noticed that when one gets jumpy or upset, that spirit quickly spreads to the others and the flock or herd scatters? Something similar takes place in a group of humans. People affect each other.

If you find yourself in a stressful situation ask yourself how you’re affecting those around you. Are you the one contributing to and causing the stress, or do you have a calming effect on others?

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1. **Perspective**

 

**Quote of the day:**

"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view.” — Henry Ford

**Reflection:**

Perspective is a funny thing and really depends on how you or someone else is looking at a situation or a problem. Try to understand the other person’s view point before insisting on having things your way.

Here’s a good story to illustrate this principle and quote.

*Two travelers were approaching the statue of a knight in shining armor from different directions.*

*"What a lovely gold shield," commented one, while the other said, "You mean a silver shield."*

*As they argued with growing anger, a local inhabitant pointed out, "You are both right and both wrong. Half of the shield is gold and the other half silver, and it depends which side you see it from."*

There are two, or more, sides to every argument, situation or problem, and we should always make sure we take a close look at the other side as well as our own.

What situations are you facing that you need to look at from a different view point?

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1. **Getting Along With Others**

 

**Quote of the day**:

“The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.” — Theodore Roosevelt

**Reflection:**

It’s a quirk of human nature that those who generally have a positive effect on those around them often worry about their “people skills,” whereas those who have more of a negative impact on others often aren’t aware of how they come across, or may even think they do well in this area. As a result, many of those who could stand to improve in this area, keep repeating mistakes they probably would try harder to correct if they recognized the problem.

To keep from falling into this trap, it’s wise to assess your people handling skills from time to time. How are you doing?

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1. **The Elephant and the Blind Men**

 

**Quote of the day:**

“When solving a problem or accessing a situation be sure to look at it from all points of view.” — Author Unknown

**Reflection:**

This quote illustrates an important point: before jumping right into solving a problem, we should step back and take time to consider our perspective of it, as is so well reflected in the story of the elephant and the six blind men.

*There is an Indian fable about six blind men who encountered an elephant for the first time. One man felt the elephant’s leg and said, “An elephant is like a tree.” Another grasped his tail and said, “No, an elephant is like a rope.” The third bumped into the elephant’s broad side and said, “I’m telling you, an elephant is like a wall.” The fourth man felt an ear, smiled, and said, “Ah, I am now aware that the elephant is like a leaf.” The fifth man grabbed one of the elephant’s smooth, sharp tusks and declared, “The elephant is definitely like a spear!” The sixth man caught hold of the elephant’s trunk and said with certainty, “You’re all wrong! An elephant is like a snake.”*

We laugh, but so often we are like one of these blind men, not seeing the whole picture and jumping to conclusions when we only see part of the “elephant.” It’s important to look at all sides of every situation. Take time to look at each set of circumstances you are confronted with from a fresh perspective, being sure to look at all sides before coming to a final conclusion on the matter.

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1. **Problem Solving**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Never attack a problem without also presenting a solution.” — Jim Rohn

**Reflection:**

It’s so easy to see the problems that surround us. Anyone can recognize them and point them out, but the true challenge is to come up with a solution to the problem. You can increase your value in the work-place, community or home by contributing with a solution. You may not always come up with the ultimate solution to the trouble, but by contributing your ideas, you will be valued for someone who helps to carry the load, instead of watching from the sidelines pointing out problems and faults.

Whenever you see a problem, determine to contribute with a possible solution, even if only the beginning of an idea; and others will appreciate and value you more for giving it a go towards helping them to tackle the load.

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1. **The Way to Communicate**

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**Quote of the day**:

“The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives.” — Anthony Robbins

**Reflection:**

Here are six more ways to build up others and gain a strong connection.

1. **Be vocal about others’ good qualities**.  Everyone needs to know that his or her good qualities are noticed and appreciated. Be generous, sincere, and specific with your compliments.
2. **Lighten up**. A person with a good sense of humor is fun to be around. Just be sure your humor doesn’t come at someone else’s expense.
3. **Keep an open mind**. Everyone has a right to an opinion. Few arguments are worth winning at the cost of a friendship.
4. **Be humble**. Proud, self-promoting people are a pain to be around. Humility is winsome; pride is woeful.
5. **Be a good listener**. One of the best ways to show people you care about them is by taking an interest in what they have to say and making an effort to understand and empathize.
6. **Be gracious when others make mistakes.** Everybody messes up sometimes. Remember what goes around comes around.

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1. **Difference of Opinion**

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**Quote of the day:**

“Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.” — Stephen Covey

**Reflection:**

Communication is not always easy and when we get into a disagreement with someone, we often feel very strongly about our opinion. It can then end up being a “me vs. them” type of situation, even if we didn't mean for it to get personal. We all like to be right. It's a part of human nature to want to feel good about ourselves, to feel that we know all the facts and that we're able to come to the right conclusions. Even in cases when there's no clear-cut “right” or “wrong,” but just differences of opinion, it's nice to feel that our opinion is more logical and accurate than the other person's. However, this stance can cloud our vision and prevent us from seeing things from a levelheaded perspective.

At such times it is more important to preserve the relationship with another than to prove a point, remembering that, “we are all different in the way we perceive the world”. Let these two thoughts guide you in your interaction with others, and your communication skills will greatly improve.

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1. **Inner Beauty**

 

**Quote of the day:**

"The beauty of a woman is seen in her eyes, because that is the doorway to her heart, the place where love resides. True beauty in a woman is reflected in her soul." — Audrey Hepburn

**Reflection:**

The quote above is about women, but both men and women’s inner beauty is seen through the eyes.

People read your eyes even before they hear what you’re saying. The eyes tell it all in that magical moment when your eyes make contact with another’s. When two people’s eyes connect, spirits connect. In that moment of intimacy and vulnerability, each party makes a conscious or unconscious judgment of the other based on what has been revealed through that initial spiritual exchange.

When others want your opinion, they look in your eyes. When they want to know if you’re telling the truth, they look to see if your eyes are saying the same thing as your lips. Eyes are prime communicators between people of different languages, because they speak the universal language of the human spirit.

What are your eyes revealing?

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