

In This Issue > Real Women

Coach's Corner: Give Me a Chance

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The idea of “giving people a chance” raises all kinds of thoughts, but I am thinking of one place you really do want to give people a chance — when they are behaving in a way that affects you badly. Failure to confront these issues can lead to resentment, misunderstanding and frustration. Learning to confront issues is a noncritical way to improve your life and your relationships.

For example, suppose you have a friend who always seems to criticize you when you are together. It may just be a bad habit, but it leaves you depleted and weary. We want our friends to buoy us up, not wear us down. Eventually, you ask yourself if the relationship is worth keeping. You have three choices:

1. Put up with it, but don't call it a friendship anymore.
2. Let the relationship slowly die.
3. Say in the kindest way, at an appropriate time, that you need encouragement, not criticism.

This last choice confronts the problem and might be a better first choice. We forget the amount of time, energy and pointless rumination we put into being frustrated with people without letting them know our feelings. Telling the other person what is bothering you gives them a chance to do things differently. Of course, it takes a bit of courage. Being honest opens us up to being rejected, yelled at or misunderstood. And the other person may not want to change. It remains their decision. But, if they do want to change, you could have a renewed friendship that really does support you.

I know that I want people to give me this chance. People are not all that good at reading minds or noticing subtle hints. Confronting the issue is hard to do but the gains are greater. Gently confronting issues can open up a dialogue with that person. They have their story, and people usually have good reasons for their behavior. Hearing their side can make all the difference. If they are not aware of their infringement to us, we probably aren't aware of ours on them.

So, when appropriate, and in a gentle way, be brave and give people a chance by telling them where your relationship will be improved.

Coaching Question: Who do you need to “give a chance” to?

Coaching Tip: Be motivated by remembering the emotional time and energy you take by playing this frustration out in your mind and the value of an improved relationship. Time is short and we do want to spend time with those that encourage and enhance our lives as opposed to those who continually deplete us.

Homework: Make a list of the difficult people in your life. Weigh and measure the value of taking this

action. Think of what you would like to say to them and even practice beforehand.

Quotes:

“The truth is cruel but it can be loved and it makes free those who loved it.”

– *George Santayana*

“It takes two to speak the truth — one to speak, and another to hear.”

– *Henry David Thoreau*

Resources:

“Confrontation: Some Practical Guidelines for Confronting Others Effectively,” The Portable Mentor Presentation Series, SOMC Press, 2002. This presentation can be downloaded from www.somc.org.

Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon’s column, Coach’s Corner, offers helpful tips from her work.

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