

Being Disrespected? Keep Your Eye On The Goal!

by Sandy Geroux

There are times in our lives, both at work and elsewhere, when we just aren't receiving the respect we deserve. An irate customer could be taking out their anger on us because we're the only one available at the moment. It may be that our boss or colleague has just chastised us - *in public* - and embarrassed us because he/she didn't know how to handle the situation, or is just having a bad day. Or maybe a loved one is frustrated and has reached the breaking point.

Whatever is happening in these cases, try to remember two things:

1. While we should never expect to be disrespected, and should not tolerate it for long, we can try to look beyond the surface to see if a little extra understanding and compassion are needed on our part. Does the person usually act like this, or is it out of character? Can we put ourselves in their shoes, give them the benefit of the doubt and make an attempt at civility... modeling the behavior we wish to see in them (remaining calm, keeping our voice low, and adopting a reasonable tone).
2. Focusing on the problem and/or trying to "place blame" doesn't solve anything. If we keep our eye on the goal, we can often remain proactive and focused enough on the solution that the undesirable, but temporary, situation resolves itself.

I'm reminded of two movies in which this principle is perfectly demonstrated. One is *The Freedom Writers* and the other is *The Ron Clark Story*. Both are about exceptional teachers who went into inner city schools to try to change the outcomes for the students there.

The problem was that these students had no respect for anyone in authority, especially the teachers at their school. In fact, the one common goal of these students was to actively disrespect these teachers enough to get them to quit their jobs - and leave them alone.

But despite this level of disrespect, these teachers were able to rise above and offer respect to their students first, keeping their eye on the goal in front of them, and earning the students' respect in the process. In other words, they went first. Someone had to go first - and it wasn't going to be the students.

While we can't always control other people's behavior, we can control our own - and our attitudes, which can help us guide our own behavior and serve as a role model for the desired behavior.

So, the next time a customer is yelling at you and you feel your temper rising, ask yourself: "What is my goal here? Is it to put this person "in their place" because they dared to talk to me like that? Is it to change my own behavior to match that of someone who is acting boorish?" Or is it to always remain the courteous and respectful person I am, no matter how the other person is acting?



Keep your dignity intact, keep your voice calm, and try to understand that there may be something else going on in that person's life that you have no idea about, and that could possibly have sent them "over the edge" during that particular moment. No one is perfect - and if we all reflect back, I'm sure we can remember occasions when perhaps we didn't act in the most graceful of manners, either.

So, remember this principle: Go First... Give others a chance to correct their disrespectful behavior by going first, modeling the behavior you wish to see... and keeping your eye on the goal in front of you before you say or do something that destroys your ability to actually achieve your true goal.

With over 27 years of speaking and training experience, national speaker and author Sandy Geroux delivers motivational and educational programs to help "Turn Your Workplace Into a WOWplace™", helping organizations create WOW experiences for customers and employees alike by fostering a culture of trust, compassion and commitment to values, service and respect. <http://www.thewowplace.com> or contact sandy@thewowplace.com or call 407-856-1188.

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