

evolve

by Jennifer M. Blair

MAKE YOUR WORDS STICK

In thinking about the bond issue, I have to admit that my first thought was Bond, James Bond. I wondered... as a predominantly women's publication, why would my editor Laura want to do an issue on James Bond? On one hand, his sexy character represents strength, excitement, adventure, cleverness, and playfulness, yet it seemed that many of our readers might not make the connection. Then I quickly realized, she was talking about our lasting, relational bonds, not the Bond-like character who really didn't know much at all about how to have a relationship, much less make it last.

By definition, a bond is "something that binds, fastens, confines or holds together," and as human beings, there is an innate desire to seek commonalities that bring us together. We do this on many levels, from when we first meet someone and play the "who do we know in common game" to the soft whispers of slowly revealing ourselves to another person we desire getting closer to. Do you have the glue that builds long-lasting relationships? Do you bond deeply to others? Are you building intimacy by sharing your hopes, dreams, vulnerabilities and fears?

In order to create a solid connection with someone else, it is important to have not only shared experiences but more importantly a strong bonding agent in the form of effective communication skills. Whether you have a parent/child, husband/wife, brother/sister, family, friend, boss/employee and/or any other type of partnership... It is important to understand that one of the keys to creating unbreakable bonds is through the ability to say what you want, when you want and be heard on the other side without being reactive, withholding ourselves, or fearing judgment.

The art of learning to convey information, thoughts, feelings, desires and opinions while at the same time creating the intended impact is a skill that can be developed and nurtured. Our words, spoken or written, are powerful, and can build up or tear down. Their impact cannot be taken lightly. The right words can create trust, loyalty, commitment, enthusiasm, love, healing and a deeper bond. Think about how you feel when someone genuinely says to you "thank you," "please," "I appreciate you," "great job," "I love you," or "I'm sorry." But when the wrong words are imparted, such as "you should have" or "I am disappointed in you," it can be devastatingly hurtful, and a bond can be weakened or possibly broken completely. Here are some suggestions to enhance your skills:

8 TOOLS TO COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Exude Confidence: Build a strong sense of self. Be your own best advocate. Create credibility with direct eye contact, a strong handshake and verbal connections.

Create Connection: Speak from the heart. Encourage reciprocal communication so that both parties have a chance to speak, be heard and honored. Learn about the other person and what's important to them.

Get Curious: Ask provocative, interesting questions so that you can learn as much as possible without it being an interrogation. Don't make assumptions by not asking. Be direct and clear about what you really need, want or must convey.

Listen Actively: Two ears and one mouth, listen twice as much as you speak. Stay in the present moment and don't think about your next question or idea if it causes you to not pay attention to what's being said. Ask for feedback and don't take anything personally.

Get Smart: Information is power. Research on-line, find support groups, find other experts. Seek wisdom when needed.

Take Responsibility: Fully own your words. Practice silence, as well as speaking up. Don't write an e-mail or text, when a conversation by phone or in person is better.

Ask for What You Want: Strive for clear, concise communications. Ask for what you want, and remember that not asking is an automatic NO. Your self-worth does not change from rejection- no one can take your self-esteem away except you.

Practice, Practice, Practice: Practice speaking powerfully, directly, and graciously in as many life areas as possible. Use "I" statements and keep trying, keep going, don't give up, EVER. Always do your best and recognize your successes.

I believe that learning to use your voice effectively is one of the best ways to build better relationships. The use of authentically communicating what you know, how you feel and what you need is one of the best assets I have discovered both personally and professionally. It is essential to use discernment, speak your truth, follow-through with the matched actions and show compassion and kindness to others. Lance Secretan said, "Authenticity is complete oneness in our thinking, speaking, feeling and doing. It's head, mouth, heart and feet all communicating and living the same message." Excavate your true voice clearly, confidently, respectfully and effectively, as it will assist in forming bonds that can last forever.

COACHING QUESTIONS TO EXCAVATE YOUR VOICE:

1. How are you using your voice to say what you want and how you feel? Count the number of times you speak authentically each and every day until it becomes a habit.
2. Notice every time you use the word "should"... Is it truly what you want or a different version of what you think you are supposed to do, say, think or feel?
3. Make your words count by only speaking powerfully this week. Why not try being Bond, Jane Bond by saying exactly what you need to but the difference is you mean it?

Life Coach Jennifer Blair is founder of Excavate in Louisville, KY. Her work focuses on empowering individuals to pursue their passions, increase their self confidence and build their authentic lives through personal and professional life coaching, creative and entrepreneurial consulting, inspirational speaking, writing, and occasionally, teaching salsa dancing. Her website is excavate.com. Jennifer can be reached at jennifer@excavate.com or 502.893.9589.