

Workplace Respect Part 1: Your 4 Abilities of Workplace Respect by J. Bert Freeman

(Includes excerpts from the Taking Charge of Your Positive Direction and Organizational ESP by J. Bert Freeman)

Respect is at the core of relationships and relationships are what make today's families, businesses and organizations work. When respectful behavior is exercised toward others under any circumstances, it adds value and meaning to relationships.

In a conversation about respect in the workplace one day, a colleague, Nick Cirilli asked a very simple question. "Where is the line? How far do I go with my comments toward or about someone else?" Many times when we have strong differences of beliefs or opinions with people or we want to make people pay for what they did, we feel that we have a 'perfectly good right' to say anything that we want to them, *and/or* about them. We even go as far as getting other people and friends on our side. Sometimes those feelings are so strong, that it would probably take more than anything that I could tell you for you to be respectful anyway.

I have often been in situations in which I wanted to make someone pay for what they said or did, so much that I felt perfectly justified to say anything that I wanted to them and do everything that I could to get others to feel the same way. However, as I learned more about respect, I realized how much I could be in control of what comes out of my mouth. I would love to say that I am the perfect example of how to respect everyone. Truthfully?? I have to work at it and there are times when it requires more effort than others. I *can* say that I have improved significantly. I do know that when I get to the name calling or language that could take away the esteem of another person, I've gone over the line. I call it the "Cirilli Line". I am also learning to help people to PLAY rather than making them pay – educating someone on how to be more respectful in a way that we can work together more productively.

Respect is also an essential part of strengthening organizational unity. If you have a rule of only respecting those who respect you, you limit the opportunities to bring the best out of people. However, if you always exercise respect for everyone whatever the circumstances, you set yourself up to take advantage of the creativity and productive decision-making that moves things forward. When you label people, you *look* for the label that you give them. If you call someone 'selfish,' for instance, you may recognize that *one* characteristic in the person enough to hide other qualities or motives that may help or impress you. Take the label away. That gives you the power to set up a productive relationship that works.

Exercising workplace respect also means to interact in ways that contribute to maintaining and respecting the self-esteem of others. It means harnessing the power that you have by using respectful language when speaking of others. It means being an *example* for speaking to and about others.

True expressions of workplace respect include respecting others when they are out of our sight, the same way as if they are in our presence. If you want to talk about someone or a group, make sure it is okay to talk about them or to poke fun or to call them names that could take away from their self-esteem. If you question whether it would be okay to talk about them that way, it is best to be quiet. Of course, you can take a minute to go and ask. Most important, rather than putting conditions on whether you will treat others with respect, respect others anyway, whether they are in the room or out of the room.

Workplace respect includes two other considerations: 1) the Golden Rule: Treat others the way that you would like to be treated. Whenever you have strong differences of opinions or beliefs, you can use the Golden Rule. 2) The Platinum Rule, according to Dr. Tony Alessandra and Dr. Michael J. O'Connor (The Platinum Rule 1998): "Do unto others as *they'd* like done unto them." Sometimes people just want their names spelled correctly or they just want a 'fair chance' or they want to be valued customers. Treating others the way that they want to be treated is the expression of your respect for the values and needs of others in your daily interactions.

Therefore, workplace respect includes your use of four abilities:

- Respect everyone anyway
- Respect everyone whether they are in the room or out of the room
- Treat others the way *you* would want to be treated
- Treat others the way that *they* would want to be treated

They are called abilities because you can control your interactive behavior and what comes out of your mouth. Using those abilities helps you to successfully manage your interactions with others. As you get better, you become a model for others to follow with the surprise consequence of increasing the respect that others have *for* you and *around* you, sometimes just because your respectful behavior is so impressive. When differences do exist, remember the powerful skill to 'help people to PLAY rather than making them pay'.

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