

## **Working Together - Cultivating Respect and Appreciation**

A One Day Seminar/Workshop for Prison Staff

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Global Co-operation House, London

Working within the criminal justice and social services arena can be particularly challenging; many of the extremely difficult situations and circumstances our clients are experiencing are often projected onto those with whom they are working. This seminar explores how it is possible to not only cope with this but to exemplify positive regard and appreciation amongst our colleagues and clients, to begin to envisage what this way of being would look like, and how can it be made a reality?

### **Subtle Aspects of Attitude**

What is an attitude?

Perhaps we can define it as:

- the state of mind with which I approach a situation
- a tendency to think along certain lines about a particular subject
- a set pattern of thinking that has developed through information and experience

How important is it? Our attitude:

- predetermines the nature and quality of our lives i.e. it affects what you think what you say and what you do, how you look, and how you feel both physically and mentally
- largely affects how successful you are in achieving your purpose in life

If attitude is so influential then there is a need to begin to explore what impacts upon my attitudes. Let us start by developing an appreciation of the impact of both spoken and unspoken language.

#### **1. The Impact of Language**

The language we use creates our reality. Perhaps we believe that we use language to describe reality but when we consider the power of perception, we can see how close perception, thoughts, and words are. In a work situation where I describe my colleagues in negative terms, I am only revealing the colour of my own glasses. What I describe becomes my own reality, further confirmed when I then behave on the basis of these assumptions and glean the result.

Be very careful with the words you use to describe yourself. In times past, people had great faith in the results of verbal blessings or curses. Regularly confessing my shortcomings can actually strengthen them. My words become prophecy. Many words which have entered our daily usage are relatively new, but now extremely prevalent in the way we describe ourselves and each other i.e. dysfunctional, co-dependent, stressed, addicted, depressed, neurotic, paranoid, burned out. However, equally, we can harness the power of positive language and create positive affirmations to describe our worthiness, qualities and success.

This principle was illustrated cleverly for us in the example of President Jimmy Carter's focus on the malaise of the country just before his re-election bid. People found this language disturbing, even if they agreed with him. It was Ronald Reagan with his optimism and insistence that America was great and glorious which inspired the people who then voted him in. If a country, organisation or individual keeps hearing or thinking about how ill they are, the group or individuals will begin to behave as if they are in fact ill. Child psychologists and teachers are very familiar with this principle, known as the Pygmalion effect (see below). But we too can apply this principle within our lives and describe only the most beneficial desired reality, in order to manifest it further. So mind your language.

What follows is an example of a flier for a men's programme entitled, 'A Brotherhood of Man' that was written in 'deficit-based language' followed by an alternative wording that is presented using appreciative language. Read each and see what attitudes are surfacing.

#### Original text - A Brotherhood of Man

*We live in one world, part of one global, dysfunctional family, in which the desires of a few members are satisfied at the expense of the needs of the others. Consequently, there are great inequalities of wealth, family breakdown, war, famine and pollution throughout the world. How can lasting order, peace and justice be restored to such a family?*

*How can we create a 'brotherhood of man' in which all human beings are respected and valued and men treat each other like brothers, rather than enemies or rivals?*

*Join us for a panel discussion with three men who devote much of their life to making a reality of what some may call a dream.*

#### Revised text - A Brotherhood of Man

*We live in one world, part of one global family in which the desires of every individual is built on the shared conscious, or subconscious, motivating forces of love, peace, happiness, personal power and respect.*

*When I begin to recognize and experience these innate qualities for myself, my perspective of my fellow human beings begins to change; greater understanding, tolerance, and forgiveness follows. This change in my personal consciousness becomes a catalyst for change in the consciousness of others around me and indeed ultimately for the world. Then brotherhood of man becomes a reality.*

Perhaps the original text releases an attitude of 'outrage'. This in turn generates thoughts and feeling such as, "Isn't this terrible! Something has got to be done to change this! Count me in!"

The alternative, revised text perhaps reveals an attitude of 'connectedness.' This is responsible for the inner voice commenting that, "This is a beautiful vision to hold. I too wish to be a part of this and contribute to its development."

The language we use is all important in the attitude and therefore in our thoughts, feelings, vision, behaviour, actions and interactions.

## **2. Pygmalion effect.**

The Pygmalion Effect or Self-fulfilling Prophecy is where a false definition of the situation evokes a new behaviour which makes the original false conception come true.

In other words, once an expectation is set, even if it isn't accurate, we tend to act in ways that are consistent with that expectation. Surprisingly often, the result is that the expectation comes true.

### Key Principles

- We form certain expectations of people or events
- We communicate those expectations with various cues
- People tend to respond to these cues by adjusting their behaviour to match them
- The result is that the original expectation comes true

### Corollaries to the Basic Principles

- We unknowingly communicate high expectations to the supposedly bright employees and unknowingly communicate low expectations to the supposedly dull employees
- Better performance resulting from high expectations leads us to like someone more and lower performance resulting from low expectations leads us to like someone less
- We tend to be more comfortable with people who meet our expectations, whether high or low and tend not to be comfortable with people who don't meet our expectations, whether high or low
- Forming expectations is natural and unavoidable
- Once formed, expectations about ourselves tend to be self-sustaining
- Good managers produce employees who perform well and feel good about themselves; bad managers produce employees who perform poorly and feel bad about themselves
- Performance ratings don't just summarize the past, they help to determine future performance
- The best managers have confidence in themselves and in their ability to hire, develop and motivate people. Because of their self-confidence, they communicate high expectations in others

### The impact of the manager

The manager increases or decreases initiative by the frequent or infrequent use of praise, criticism, feedback information etc. The manager, therefore, plays a highly significant role in the success or failure of an employee.

*“If he is unskilled, he leaves scars on the careers of young men (and women), cuts deeply into their self-esteem, and distorts their image of themselves as human beings. But if he is skilful and has high expectations of his subordinates, their self-confidence will grow, their capabilities develop and their productivity will be high. More often than he realizes, the manager is Pygmalion.”*

*Dr David Livingstone*

### Communication of expectation

The various ways in which managers communicate expectations to employees can be broken down into four general categories:

Climate: Managers create a warmer social and emotional mood for high-expectation employees. They smile more, nod their heads approvingly, and make eye-contact more often. They are generally more supportive, friendly, accepting and encouraging.

Input: More assignments and projects are given to high-expectation employees. In addition, these assignments are more challenging and afford higher visibility.

Output: Managers give high-expectation employees more opportunities to speak at meetings, to offer their opinions or to disagree with the manager’s opinion. They pay closer attention to their responses and give them more assistance or encouragement in generating solutions to problems.

Feedback: Managers give more positive reinforcement to high expectation employees. They praise them more for good work and criticise them less for making mistakes. Consequently, confidence grows.

### **3. Power and Force**

Having spoken of expectations, in the section ‘pygmalion’, participants were asked to list the various ways in which we try to ‘encourage’ others to fulfil an expectation. These included:

Manipulation	Put-downs
Ignore	Emotional blackmail
Anger	Threatening behaviour
Criticism	Body language
Blackmail: “I’ll do this for you if you do that for me”	
Painting a bleak picture of when it doesn’t happen	
Attempt to undermine their self esteem	‘Walk with them’
Encouragement	Explore a shared vision
Look of disdain	

Participants were then asked to explore, in small groups, their responses to the five questions below.

From the list of 'control' methods identify one which you use frequently.

What is the belief that underlies the use of this control method? Can you identify the attitude from which this stems?

What type of response does it generate in the other person?

How do you feel about that response? What do you do?

What is an alternative attitude and method of interaction?

The following scenario shows what happens when expectations remain unfulfilled.

*You are at home, in your living room, having an informal business conversation with your CEO over a cup of coffee. Unexpectedly, your 8 year old son, Bruce, walks in with a friend. Taken by surprise to see you there, they both sit down on the settee. In your mind, you hope they don't misbehave. Therein lies the expectation!*

*After a few minutes of sitting quietly they begin to whisper and snigger between themselves. Your expectation is not being fulfilled. You turn and with a cautioning tone of voice say, "Bruce...please!" Again for a moment they are silent only to begin messing about shortly after. Again you turn and in a sharp voice say, "Bruce, I have already asked you to behave!" Again silence. Again they begin to create enough of a distraction to warrant you turning again and very sharply saying, "Okay, that's enough. Both of you... out... now!"*

*Each time the expectation wasn't being fulfilled then there was an increasing amount of force being applied in order to bring about expectation. The end result is that you achieve the desired outcome. However, at what cost? When you have finished your conversation and the CEO has left you go and find Bruce, asking him if he wants to play football with you? The reply..... "No." He is upset with you for showing him up in front of his friend and for being angry.*

What are the steps involved here.

1. Holding an expectation of another.
2. Unfulfilled expectation by the second person.
3. Application of pressure with increasing magnitude until the expectation is fulfilled.
4. The result: while your action achieves a desired outcome (undisturbed conversation) you have become angry, the CEO 's attitude towards you may be influenced, your sons' friend may become more cautious of your 'angry and intolerant nature,' your son has become upset and uncooperative, there has been a disturbance in relationship between you and your son, and the disturbance will almost certainly spread to others in the family circle as they are drawn in to resolve the rights and wrongs of the situation.

The application of pressure to bring about any desired outcome is an aspect of force and whatever you give out will come back to you. Alternatively, for some people, they may say nothing when an expectation is not being fulfilled but inside they are creating a string of negative thoughts which are a drain on the personal energy as well as creating an awkward silence and energy or atmosphere.

What could be an alternative approach?

Assuming that you didn't ask Bruce and his friend to vacate the room in the first place, then as soon as their interaction was becoming a disturbance, draw upon your higher, spiritual values of peace, respect and love. Your comments may then be along the lines of, "Excuse me just a moment, please, Dan. Bruce, Mr. Mann and myself are having a conversation about x and y and would appreciate a quiet space in which to do that. Could I ask you and Ewan to play somewhere else for about 20 minutes? Would that be okay? I'll let you know when we are finished."

A very simple request in which you remain in your self respect and one that gives respect to every individual in the room. This is a contrast to the first situation, for this is about power – the bringing of power through the expression of higher values to a situation and people. They become empowered.

Force will always carry a negative energy. Power will always carry a positive energy.

The ideas shared so far in the seminar were then explored in the context of questions designed to bring home what respect and appreciation looks and feels like. The questions were explored in pairs in an interview/conversation format.

#### *Interview Questions*

- 1) In our work we have all seen or been a part of, high quality and not such high quality, actions and interactions with clients and with other staff. As you look back over your time within your work there will be many examples that come to mind. For the moment, focus on a particular situation or period of time, that stands out from others, where you experienced for yourself a powerful expression of respect or appreciation. Describe that situation.

*What was especially noteworthy about this example that you are drawn to recall it today? What were the circumstances that facilitated that act of respect and/or appreciation? What were your feelings towards those around you or to the situation? What was the difference in the way that you acted or interacted with others at this time compared to times when you weren't experiencing such respect and appreciation? What was the impact on them, both at the time and/or later on?*

- 2) *Make a note of the values that were apparent at the time you have just described.*

- 3) A personal, positive vision of the future can be described as our preferred future state. When we see that future clearly then it becomes a powerful incentive that influences our present decision-making.

*Imagine that you are now in the year 2008. During the last few years many very radical changes have taken place within your workplace which is now the flagship of your Service and is an example to many international visitors. The transformation that has taken place has meant that all that you have identified regarding respect and appreciation is being expressed by each individual, at every level, in every part of the workplace.*

*How does life look in your place of work? What are people doing? What are people saying? What is different? What is the same but perhaps more of it?*

What three key areas of your own personal inner change have contributed most to these external changes?

**Feedback** – What were some of the factors that enabling expression of respect and appreciation?

Knowing the time to.....	Offering genuine support
Being there for another	Mutual reinforcement
Information exchange	Working together
Each one using their gifts	Forming relationships
Stepping out of or suspending role	Maintaining boundaries
Extending boundaries	Shared responsibility
Groundwork	Seeing beyond the limitations
Courage	Honesty
Acceptance	Going the extra 10%
Providing genuine support	Active involvement

**Feedback** – How does life look in your preferred future state?

Improved communications	Honour in relationships
Allocation of resources	Fun
Recognition for the value of a piece of work	
New thinking	
Prisons treating prisoners with respect and appreciation	
Each one is a role model	Readily transferable skills
Empowerment and expansion of communities	
Community groups flourish	Preventative proposals
Positive language used in proposals	Win – win cultures
All engender a love of learning	Failure/setbacks make you wise
Difference will be celebrated	Seeing greater commonalities
Focus is on the positive	Humour
Sharing of experiences	Provide beauty in the world
Everyone will be at peace with themselves.	Love for the self
Personal empowerment	Language of appreciation

To conclude the workshop, participants were invited to:

- Consider all the ideas and information taken from the day and create a personal action plan as to what they would do on return to work to implement for themselves and encourage within others, respect and appreciation.
- Highlight methods by which to sustain their action plan.
- Identify criteria by which to measure increased in respect and appreciation in the workplace.