Magic Spells in Words and Actions - *The Power of Positive Communication*

How many times do we find ourselves lost for words to explain something to someone without hurting them? Why do we find it so difficult to understand messages other people try to give us? Why is it so much easier to send a message from our mobile phone instead of facing each other?

In a world of technology, where the mobile phone and the chat rooms on the internet have taken away much of our spontaneity, it is not so difficult to realize that communicating directly with a person in front of us might create some level of stress and distress that we are unaccustomed to. Say, for example, it is easier to tell one of our e-friends that a dress does not suit her on the net rather than telling her face to face. And if we are direct we can have a decent fight with heavy words thrown at each other, but at the end of the day, words written on a screen might not hurt us so much as verbalized directly in our face.

Or how many times do we switch ourselves on idle mode in a chat room if there is someone whom we do not want to talk to? Just a click of a button and we are off. But when it happens in the street or at work we might find it all the harder to tell someone away.

New ventures in technology (as it is evolving by the hour nowadays) might put us at risk of becoming more individualist and thus we tend to create a world of our own with fantasies about other people and their worlds. But truly said, apart from what is already assumed, any means of communication is still important for our social well-being. And the way we pass on our messages is the most important aspect, because many times the message we manage to pass through is not what we say but how we say it.

So is there any magic formula on how we can effectively pass the right message across? Sure there is . . . but it needs practice (as not even Harry Potter managed to do his magic spells in one go!) . . . and it is called positive communication.

What is positive communication?

Put plain and simple, it is passing a message through a positive frame of mind and making sure that the message you are delivering is understood. We might have a habit of using the phrase ‘honestly speaking’, but do we really mean it?

The best way to say an honest truth is to say it honestly and truly.

We might have a tendency that if we are talking to a person who is boring, irritating or even naïve, we become irritated and get on the defensive or aggressive mode. And that is when our message does not come across as the person in front of us picks up our frustration and will not listen to what we are saying but will act on what we are feeling. And to our extreme frustration some people might start fidgeting with their hands or impulsively swaying their feet.

So what should we do? Simple . . . listen carefully to what is being said and what is being meant. Ask if you don’t understand. Give short statements as an understanding

pact with the speaker and indulge into whatever your reply might be, clear and explicable.

There are important factors one needs to keep in mind for effective communication, regardless who we are communicating with. These three values are:

- **Non-judgmental**

When we are faced with a person in front of us we are carrying our own mood, our sufferings of the day, our own attitudes. So who says that the same person we are talking to is not carrying those same emotions, hurts and moods? We can never understand fully what that person is passing through at that particular moment in time.

As social beings, we should try to avoid judging the person before she or he starts speaking. And generally when we interact, we realize how wrong we were. And who told you that this same person is not doing the same with you? Consciously or otherwise we create an image of the person in front of us and we communicate according to our illusions. And thus, we end up not understanding the real value of the messages we are being given.

So we should start by being open to what the person is trying to tell us and not listen to what we want to hear, with our pre-conceptions and effected by our own mood.

- **Honesty**

Many times we hear people say that they are open in what they state, and whatever the argument they throw words at us without thinking, just because they do not stop and think what message they really want to put across and without considering the effect their impulsive behaviour might leave on the other person in front of them.

When we are faced with an argument, the first thing we should do is stop to think what we are being told and not backfire our arguments without even noticing what atmosphere we are creating around us. It is not easy, be assured, but it works wonders when you have a person, especially, that is aggressive. If we start going on the defensive then there is no point in continuing the argument as both parties end up at a loss in understanding the main concept of such dispute.

Useless to say, but when a dispute arises, generally both parties have their own reasons and their points of understanding. So, to stand out of the crowd we should stop, even for a little while to understand, think and reply back. And when replying back the best answers should be like '*I can see your point but . . .*' or '*you have a valid argument if not in this context . . .*' Again, asking questions might be illuminating in what the argument is and the subject in question can be more understood.

If the situation escalates then we should be brave enough and ask for time-out, that is time to calm down and start once again thinking with a positive attitude towards the person and the situation.

- **Focused**

We really enjoy it when we are surrounded by people who give us their attention and can understand what we are saying. Other people would like that too, so it is in our own interest to create such an atmosphere with those of whom we are articulating our thoughts.

Making us interesting people is not merely our own agenda, but eventually respecting the agendas of the others. Focusing on what the person is saying and understanding what is being said makes us good listeners. But being good company is also giving the right answers to what is being asked of us and not merely state what we think. At the end of the day it is the other person who should decide if what we are saying is good for their own circumstances.

Positive communication is an infinite subject which might take us ages to comprehend fully the extent of which our human relations can improve. Suffice it to say that practice makes us positive in our attitudes, and we should start by communicating our positivity with our own words and attitudes.

So parents, give some time to your children to share some quality time with you after work. Put aside your stresses of work and your frustrations at not having time to do what you like, and focus on your children. They too have their own sufferings and frustrations which they want to share with you.

Help and support

The Foundation for Social Welfare Services regularly organizes parental skills courses. Those interested can log on www.sedqa.gov.mt or call 2388 5110 for more information. Aġenzija Appoġġ offers various support services within the community to parents, amongst them Programm Ulied Darna and Home-Start Malta. Such community services are aimed towards imrpovbing the quality of life of the family, working on the relationships between members of the family and offering practical support where necessary. More information is available on www.appogg.gov.mt.

Aġenzija Appoġġ and Aġenzija Sedqa form part of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services which also incorporates Agenzija Sapport (www.sapport.gov.mt).

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