

SECTION II

COMMUNICATION

New Beginnings-Support Staff- -Detroit Conference of the UMC

Key tips for communicating with people in the congregation:

- Keep it positive.
- Be a non-anxious (or at least less anxious) presence.
- Be a safe sounding board.
- Let people vent, if they must, but don't feed into the negativity.
- Be non-judgmental.
- Squelch gossip.
- Listen.
- Affirm feelings of grief/anger/hurt/fear as normal.
- Acknowledge that change is hard.
- Extend grace.
- Extend grace again.
- Encourage prayer and being open to what God is doing in your midst.

Key tips for communicating with other staff:

- Be supportive of each other.
- Listen.
- Encourage each other.
- Affirm needs for time off, rest, Sabbath.
- Let people vent if they must, but don't feed into the negativity.
- Ask questions if you have them and ask for answers from the pastor/SPRC.
- Extend grace.
- Extend grace again.
- Encourage prayer and being open to what God is doing in your midst.

Key tips for communicating with the new pastor:

- Be welcoming.
 - Be positive.
 - Be respectful.
 - Listen.
 - Tell stories.
 - Repeat your name and what you do more than once.
 - Ask, what are you wondering about? Is there anything I can help explain?
 - Extend grace.
 - Extend grace again.
 - Let the person know you are praying for him/her and the transition time.
- (From Rev. Karen Noel and Bishop Kenneth Carder's List)

From Kaleidoscope Institute

Respectful Communication Guidelines

R = take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel without blaming others.

E = use EMPATHETIC listening.

S = be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles.

P = PONDER what you hear and feel before you speak.

E = EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions.

C = keep CONFIDENTIALITY.

T = TRUST ambiguity because we are *not* here to debate who is right or wrong.

Ride the Tide of Transition

Submitted by Yvonne Chiarelli

As we move from Summer to Autumn, I notice that it is the most difficult seasonal transition for me. It's not about Autumn itself, but about the 'letting go' of my favorite season (Summer), which I never want to do. Ironically, the gift of the 'letting go' is one of the primary hallmarks of Autumn according to Chinese five-element philosophy. I am easily reminded of it as I watch the trees lose their leaves each year. Moving through this particular transition each year with as much grace and dignity as the trees do is becoming a personal goal for me.

We undergo endless transitions as we journey through life. Many of us are resistant to change, yet the presence of change is one of the few constants. A friend of mine told me that, 'Change is not always progress, but progress is always change.' Often we want to skip the process of the transition and get to the other side quickly in order to regain a comfort level. Yet, I believe that life works its magic within the process of the transition - somewhere in the messy middle of it. Transformation emerges from within the chaos.

We experience transitions in every area of our life including career, relationships, beliefs, self awareness, skill building, emotional intelligence, and physical state, just to name a few. We can reframe our experience of transition into one that demonstrates growth, mastery, and transformation. Our evolution depends on our ability to ride the tide of transition. A few simple strategies can be employed to help keep us steady, strong, and confident throughout the process of transition.

1. Acceptance.

Some transitions are welcomed and some are not. Either way, recognize that you are engaged in a transition. Acceptance invokes your personal power to successfully navigate it.

2. Imagine the best.

Visualize in your mind the ideal outcomes of the transition (including the harmonious good of all concerned). Continue to build your vision and add the feeling of it within the vision. Building up this feeling state is key to building a future that pulls you toward it, versus you struggling toward it.

3. Seek and accept support.

Meet with a coach, friend, advisor, or therapist on a regular basis to keep you grounded. They can provide a safe space for you to vent, be fully heard, validate your experience, brainstorm ideas, maintain perspective, and simply be yourself.

4. Look for the unbidden opportunities.

In the Chinese language, two characters compose the word 'crisis.' One character represents danger and the other represents opportunity. Even the unwanted transitions can work for your good by presenting opportunities for you to shine, but you've got to recognize them as they come along.

5. Watch your language.

Observe your spoken language and the self talk in your head. Is it positive or negative? Does it express blame or creativity? Is it destructive or constructive? Is it rooted in fear or love? Does it look backward or forward? Positive, creative, constructive, and loving language -- spoken or thought -- makes all the difference for you in your experience of riding the tide of transition and the results on the other side.

6. Engage your daily habits.

Select and practice daily habits that support and energize you. They serve as your pillar of stability through the changing times.

7. Evolve.

You are most likely back on a learning curve. Make it OK to be a beginner again. It's how we grow and transform. You will inspire others.

8. Treat yourself right.

Navigating transition requires extra energy. Ensure that you take care of your body and soul more diligently than usual. Don't forget the extra treats for yourself, you deserve them.

9. Release the past.

Honor what has come before, learn from it, and let it go; acknowledge the present, and give thanks for your future.

10. Be patient.

Transitions are the stuff of the cycles of life. We can trust that the process of life moves for our good. Ben Sweetland said, 'Success is a journey, not a destination.' Be assured that it won't be your last adventure through transition. Whenever we get 'there,' there will be someplace else to go. Anticipate an ever-changing journey to your future.

How to Have Supportive and Respectful Communication Among Friends, Classmates and Co-Workers

To cope with the current world situation, many people have a need to talk and voice their views – whether personal, political, emotional or intellectual. Discussions can create an opportunity for constructive dialogue, and even help prevent and resolve potential conflict. It's important that we reach out to each other, to be able to talk with those around us. But discussions may be challenging because of the sensitivity of the issues. Given how deeply people can be affected, a conversation with co-workers, roommates or classmates can be anything from a wonderful learning experience to a very difficult debate. Here are some suggestions to help you have meaningful, yet supportive and respectful discussions.

Be aware of your communication style when speaking of difficult issues. Communication styles vary widely among individuals, cultures, and ethnicities. For some, these issues are subjects for dispassionate, intellectual discussion. For others, issues may be deeply felt—if you attack their ideas, this may make them feel as if they are being attacked personally. There may also be people who are not interested in discussing these topics at all.

Treat each person as an individual. A good place to begin discussions is to not make assumptions about where someone stands. Let individuals tell you their ideas.

The same words or symbols may mean different things to different people. Words such as “war,” “American,” “patriotism,” or “terrorism,” or symbols such as the American flag or the peace sign can evoke a variety of feelings and values. You may need to use specific language in expressing your thoughts and opinions and be aware that others may have reactions to words and symbols that you might not expect.

Silence means only that: silence. Silence does not mean agreement or disagreement. People have the right to be silent or to have other reactions that may not be comfortable for you. If you're unsure about what someone's silence means, ask for clarification. However, respect that a person may still choose to remain silent.

Feeling “judged” and feeling “respected” don't usually occur together. When people feel judged, they don't feel respected. If you act judgmentally, you may create a barrier between yourself and others. Also, use humor carefully—humorous jokes or remarks may be interpreted as disrespectful.

Consider these Principles of Genuine Dialogue

Suspension is a commitment to notice and temporarily suspend our own reactions, opinions, and assumptions. It is being aware of our thoughts, feelings, and judgments—e.g. “he's naive,” “she's a liberal”—and to put them aside.

Identifying assumptions, which are our beliefs and opinions about how the world works and what is true for us (e.g. “people over 50 don't like to change” or “silence means people agree—or disagree—with me”).

Balancing Inquiry and Advocacy. *Inquiry* involves asking others what underlies their opinions and learning more about their views; *advocacy* is the act of sharing our own thoughts and feelings with others.

Reflection is the thoughtful contemplation in the search for meaning. It arises from SILENCE -- a time to allow the pieces to move around and suggest new patterns, meanings and relationships to emerge.

Be Gentle with yourself and with others. Gentleness includes respecting our differences. We each have our own unique history, memories, stresses, levels of support and ways of coping. Encourage people to slow down, to honor the differences that enable our own ideas to be genuinely considered.

Remember the Difference Between *Dialogue* and *Debate*. Debate has a role in our academic and political lives, but it is not the only framework for discussion. Here are some differences between debate and dialogue.

In *debate*, we emphasize differences in a win/lose fashion; increase separation, and distinguish agendas. Debate tends to be driven by individual interest and advocacy and exploits weaknesses. *Dialogue* seeks to identify underlying meaning and principles, builds community, and embraces differences while highlighting commonalities.

Consider the importance of organized discussions to address the many issues that arise during these challenging times. Such discussions offer a structured time for people to talk, especially if they're talking in the hallways anyway. If there is already conflict, or high risk for conflict, the meetings may not make things better, but they will rarely make things worse.

Have ground rules, and enforce them. Go over ground rules at the beginning of the meeting. Get verbal or non-verbal agreement from everyone (such as, people nodding "yes"). See if there are other ground rules people want to suggest. Post ground rules so everyone can see them. Here are some examples:

- *The discussion stays in the room.* What is shared in the room, stays in the room.
- *Listen respectfully.* Allow people to finish their thoughts, without interruption.
- *Speak from your own perspective.* Use "I" statements: "I think," "I feel," "I believe."

Agree to disagree. In any group we expect different opinions, and it's no different on this occasion.

We all need to keep working and studying together. What you say today may be remembered for a long time. Try to respect differences; you and others can agree to disagree or agree. And, we can have our discussions in ways that support all of us as respected, contributing members of the campus community.

For More Help

For further assistance and/or consultation, contact:

- **If you work with students,** Counseling Services for Students is available at 2-9494.
- **If you work with faculty and staff,** CARE Services for Faculty and Staff is available at 3-7754.

Also see:

How to Support Others During Difficult Times: Tools for Faculty, Managers, Supervisors, Residence Hall Directors, and Others in Leadership Roles, available at www.uhs.berkeley.edu.

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