

Workplace Respect Part 4: Solving the Dichotomy of Complete Respect by J. Bert Freeman

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

One day I had a conversation with myself.

“What do I do? Do I help people PLAY or do I ‘give them what I think they deserve’ or ‘tell them where they can go’ [out of concern for others or myself]? Do I *look* for people to be inconsiderate, selfish, stupid or unfriendly or do they just show up that way in front of me? Why does it seem to happen around me so often?

“What do I want? Do I want to perpetuate the differences between what I see and how people should act or do I want to provide guidance, suggestions or a friendly look to help people to ‘act right’, be considerate, think of others and be understanding?” I realized that many times when I experienced differences, I wanted ‘people to pay’ more than I wanted to ‘help them PLAY’.

Through any given day we will have differences or agreement with what people do and the way people act. I may keep the differences to myself or express them out loud. I may speak directly to the person or people ‘who did it’ or I may share my experience with friends. We have choice and control over what comes out of our mouths. We also have choice and control over the direction in which we carry our thoughts. A silent aspect of Complete Respect in a Positive Direction is “How do I help people to ‘**play**’ instead of making them ‘pay’, in my spoken words and in my thoughts. Think of some workplace situations and answer that question. Here are some examples:

- The leadership team functioning in different directions
- Being micro managed by my boss
- People working in silos
- People using profanity at work
- Too little management support
- Too much management support
- Too much time required for my special assignment
- Gender respect issues
- Favoritism
- Someone having a conversation with the cashier when I have to get back to work
- Whatever really matters to me

For me, exercising this skill requires an everyday effort. Instead of being focused on how someone needs to ‘act right,’ I may get focused on wanting someone to pay for what they did or are doing. I may look forward to the day that I can say “He had it coming.” In giving myself the courtesy of listening to myself, I may think: “I want it all to come back on them. I want them to really feel the failure. They need to realize how wrong they were and how it affected everything”. Also, I may want to *keep* that feeling, sometimes for as long as it takes. Yet, my real concern was for people to act respectfully or appropriately toward me and/or others. Therefore, I had to rearrange my logic.

If I really want people to ‘act right’, then that is where I need to direct my efforts. Sometimes I may even need to be the model. For example, rather than telling people that “the profanity is annoying”, help them to understand how respectful language is necessary because people come from different backgrounds and it helps everyone’s morale. There may be times that firmness is necessary. It may be necessary to send someone for professional development training to help the person to play.

The phrase, ‘Causing or helping people to play,’ means to cause or help people to act or perform appropriately. I think that in many ways we were raised to ‘make people pay’. I often hear conversations about “I showed them” or “It serves him right.” There is such great satisfaction that comes with those situations; sometimes I think that we even look for them. There is one alternative to achieving such a feeling of satisfaction. That is deriving satisfaction from causing or helping people to play—positioning people to ‘act right’; positioning people (and me) in a direction of being respectful and supportive of each other. At first, you may have to really force yourself. Thereafter, it gets easier. Also, ‘helping people to play’ is a ‘two way street’. It should function beyond rank or status.

There are numbers of situations and circumstances that impacted millions of people, in which it was much better to cause people to play. In America, it was the rise out of slavery. In India, Ghandi’s efforts brought about independence from British rule. In Europe, it was the progressive unification of eastern and western Europe, best symbolized by taking down the Berlin wall. It was the development of racial justice in South Africa. It is true that new differences arose in many of these situations. Many of them were resolved and many still need to be resolved. However, these events caused people in the world to ‘play,’ more than ever in our modern past. National and world opinions and perceptions were changed, seemingly, overnight.

Causing or helping people to play is a compelling and powerful strategy for respect and working together in the workplace and beyond. Sometimes it is easy; sometimes it requires significant effort. However, the amount of effort is more productive than perpetuating differences. So, cause or help people to play. You have many opportunities. Most of all, cause *yourself* to play.

Exercise 1: During the next few days consciously look for acts of consideration, help, support, kindness and respect.

Exercise 2: Consider situations in your life in which you would want one or a number of people to ‘pay’. Then translate those thoughts into how they should act appropriately and how they can or should ‘play’.

Feel free to send any comments, reflections or questions to jbertyreeman@positivedirection.net.

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