



Take the Sunshine with You to Work

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The climate of a relationship can be described in weather terms: stormy, cold, cloudy, warm or sunny. The same is true of groups of relationships, such as family, church or workplace. Have you ever been in an environment where criticism, sarcasm, backbiting and suspicion were predominant? A climate where you could "feel the tension in the air?" Or have you had the privilege of experiencing a positive, supportive, affirming environment? If so, you know what a difference communication climate makes. In positive climates, group members notice, engage, acknowledge and endorse one another. In negative climates, they do not.

Notice

The most basic act of positive affirmation is to take note of an individual's presence. Noticing others means that we make eye contact, turn our bodies towards and not away from them, approach them, smile, and acknowledge that they are there. Negative communication climates fail in this most basic area. People walk past each other and around each other without indicating that they notice the other's presence. They avoid eye contact, do not approach, and appear reluctant to connect. Failure to return phone calls is an example of this type of disaffirming behavior.

Engage

Stronger affirmation occurs when people make the effort to engage. Though the degree of self-disclosure may be low, they willingly and eagerly enter into conversation.

Acknowledge

People feel even more affirmed when others seek to understand their ideas and feelings by asking questions and carefully listening to them. By acknowledging them in this way, we communicate that their ideas and feelings are important to us.

Endorse

Endorsement is the strongest type of affirmation. Not only do we show that we are interested in another's ideas or feelings, we also agree with those ideas or feelings and/or promote them. It is possible to disagree with the bulk of someone's ideas or feelings but still endorse the part that we agree with. Compliments, praise, expressions of gratitude, and public acknowledgement are endorsing behaviors.

If you are in a negative communication climate, and wish to change that climate, ask God for the ability to notice, engage, acknowledge and endorse those around you. Perhaps the clouds will part, and the sun will begin to shine through.

~ Father God, help my communication to be full of grace and seasoned with salt. Enable me to take the first step today towards improving the climate where I live and work.

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4:6).