

SPEAKING THE TRUTH

Samuel Johnson once said, "*Between falsehood and useless truth there is little difference.*" How often at work or home do you tell the truth? Or, maybe better said, how often do you believe what you hear? Most of us do not blatantly lie, but we may hide behind partial truths, omit things, or say what is politically correct.

The level of communication in your home or organization is the result of norms, habits, conventions and patterns that have emerged over time. There may be forbidden or taboo subjects which no one addresses. Forbidden subjects in families or work may be the result of fundamental differences between parents, an unresolved disagreement with a boss or co-worker, or unresolved feelings in a relationship.

Groups of people - whether a family or employees in an organization - have a unique culture that can either encourage avoidance, blame others, fly into crisis mode, or encourage openness and honesty.

In Annette Simmons book, "*A Safe Place for Dangerous Truths,*" she notes that most groups perform well below the intelligence of its members. For example, how is it possible for a surgeon to operate on the wrong foot? Was there not one person in the room who knew the truth, but was unable to tell the physician of the error?

Simmons describes this as process loss and states that it is due to:

1. A low tolerance for uncertainty: In order to learn, groups or families must embrace uncertainty from time to time. If, for example, you can't ask questions, challenge assumptions, or have permission to fail, individuals are robbed of the opportunity to learn from their experiences.
2. A tendency to rush to conclusions: The "do it now" routine shortcuts the process of reflection, and the introspection necessary for learning. When groups are impulsive and rush to agree or act, they risk avoidable errors and mistakes repeat themselves over and over.

Ms. Simmons advocates for a unique kind of dialogue that builds coherence through self-awareness. In unaware groups, members don't see their weaknesses or their unhealthy communication patterns. Highly effective families and groups know their strengths and potentials and more rapidly problem-solve and resolve conflicts.

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