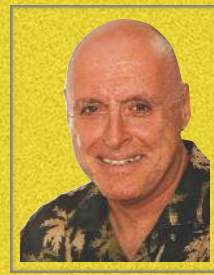


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



576 The Right Way to Say “Let’s Talk”

Is there a right way and a wrong way to say “we need to talk” in the workplace? Has anybody ever done it wrong with you? Have you ever done it wrong with someone else? I’m Jerry Roberts and today, those difficult conversations don’t have to be so tough on people. That’s next on The Extra Point.

Few opening lines inspire more dread than those four little words...“We need to talk.” If you ever heard that from someone in a personal relationship with you, it’s likely the news wasn’t good and involved other words such as, “I’d like us to be friends.”

In the workplace the boss walks up to you after lunch and says, “I’d like to see you in my office at 5 o’clock.” Have you ever heard those words? Have you ever thought to yourself, “I wonder why he wants to see me,” or “maybe something went wrong,” or “What did I do?”

So you call home to let your spouse know you’ll be a little late, and they ask, “What did you do?” You say, “I have no idea.” They say, “You must have done something. Why would he want to see you at 5 o’clock? Do you know that’s when people get fired? Oh Lord, you’ve lost your job. How did you let this happen?”

So, for the next three hours you worry about the meeting, going over everything in your mind that could possibly be the reason the boss is mad at you. This feeling of dread is thick and weighs on you like a wet blanket. Finally, the clock hits 5:00 and you slowly walk to his office, one painful step after another.

The boss sees you and says, “I wanted to get your opinion of the latest designs for the new product line...what do you think of these?” You thought you were being fired, now you’re not, and “Oh happy day, I’m still employed!” You go home and the spouse says, “Oh, I was just kidding. They respect you. I knew it all the time. You’re wonderful!”

Let’s examine the situation. Three hours of worry, the spouse was sure you were being dumped and began to dump on you, and all because of why?

Because the manager failed to be clear about why he wanted that 5 o’clock meeting. None of those things happen if the boss says it like this: “Hey, I’m getting the new drawing for our product launch this afternoon. Can you stay a little past five so I can show them to you and get your thoughts? You’ve got a real good feel for these things and I respect your opinion.”

Then, you call the spouse and say, “Sweetheart, I’ll be a few minutes late. The boss has asked me to look over the hot new drawings for our product launch. He says I have a good feel for design and he wants my opinion. Okay?”

The spouse then says, “Oh darling, I’m so proud of you. You work so hard and you’re so talented, and it’s wonderful that your boss recognizes your abilities. Tell me all about it when you get home. I want to hear every word of it. You’re so awesome!”

The lesson is this. Words matter. The ones you say and the ones you leave out, can cause all kinds of trouble. Unless you’ve got a serious administrative reason to call someone in and don’t want to let on why, make sure that your communication and intent is always clear. Don’t make people guess — and maybe worry — why you want to see them. Practice this and do it right. Everybody will appreciate it.

That’s The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I’m Jerry Roberts.

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