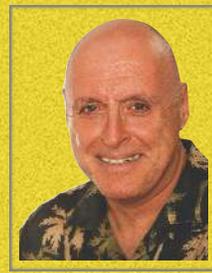


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



598 Do We Always Need to Give Advice?

A friend loses their job and is devastated. We want to give them advice on what to do, But should we? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, we dig into that on The Extra Point.

The friend calls us up and tells us the sad story. They got fired and didn't see it coming. It was a huge surprise. They begin to unload about it and we then know how upset they are. What should we do?

Option #1, we hear them out and offer them advice, along with a potential solution to their problem. Hey, they wouldn't be calling us if that wasn't what they're after.

Option #2, we just hear them out and let them vent because that's the most important thing for them right now. They need to cut loose the anger and get their head straight, and then think about the future.

These is our friend. The natural urge is to try to help. We want to comfort them and offer reassurance that everything will be fine. That's what friends do.

Let me give you a couple of generalities, but in this case I think they hold up pretty well. When women encounter a situation like this, they tend to just listen. They show that they understand. Most men, on the other hand, want to solve problems. They have a lesser capacity for listening and will try to introduce information as soon as possible that leads to a solution.

Early in my career I would listen and well before the person had finished with their venting, I was ready with the answer — just waiting for them to take a long breath, or maybe hear those magic words "what do you think?" so I could give them a blast of my brilliance. To my dismay, they weren't really interested in my great idea. They just wanted someone to hear them.

I read up on the topic of active listening, the

process of eliminating distractions and focusing on what people are really saying. I began to just listen, without any thought of fixing someone's problem. That took the pressure off of me to come up with an answer, and if I had 10 minutes to give I would give it.

One of the keys to helping them is to ask good questions, and the open-ended kind. That helps them to explain things. Here's an example: Juanita says, "I feel really upset about losing my job." We might say, "I know I'd feel the same way, but please tell me specifically what you're feeling and why."

Maybe Juanita tells us she's worried about not being able to pay her mortgage or some other obligation. Whatever the reason, now it's out in the open. It's not being fired from the actual job that's bothering her, it's the very real financial hardships it represents. This gives us a path toward offering a solution.

Let's be clear about something, if we don't have a ready answer for Juanita, that's okay. We won't always have answers, but we can always listen.

On the other hand, once in a while things just fall into place. Juanita calls up and says she got fired and our company is looking for someone who has her specific skills. We offer her a job and she accepts — and Juanita is thrilled beyond words, so glad she called us. This won't happen often. Most of the time the best thing we can do is just listen.

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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