

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



950 Stop Rolling Your Eyes at People

Do you ever roll your eyes when talking with someone? Why do you do that? What message are you intending with that gesture? What message do you think is received? Let's talk, next, on The Extra Point.

Rolling your eyes at another person is non-verbal communication, something most people consider to be a display of annoyance, dislike, and disrespect. Bottom line, it's rude. Some people see it as a sign of immaturity. However, none of this applies to how eye-rolling was once seen.

As near as 50 years ago, eye-rolling was seen by many as a method of flirting, and a way to express desire for someone. This is found in literature, music, and film, and it dates as far back as the time of William Shakespeare, who contributed to the arts over 500 years ago.

In our society, it is taken by many as an insult, and not a mild one. Rolling eyes indicates a lack of respect.

Two people can see a disagreement spill over into a heated argument, and still maintain a respect for each other. However, if one party rolls his/her eyes at the other as a response to a point made, the conversation can break down or turn personal — and ugly.

This is a frequent contributor to a breakdown in personal relationships. Two people are barking at each other over something, one rolls his eyes, and that raises the problem to a higher level.

We often do it out of frustration, or the inability to effectively communicate how we feel. That said, sometimes it's intentional and we do so with the full knowledge that it will inflame the other person.

I was working as a manager in the late 1980s, when the CEO broke an agreement with a client, and instructed me to deny he had done

so. He wanted me to lie, even though the client had absolute proof and had presented it to me.

I declined, and it set my termination in motion. He called me in, criticized me, told me why I was being fired, and I sat in silence for most of it.

I argued a couple of points, saying none of it was necessary had the original agreement been upheld. He said I should have followed his orders, then made a condescending remark, and I rolled my eyes at him. He called me on it.

Frankly, I was feeling an intense dislike for the man at that moment and didn't care if he was upset at me rolling my eyes.

However, looking back, I wish I would have controlled myself and just listened, smiled at him, shook his hand, and then walked out the door — without a word. That would have sent a stronger message.

There's another factor that we should consider. Psychologists advise that the act of rolling eyes is an indicator that a relationship may be in trouble. It ranks high on the scale of contempt, along with name-calling and mocking.

These acts are not received well, and can be painful, if not shocking. Once done, you can't say anything that will erase the memory, but here's a starting point:

"I owe you an apology. I don't agree with what you said, but I was wrong to show it in that way. I respect you too much for that."

Hopefully, that will lead to a discussion where both parties can express their frustrations and how they hope the situation can be resolved.

Once each understands how the other feels, the path to an agreement has been laid. It may take a while to get there, but don't give up. (Con't.)

So many of us roll our eyes, and we do it without knowing the impact it has on the other person.

Yet, we know we don't like it when we're on the receiving end.

If we are the victim of an eye-rolling and the other person apologizes, here's another tip we should remember. To show immediate forgiveness, maybe like:

"Thanks for saying that. I appreciate it. Look, I've done it, too. Why don't we sit down over a cup of coffee, and work it out?"

Let me know if this is helpful.

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.

###

For information on training and consulting services with Jerry Roberts, please click this link: guamtraining.com

