

Communicating Under Pressure Or, Remaining a Diva No Matter What!

By Allison Adams Blankenship

Ever been stuck in a situation and you just don't know what to say? Even worse, you say the first thing that pops in your head, only to regret it later? Here are some quick ideas to help you remain in control of yourself, the situation and your tongue when the situation becomes sticky...

First, *assume positive intent* – that's right. Despite the sarcastic tone of the comment, assume that most people do not mean you personal harm or ill will. You just caught them at an inopportune time of their day or life. Practice the QTIP philosophy and “quit taking it personally!” Instead, focus on the fact that they are frustrated and you may be able to help them solve their dilemma – they are asking for your help and your attitude should reflect compassion, regardless of theirs.

How about the habitual whiner who always looks to you to be rescued or bailed out? Here's a favorite trick: the next time they approach you with a task that is not your personal responsibility, put on your best smile and say, “*No, thank you.*” It goes something like this, “Susan, can you help me out with this report? Bill needs it by 4 p.m.” Your reply, “No, thank you, Kathy.” Short and sweet – the look on Karen's face is worth the reply! It never occurred to her that you have a choice in helping out. A simple “no, thank you” reminds her that you have your own responsibilities.

What if this person is habitually rude to only you? Then, congratulations, you've been pre-selected to be mistreated. That's right. This person has observed your behavior and is betting that you won't cause a scene or put up a fight. Try the “burger method” to address this person in private.

The burger method starts with you addressing the other person's behavior without emotion – that's the top bun. “When you use that tone of voice...” Stick with the facts in describing their behavior. Then follow with your reaction, the meat of the message – hint, keep your reaction neutral! “...it really concerns me.” Close the conversation with the bottom bun with your reason for them to change their behavior. “Are you aware that tone sounds condescending? Is there another issue we need to discuss?”

You won't have to use the burger method more than 3 times with this person. Once they see you are willing to confront their negative behavior, they'll find someone else to bother.

These are just a few ideas to maintain that wonderful Diva composure – after you've tried them, then run back to your office or car and slap on that tiara – you've earned it!

Allison Adams Blankenship is one of the founding Life Divas and president of Life's Simple Solutions, Inc. As the Florida Speaker of the Year for 2004, she speaks and writes on productivity, communication and life balance. Visit www.AllisonSpeaks.com.