“RESPECT -- THE WILL TO UNDERSTAND”
Part Two Heading in Decent People, Decent Company:
How to Lead with Character at Work and in Life
by Robert Turkenett and Carolyn Turkenett, 2005

Respect Handout

“Respect describes the sense of partnership, participation, and equality you want to feel in any organization or company you are involved in. It is the sense that although everyone may not be equal...each role is viewed as vital.” (Turknett & Turknett, p. 29).

RESPECT starts with being willing to give someone your complete attention and put aside what is important to you so you can listen attentively.

- You cannot demand respect. Respect always begins with you and how you communicate and connect with others.
  - Responding first with your own viewpoint communicates that you are not willing to listen and understand: therefore, others do not feel valued or respected and communication shuts down.
  - When you do not feel respected, you communicate with anger and blame for not being respected. In return you receive anger and blame because of how you are treating them.
- You receive respect when you show others respect regardless of how they treat you.
- The most difficult and most important time to show others respect is when you do not feel you are being respected.
- It takes a great deal of emotional mastery, a lack of blame, and self-control to respond to someone with respect and empathy when you feel attacked.
- Robert and Carolyn Turknett have identified four character behaviors and skills necessary for respect: empathy, emotional mastery, lack of blame and humility.

1. EMPATHY is being able to walk in others’ shoes and understand, feel, and accept what they are experiencing.

- Gus Pagonis, a former Lieutenant General in the U.S. Army, who was in charge of logistics during the first Gulf War, wrote “No one is a leader who can’t put himself or herself in the other person’s shoes.” (Turknett and Turknett, p 53).
  - Empathy is feeling with someone. Empathy is being connected. Empathy is seeing yourself in the other person’s situation.
  - Sympathy is feeling for someone. Sympathy is being detached and focuses on doing something for to try and not feel bad for… I am sorry this happened so I will...

- When you put yourself in the other person’s shoes, there is a “sense of partnership, participation, and equality” (Turknett and Turknett, p 29). You are walking on the same path.
• The focus is on the partnership and sense of equality, not on winning or making your perspective the only right one.

• Being able to put yourself in someone’s shoes is what enables you to understand others’ feelings and viewpoints.

• The focus is on \textit{how you} are communicating with other people, not about how they are communicating with you.

• You let others know you are \textit{accepting} them and trying to \textit{understand} when you \textit{summarize} what they are saying using descriptive, neutral language that contains no judgments, labels, evaluations or your conclusions.

• \textbf{As empathy} becomes part of your pattern of communication, you become more aware of how others are responding to you and your effect on them.
  
  – This awareness of how others are responding to you allows you to immediately \textit{modify your behavior} and increase your ability to understand and communicate your understanding.

  – This is the primary skill for effectively dealing with differences where everyone wins and feels respected.

• “Empathy allows you to connect with people, understand them, and ultimately influence them.” (Turknett and Turknett, p 65).

2. **EMOTIONAL MASTERY** is being able to tolerate the \textit{intensity of your feelings} so that you can \textit{choose} how you respond. \textit{Choosing how to respond} rather than just reacting is having emotional mastery. See \textit{Raising Your Emotional Intelligence} by Jeanne Segal (1997) for skills in learning to tolerate the intensity of your feelings.

• Emotional Mastery is being able to “manage your thoughts, attitudes, and emotions, and the behavior that results from them. You monitor thoughts and emotions through self-awareness. You change them through conducting an inner dialogue, which we refer to as \textit{self-talk}” (Turknett and Turknett p. 71).

• When you are able managing your thoughts and emotions, it helps you reduce your negative thoughts so that you can develop the attitudes and skills to choose the most useful emotional responses. Developing emotional mastery and the related skills and beliefs/attitudes makes your interpersonal relationships more effective in all areas of your life. These skills increase your self-confidence to handle any challenge in all areas of your life (Turknett and Turknett, p. 71).

• You reduce your negative thoughts and emotions by \textit{using descriptive, neutral, nonjudgmental language when you talk about them}. When you change your language, you change how you feel and think about yourself and others.
  
  – With descriptive language, your perception of situations is not distorted by your thoughts and beliefs about others and yourself. This changes the attitudes that influence your behavior and how you treat others and yourself.

  – Now there is no need to blame others or yourself. You can now \textit{accept yourself}, even the parts of you that you do not like and “honor” your feelings.
• When you accept yourself and your feelings, you are also accepting the very uncomfortable physical sensations your body. It is the physical sensations responding to your feelings that are most difficult to handle. Your negative self-talk increases the intensity of your physical sensations and the very strong desire to get rid of these sensations

- Tolerating these intense physical sensations allows you to be aware of where you experience these physical sensations and how they are expressions of different feelings. This awareness allows you acknowledge what you are feeling immediately and begin to calm yourself quickly so you can choose how to respond rather than react.

- Taking 3 slow even deep breaths in and out of your nose calms the physical sensations. When your breathing is slow and even, it is quiet and not noticeable. When you focus on your slow deep breaths, your mind and automatic negative thoughts stop. Calming your physical sensations and taking a quick break from your negative thoughts, gives you time to choose how to respond rather than automatically responding.

- Calming your physical sensations is the first step to thinking clearly without judgment. Without calming your internal physical response, you react very quickly to get rid of these physical sensations by shifting the focus to someone else and blaming them for your feelings.

  “Emotional mastery is essential for clear thinking, empathy, humility, and creating a culture of respect, effective leaders are masters of their emotions”  (Turknett and Turknett, p 85).

When you have **emotional mastery**, you accept your feelings and recognize that they are yours and no one else is responsible for them. A **Lack of blame** is an essential character behavior and demonstrates **emotional mastery**. Only when you can communicate with **emotional mastery** and a **lack of blame** can you be **empathic** and **respectful**.

3. **LACK OF BLAME** creates a “culture of mutual respect” and “personal responsibility” (Turknett Turknett, p 90)

- Blaming creates a toxic, fearful culture where people are afraid to admit they made a mistake or offer any suggestions, creating a defensive, self protective culture without “mutual respect” and “personal responsibility.”

- By blaming others for your mistakes, imperfections and uncomfortable feelings, you protect yourself from acknowledging and accepting your vulnerabilities, imperfections, and mistakes.

  - Blaming and defensiveness are self protective behaviors as they shift the focus from you to others or situations. *It is not me…it’s not my fault, I am not to blame. If they would just…everything would be fine.*

  - The focus becomes “who” is to blame, rather than on finding solutions to solve the problem.

  - Instead of solving the actual problem, the focus becomes finding solutions for the personality and behavior problems of the person who is blame or deemed responsible for the problem.

- **Accepting** that no one, including you, is not perfect, and everyone makes mistakes allows the mistakes to become opportunities for learning and NOT signs of incompetence, failures, or character flaws.

- When there is a “culture of mutual respect,” discussion about mistakes or problems is descriptive so that everyone focuses on understanding the situation.
Descriptive language and focusing on the problem communicates that everyone’s perception and understanding of the situation is valued.

People are willing to take personal responsibility for how they may have contributed to the problem and for finding solutions.

- Everyone’s attention becomes focused on solutions and learning. What happened? What can be done differently? This culture of mutual respect and focusing on the problem creates better solutions to problems and people are rewarded for speaking up rather than being dismissed or attacked.

- A lack of blame eliminates the need to be defensive and creates a culture where people accept their personal responsibility in any situation (Turknett and Turknett p 92).

  Being respectful requires emotional mastery and personal responsibility for mistakes (lack of blame).

4. **HUMILITY** is the foundation for being respectful. It is the sense of equality in relationships…I am not better, I am different. When you have humility…

- The focus of your communication is on understanding and connecting with others, so you listen and empathize with others rather than talking and telling.

- You believe that you are not the only one who has all the right answers and know that the best decisions include the ideas of others.

- Everyone can admit their mistakes, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities without fear of judgment.

- It is accepted that everyone makes mistakes and when there is a mistake, the focus is on correcting the mistake or resolving the problem rather than looking for who is to blame.

- There is no need to get upset, lose your emotional control and protect yourself; therefore, people do not need to become defensive. “Relating to others with humility creates a collaborative climate where giving and receiving feedback is common.”

- You recognize that good relationships allow everyone to focus on the quality and success of the project.

The opposite of humility is arrogance.

- When you are arrogant, you believe…No one can do anything right…Doing it yourself is the only way to get things done right…Even though the team thinks this is the best option, my idea will have the best result…I know what is best.

- People are arrogant when they are afraid to look and accept the contradictions within themselves…their weakness and strengths…what they don’t like about themselves and what they like. Accepting their weakness and what they do not like about themselves, means they are imperfect and therefore, inadequate.

  - Protecting their self-image is absolutely necessary in all interactions.

  - What is most important is controlling every situation so their weaknesses or vulnerabilities will not be exposed.
An arrogant leader creates an environment where people are fearful of being blamed, so they keep their heads down and focus only on their specific job or responsibility.

- There is no commitment to the relationship or organization, or any sense of responsibility for successful results.

“It takes humility to get others to follow in ways that draw out the best they have to give, that get your own ideas heard, and that allow you to be the leader you want to be.”

(Turknett and Turknett, p 105).

**SUMMARY of RESPECT**

“Leading with Character in Life and Work”

When you are **humble**, you accept your imperfections and mistakes so you do not have to protect your self-image by controlling others and looking for someone to blame when things go wrong. When you accept your imperfections, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities, there need to protect and defend yourself. Your self-acceptance means you do not have to blame yourself and others when mistakes occur.

Now there is a **lack of blame** in your communications with others and yourself. When you feel attacked, scared or things don't happen as you expected, you maintain your **emotional mastery** and choose how to respond without blame.

With **humility**, **emotional mastery**, and **lack of blame**, you are able to put yourself in the other person’s shoes and practice the skill of **empathy**. These four skills and character components that Turknett and Turknett (2005) describe are the foundation of being respectful in all of your relationships.

**Resource**


Additional Copies at [www.hr.niu.edu/serviceareas/employeeassistance/](http://www.hr.niu.edu/serviceareas/employeeassistance/) see coaching…Respect: Talking Points

Written by Nancy Apperson, LCSW, 2010
Northern Illinois University Employee Assistance Program Coordinator