

"I CAN'T SAY THAT!"

by Deb Elkin, LPC

So many times, we don't tell people what it is that we really think or feel. When we do that, we stop ourselves from being able to create what it is that we really want or need in our lives. How can we have the job, the relationship, the friendship we want if we can't tell those significant people in our lives what it is that we think, feel, want or need?

We keep these things to ourselves for a multitude of reasons.

- We don't want to hurt the other person's feelings.
- We don't want to upset the other person.
- We're afraid the other person will get angry.
- We're afraid we'll get angry.
- We're afraid we'll cry.
- We're afraid we'll lose control.
- We don't think our thoughts and feelings are valid.
- We don't think we deserve to speak them.

We all have times when we hesitate to speak. It is part of the human condition. Sometimes we would just rather avoid the conflict than have to deal with what comes out of "stirring things up."

How did it happen that we got so "gun shy", so afraid, so insecure around speaking our truth? There are lots of possible scenarios. Perhaps when you were growing up, your family did not express emotions. Maybe things were never talked about. Perhaps you were told to go to your room if you were angry or upset, or to smile, even when you didn't feel like it. Perhaps your parents fought a lot and you decided, "I'm never going to be like them!" Or maybe you never learned any other way to communicate your feelings, so you decided not to do it at all. Perhaps you were teased or shamed at home or at school for being too emotional, or judged for being too loud or too vocal. Or perhaps you learned to be a "pleaser" or a "peace maker," to keep everybody happy, and in the process, put your own feelings to the side.

However it came to be that we decided not to speak our truth, know that this was not a conscious choice. It was what we learned to do to live safely in our families. What we also learned to do, however, was to bury, discount, deny, or ignore our truth.

This worked well for us when we were young. It kept us safe and protected. The problem is we often carry those old patterns with us into our adult life. It doesn't work so well here. When we don't speak our truth now, our relationships suffer, and we're less likely to get what we want in our lives.

In order to speak our truth, I want to go back briefly to a previous lesson about allowing our feelings because it is the prelude to speaking our truth.

- If you are feeling something, it is your feeling.
- Because you are feeling it, it is real.

· Because you are feeling it and it is real, it can't be wrong.

Remember, when we ignore, deny or shame ourselves for having our feelings, we are re-wounding ourselves. When we listen to and honor ourselves, we heal. When we honor ourselves, we give ourselves permission to speak. So, if you haven't been practicing "allowing," that is your first step. Loving and accepting yourself come first. If you don't think you deserve to speak, you probably won't do it. You probably won't expect to be heard either.

It can be scary and difficult to speak our truth after so many years of not doing it. For some, just making the decision to do it will be enough to make it happen. For others, it won't be quite that easy. Remember, allow time and patience for making this shift. You are undoing many years of fear, insecurity, and habit!

When you know it's time, you're ready to speak, you don't want to be silent anymore, start by identifying the people in your life who feel safe (those people you are most likely to get heard and supported by). Know that not all of your experiences will go as smoothly and easily as you'd like. But if you choose safe people and start with the less "loaded" issues, it probably won't go as badly as you feared either. That's how you build confidence, starting with safety, and from there you can move on more easily to the tougher ones.

It is from this place of honesty and integrity that you are much more likely to bring what it is that you want into your life. I will talk next time about some "tools"(How to Get What You Want) you can use that will be helpful in learning new ways to speak your truth.

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