

Seminar Teaches Ways to Master Confrontation

By Marsha Stopa

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Michael Caruso is a Royal Oak-based speaker the owner of The Edison House, a consulting company that specializes in teaching creative communication. The Edison House and the Optimist Club of Bloomfield Hills are sponsoring a seminar at 7 p.m. March 2, [1999] at the Troy Marriott. The seminar is titled, “Talk to Me: Conflict Resolution Made Easier.”

Q: What is the definition of a “difficult person?”

A: Most of us think that we’re fine and everyone else is difficult. The dirty little secret is that everyone is difficult. You first need to identify what kind of difficult person they are. For example, the Director is someone who tends to be in your face. He’ll sacrifice tact for what he considers to be efficiency or productivity. Another style is the Thinker. He can’t get enough information and sometimes frustrates those who have to provide that information.

Q: How do we deal with difficult people?

A: With most difficult people, the trick is to forget the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule is “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” We should treat people the way they want to be treated. Dr. Tony Alessandra touts what he calls the Platinum Rule, which states that we should, “Do unto others *as they want to be done on to.*”

Q: So, are we changing others or changing ourselves?

A: Most of us try to change difficult people in order to make them more like us, but the hard truth is we can’t change people. Since we can’t change others, our time and energy is best spent changing ourselves. In particular, we need to change our responses to difficult people. If I’m a Relater, for example, and I treat someone who is a Director as a Relater, it will never work.

Q: Which personality type is the most successful, the Director or the Thinker?

A: Personality style is not the predictor for success. The predictor of success is adaptability.

Q: What can we do in a confrontation with a difficult person?

A: The key is to remember that emotion cripples rational discussion. There is a real benefit to converting an emotional reaction into a thoughtful response. Find a way to keep from yelling at the person. Delay in sending that angry e-mail message. In verbal confrontation, I call this technique the “seven-second rule.” For example, if someone says something nasty about your mother, wait seven seconds before you respond. This pause has two direct benefits. It allows you to think about your response instead of giving a reflexive reaction. Also, your silence gives the other person a chance to think about what they said.

Michael Angelo Caruso is President of the Edison House, a Detroit-based communication company. He is the author of “5 Cool Ideas for Better Working Living & Feeling,” “Hmmm . . . Little Ideas With BIG Results” and the audio book, “Dear Michael Angelo – A Father's Life Lessons To His Son.” Mr. Caruso delivers 180 presentations per year. Click [here] to request booking information. Mr. Caruso can be reached at 248/546-9140 and at www.EdisonHouse.com.
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