

Dr. Blume's Article of the Month

Ten To Avoid

by Ginger E. Blume, Ph.D.

1. Being unfriendly - It's difficult to be unfriendly to someone we really like. Conversely, it's easy to be unfriendly to someone we dislike. Be careful that we don't let our misperceptions get in the way of being friendly but yet appropriate
2. Being too friendly - While not as bad as being unfriendly, being too friendly at the wrong time can seem disingenuous. Overly friendly people are often held in suspect.
3. Mind reading - Even if we have a pretty good idea of what the upset person is trying to say, don't say it for them. Use your best active listening skills to bring out the unexpressed feelings of the upset person.
4. Saying too much - In the desire to be helpful and also to massage our own discomfort, we may reveal too much information too soon. Make sure you have all the data you need before sharing data that may later contribute to upset feelings.
5. Getting too emotionally involved - A most difficult thing when working in human services. However, those who get to emotionally involved with their cases burn-out very quickly. Find the balance that works for you.
6. Staying too emotionally detached - Human services is about dealing with the human problems. This means that emotions and strong feeling will possibly get evoked in both the case worker and the consumers. To protect our own feeling we may become too emotionally detached.
7. Being condescending - While this is related to issues of respect, it is different in that condescension communicates an attitude of superiority. Be careful of the words and phrase you use so that your choice of words and the tone of your voice avoid sounding condescending to others.

8. Being unclear - If there is a sure way to shut down the communication process it's using mind reading as a way to move situations along. Mind reading discounts the other person's thought process and it is aggravating.

9. Issuing empty threats - Use discipline so that you don't say something simply because you can. Only state the facts and always use pre-established consequences as your way of reminding others of their responsibility.

10. Being disrespectful - The quickest way to escalate a situation is by being disrespectful to another person. Even the most unreasonable person wants to be respected even though they may not act in kind. Don't feed into the trap of being disrespectful as a reflex action.