

Be the World's Best Communicator

Even if you never were before

Tanya Logan

My hairdresser asked how my friend is doing, who I told her had just gotten diagnosed with an illness at my previous appointment *six weeks ago*. How'd she do that? I was impressed.

Challenge: can you remember something that person said the last time you were together?

We are all guilty of not listening, because we don't listen in order to pay attention—we **pretend** to listen while lining up our reply. In truth that is only partial listening. Instead of going through life hearing only part of what's said, practice active listening. Nod only where appropriate (not the whole way through, which signals that you're thinking about your response). Ask questions for clarification. Repeat back what's been said. Bring it up in the next conversation. Be a good listener. You will make more friends, and be perceived as a better friend for your efforts.

Sometimes we hear what we want to hear. Sometimes people say what they think you want to hear. Strive for honesty, the kind where both parties make an effort to arrive at truth, no matter who doesn't want to hear it.

Challenge: Are you ready for that kind of truth? Are your friends?

I heard once that a friend won't tell you what you want to hear; they'll tell you what you *need to know*. If you are struggling to know whether someone is a friend or not, maybe it's because they said what needed to be said.

To put it another way, a true friend will allow you to vent without judgment and will give an honest opinion when asked – *even if it isn't what you want to hear*.

Challenge: Read the above sentence. Are you that kind of friend?

When communicating with people you don't know well...the cashier, the agent on the phone, a neighbor: You don't know what their day has been like. You don't know what their life is like. If you find yourself tense or defensive, don't assume, don't judge, don't jump to conclusions. Stick to the subject at hand and the facts pertaining to it. Calm, and "just the facts, ma'am," will win the day. Unless...

Sometimes people want to be dramatic, uncooperative, or downright mean. If you find you can't come to a reasonable, rational solution—step away. Breathe and do the thing that makes you calm, whether it's yoga, meditation, bible reading, or drawing. I've taken to drawing pictures on little 2X3-inch cards while I'm on the phone. It's quite calming.

When you have to communicate with that dramatic, uncooperative person again, pray first. Ask for direction. Switch to email rather than the phone, if that will help slow the

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conversation and emotions. Get everything in writing, if it is that kind of relationship and if you can.

Lastly, remember that *sometimes you can't win*. You can't resolve the situation, or you realize this is the third, tenth, or fiftieth time this person has cause this same problem/conversation/ attempt at reconciliation. In this case, move on. We aren't expected to keep fighting for a relationship that is no good. In order to live your very best life, you need to keep the good and get rid of the bad, and sometimes that includes weeding out a friend. It's okay. The sky isn't going to fall. In fact, the world is going to keep going pretty much like normal.

When you let go of a friendship, there's usually a new one on the horizon. Nurture that friendship – not by bashing the old friend to the new one, but by practicing mercy, love and grace.

And listening.

Till next time,

Tanya