

Can I Give You Some Advice?

Empower yourself to inspire through great communication.

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Oh, my, gosh. What should I do? What would you do? What's going to happen? How am I going to get out of this mess? How can I decide? I can't do it, I don't know how! How does this look on me? Should I lose/gain weight, cut my hair? Should I quit my job? Should I tell my boss what I think?

These words, these questions are just begging for answers and in the world of friends, family, colleagues, experts and even acquaintances they just beg for advice. ADVICE according to the dictionary implies real or pretended knowledge, often professional or technical on the part of the one who gives it. When I exercise the power to advice, I am doing so with either real expert knowledge such as that offered by electrical or computer technicians, doctors and carpenters or I offer it through my own personal perspective. My personal perspective, created through my lens, my understanding of the world is made from the experiences I have had, the knowledge I have gained and the many layers of my being. And, because of this, it is uniquely valid to me.

My NON-EXPERT ADVICE cannot and will not fit perfectly for any other person. It will always feel just a bit uncomfortable, ill fitting and can often quite simply fall flat or be dead wrong.

People offer me advice all the time. Often it is offered when I am not even asking for it. I have been noticing how this is for me. When someone gives me advice, the first thing I realize is an increase in tension of the muscles around my shoulders and upper back. It is truly weird to notice your body as it involuntarily reacts to some sort of stimulus. I really do NOT like this feeling and would prefer my "advice giver" stop giving me advice at the moment. Behind the physical reaction, I realize I am in resistance and wonder why. It could be that this person has something important to share and it just might be really helpful. I smile and nod and agree or pretend to agree while thinking, 'this is just NOT going to work.' In one

way or another, I communicate to my 'advice giver' gratitude at receiving this wisdom. On the inside however, I may be grateful for their effort but also feel anxious knowing I don't want to use this well-meaning advice. *This is just one of the many different reactions we could chose to use in this same scenario.*

Why this type of reaction? Part of the problem is that the advice giver has launched into solutions when they clearly haven't gotten the whole picture. There is more to know and perhaps it is difficult to explain the details, nuances and subtleties of the situation. Perhaps it would take too much time and energy to go there.

So, in the end, we both agree the advice is great and move on to whatever is next. And, with that moving on the advice giver may be glad to have helped. However, she may feel just an inkling of something being not-quite-right. It's subtle like a quiver beneath the skin and it just nags a little and then lies to rest, not gone just sleeping. The advice receiver may walk away with a whole host of thoughts and feelings. Can you picture resentment, anxiety, guilt, anger, loss and embarrassment? What if I follow this advice despite knowing it isn't right for me? What if I don't follow it, how do I explain that? Next time, I'm not going to talk about what is going on and set myself up for more advice.

I know I don't want my family and friends walking away from me with any of these types of feelings. We are each ultimately responsible for being honest and clear, however, out of a sense of obligation, caring, fear or for other reasons we are not always forthright.

Most of us want to figure things out for ourselves. But, in our culture just bringing up a subject, any subject at all is a set-up for receiving "help". Often we do want help and sometimes it IS advice we seek, but perhaps more often it is a DIFFERENT KIND OF HELP we look for. I want help in finding

my OWN ANSWERS. And, I want to help others do the same.

In becoming a life coach, one of the most important things I have learned is THE VALUE OF HELPING OTHERS FIND THEIR OWN ANSWERS. This is important not just because it ultimately works better but because of how it affects self-esteem, self-awareness, personal learning and the expedient effect it has on future problem solving.

TO GUIDE ANOTHER TO THEIR SOURCE OF ANSWERS HAS AN INCREDIBLY POWERFUL AND PROFOUND IMPACT ON YOU, THE OTHER AND ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

I can do this by claiming responsibility for CREATING SUCCESSFUL AND HEARTFELT CONVERSATIONS and here is HOW I DO THAT.

(Coaches) DO THIS THROUGH A PROCESS of listening fully and asking questions that heighten awareness. If I listen to a friend without thinking about my own story and how what is being said relates to me, I hear and understand more. Being curious to know more leads to automatically asking helpful questions. This works especially well when I suspend judgment of what is being said. And, when I share my story using “I” statements throughout I give information that others can choose to use, or not. After all, what works for one person will typically not work for another in exactly the same way, but perhaps some element of my story will be helpful or open the door for new creative ideas.

When I am ‘coached’ to find my own source of answers, I walk away with head held high, a spring in my step. I know that what I will “do” and “be” next will get me what I want and need. I feel excited, happy, empowered and full of anticipation.

I have friends and perhaps you do as well who are naturals at being curious and allowing others to find their own answers. I am drawn to these people in a way that is healthy and balanced and I want others to connect to me in the same way. Ultimately what we all want is to be connected to others in our lives. Learning to listen, suspend judgment, be curious, share our own story and trust the wisdom residing in each person allows for a greater feeling of connection.

How great would it be to learn to honor and facilitate others in our life to live and be their full magnificent and resourceful selves? What if we all modeled behaviors for creating connection and taking this learning out into the world creating *a mobius of connection*?

Just imagine the potential!

About the Author

Linda McDonald has been coaching, training and consulting for nearly a decade and prior to becoming an independent business owner provided these services at the University of MA, Amherst. The mission of REACH Resources is to provide the services needed to help individuals, supervisors, managers, business owners and leaders renew, elevate and accentuate their strengths, talents and gifts, and explore their own magnificence and source for answers.

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