

On Being Kinder to Each Other

A Short Workshop

Sometimes, to our surprise, what we say or do is hurtful to others. It is important that we become sensitive to the reactions of others to what we do and to what we say. Below are a few activities that will help to sensitize us to the possibility of diverse reactions to our spoken and/or written interventions.

What is the effect?

The following can be said in many different ways – some hurtful, some humorous and some congratulatory. How the hearer understands the message depends on the circumstance, the speaker's tone of voice and word emphasis, and the physical stance of the speaker. In groups, try to speak them to convey different meanings.

- a. That was a wonderful speech.
- b. Did you ever consider going on a diet?
- c. Your report was way too long.
- d. Do you think you are dressed appropriately?
- e. Who told you to do that?
- f. Have you ever done that before?

Situation and how to handle them

How can we kindly handle the miscues, inevitable mistakes or uncomfortable situations that can occur at meetings? What are some excellent (E), good (G) and poor (P) ways in which the following situations could be handled? As you work through these, focus on the result of the reaction to the situation. The first one is given as an example.

- A. Mrs. I. B. Tardy comes late to the meeting:
 - a. All turn and look at her. (E,G,P)
 - b. The president stops the meeting until she has seated herself. (E,G,P)
 - c. The president ignores her and goes on with the meeting. (E,G,P)
 - d. A member calls, "Hi I. B.," and goes to welcome her. (E,G,P)
 - e. other
- B. Newly-elected, Connie I. Whistle, calls for a vote before a motion is seconded.
- C. You are at a meeting and are unable to hear what is going on.
- D. In your group, one of the members tells a personal story about everything that is discussed.
- E. One of the standing committee chairpersons never has anything to report.
- F. A new member suggests the council try something that they have never tried before.
- G. Two members are chatting during a presentation.

Random Acts of Kindness

These are ways, both spoken and unspoken, to say, “I care,” “I love you,” “I hold you in my heart.” Look for opportunities to perform these acts – a birthday card, quick hug, plate of cookies, a kind word, a smile, etc.

Seeing the face of Jesus in our sister members

- Before we say something nasty to someone, see Jesus’ face reflected in her face.
- Before we criticize someone, see Jesus’ face reflected in her face.

Seeing our sisters with the eyes of Jesus

- Look into the face of your sister with the unconditional love that comes from Jesus.
- Look into the face of your sister and see the good that Jesus sees.
- Look into the face of your sister and see the life that has been given to her by God.

Reconciliation

Think of those members with whom you have issues. Because they have done something nasty to you, because they have said something nasty about you, because they have hurt you and others.

Think of those times you have unintentionally hurt others, times you have said something nasty about someone, times when you have not been kind in your words and actions.

Forgive your sisters. Ask for forgiveness for yourself. Ask forgiveness of God.

Conclusion (recite or sing):

Peace Prayer of St. Francis

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord,
And where there’s doubt, true faith in you.
Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there’s despair in life, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there’s sadness, ever joy.
Oh, Master grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled, as to console.
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved as to love with all my soul.
Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving to all men that we receive, and in dying that we’re born to eternal life.