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Words Have No Meanings!

Words have meanings

and those meanings can hurt and devastate people.

Which is true?

If words cannot hurt your feelings, how is it that you and so many other people are getting their feelings hurt? If someone else's words can hurt your feelings, then are not you a victim of that person and their words? You do not have to be a victim. You can take back your power!

Learn the concept that can empower you to never get your feelings hurt again!

General Semantics (a part of the linguistic curriculum in many colleges) states, "The message is never in what the sayer, says, it is in what the hearer, hears." To say it another way; no matter how clearly you say something, the other person puts their meaning to what you have said, and it may not be even close to what you meant. So, what are you hearing?

For example: A husband is trying to convince his wife that he loves her. He says, "In 15 years of marriage, I have never seen anyone I would rather be married to than you." She screams back, "See, I'm right! You have been looking for someone else for 15 years." The message that she heard was not the message he was saying!

This concept is not new. We have known it for thousands of years. Unfortunately, each new generation seems to forget.

"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7 700 BC

"Men are disturbed not by things, but by their view of them." Epictetus 55 AD

"You feel the way you do right now because of the thoughts you are thinking at this moment." David Burns MD 1981 psychiatrist.

Each one of these quotes is another way of saying that words have no meanings, that the way you think (meanings you put on the words) determine when your feelings get hurt.

For instance, here is something that might hurt your feelings. What does the following six words say about a woman?

**Woman
without
her
Man
is
nothing**

So, what have I said about women? What did you hear? That a woman is nothing without a man?

Or do you hear that man is nothing without a woman? You can look up every word in the dictionary and you will never find the meaning of those words. What I hear when I read these six words is that a man is nothing without a woman in his life! (Maybe, this is why Victor Borge invented his phonetic punctuation.)

Where you put the comma is reflective of your beliefs! Words have no meaning except what you put to them. The meaning of a word has nothing to do with the definition of the word.

Warning: Listening becomes much easier when you “know” what kind of a person you are listening to. Once you have put someone in your “box,” it becomes much easier to listen to them, because it is going to be what you believe about them.

Once you understand that in language, words have no meanings, only people have meanings that they attach to words. Words have definitions. In fact, they may have more than one definition for the same word. (One of my readers suggested looking up the word “use” and see how many different meanings there is for that word.)

How to Never Get Your Feelings Hurt.

Since you are the one that is putting the meaning onto the words that you hear and use, can someone hurt your feelings? If your mate says, “You are a lousy lover, self-centered, narcissistic, and have never done a single thing that was loving or caring.” Do you think if your mate said this to you with anger in her eyes, would your feelings get hurt? I think so.

So then, your feelings can be hurt by what somebody else says? Is what your mate just said true? No! And yet, your feelings got hurt!

But, what if out of the blue, your mate said in all seriousness, “You are a very frightening person. You have three heads and fifteen legs. You can’t be trusted around the children!” Is it true what your mate just said? Do you have three heads and 15 legs? No! Do you feel hurt by what your mate said? Or, do you feel scared and concerned for her?

Both statements were false! And yet, one hurt your feelings and the other did not! How is it that you can take two statements that are both false and allow one to hurt your feelings and the other to not?

It is not whether it is true or false or what a person says to you that hurts your feelings! It’s the meanings that you attach to the words that cause you hurt.

Can you see that what she just said about you, said nothing about you, but it tells you a whole lot about her?

The first statement, the one that hurt your feelings, can you see that is about her, not you? In the first statement, it is **her** disillusionment about the relationship and **her** expectations about how you would behave. Perhaps your mate has a belief that says, “People should do what I think they should do, not what they do?” Then it makes perfect sense that she would be angry at you.

What have you learned?

Any time that you get your feelings hurt, STOP. It is time to be an actor, not a reactor.

First step, complete this assessment:

- Is what they are saying about you true or false?
- Does what they think about you really matter?
- What is that person telling you about themselves?
- How can you respond other than by getting your feelings hurt?

Second step,

- ✓ Decide the meaning that **you** want to put to the words that hurt your feelings.
- ✓ Consider the source and ignore the remark.
- ✓ Reach out with understanding of how the other person must be feeling: put-down, powerless, confused, helpless, scared, etc.
- ✓ Validate their feelings as being true for them. “I can hear that you are very angry at me because I have not lived up to your expectations. It sounds like if I don’t live up to your expectations, that means our relationship is over.”

Your feelings are in your hands, not in someone else’s hands! Your children’s feelings are in your hands. If you are a parent or grandparent, this is an important concept for you to learn and then to teach to your children and grandchildren.

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Dr. Downing’s e-book: “Taking Control of Your Life: How to Drastically Increase Your Emotional Quotient (EQ)” is available at:
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