

Cleaning Up the Personal Graffiti

Dr. Ron Kaiser January 28, 2014 No Comments

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Hi everybody, this is Dr Ron Kaiser with your August 2011 podcast from The Mental Health Gym. I hope you're all doing well and if you're living in the Northern Hemisphere I hope you're enjoying the summer weather. Today I'd like to talk about the topic that I call "Cleaning up the Graffiti". You know when I wrote my eBook "What Can Go Right", I included a chapter called cleaning up the graffiti and since I wrote it I've actually got quite a number of comments upon it because it kind of conceptualizes something in a way that isn't commonly done.

When I speak of cleaning up the graffiti I'm talking about cleaning up and attending to those verbal and non-verbal parts of what you present to the public, in other words your public presentation. I call that your graffiti if it's not a very proud kind of presentation. I compare it to graffiti in the neighborhood. You know if you pass a neighborhood that has a lot of graffiti and you can be pretty sure that there're some other things that go along with it. In many cases you find yards that aren't well taken care of, little pride in the neighborhood that allows the graffiti to stay and that becomes kind of unwelcoming place, a place that you don't really want to go to very often if you don't have to.

On the other hand if you pass neighborhood where the streets and sidewalks and yards and houses are well maintained and if graffiti appears, it is taken care of quite quickly then you kind of have a sense that this is a neighborhood with pride, this is a welcoming place that you'll enjoy visiting perhaps many times. I think the same thing

applies with respect to human beings. Let's not focus so much on content at this time but let's focus on presentation. I believe that the way you present yourself conveys a sense of whether you're keeping graffiti around or whether you're cleaning it up and I think one of the objectives for a person who is devoted to becoming as emotionally fit as possible is to make sure that we're cleaning up that graffiti and how do we go about it.

Well I think there're several principles that are important to keep in mind. First thing that I like people to be conscious of is that they present themselves with enthusiasm. Think about it, you know when you meet other people what are some of the things that tend to cause them to appeal to you and chances are that an enthusiastic person, not somebody who's over the top but somebody who shows general enthusiasm for life and for meeting you and for being with you really makes you feel welcome to be in their company. And obviously the same thing applies in reverse, if you approach people with enthusiasm there is a high likelihood that they will be interested and appreciative and wanting to be involved with you.

I know for example when I work with patients, I really try very hard to convey the impression that I feel namely that there's nothing I'd rather be doing at any particular time than being with the patient whom I'm spending my time with. Hopefully they feel the same way and under those circumstances we get the most done. So enthusiasm which can be conveyable verbally and non-verbally is an important first step. Another aspect that helps to clean up the graffiti is the matter of posture. When meeting people, old or new friends or acquaintances, it's quite critical to carry yourself in a way that again conveys the fact that you wanna be there.

Avoiding slouching shoulders, avoiding looking down rather than at the person, avoiding turning away and seeming to look for

interesting things to do than talk with them are all things that represent personal graffiti and the cleaning up of the graffiti. So it's a real easy thing to check, it's an easy thing to determine just how you are sitting, standing and is your posture appropriate and erect. Now I know some of us have long histories of slouching and taking it easy and being little more relaxed in the situation like cough, but we can be relaxed in our feeling without being relaxed in our posture.

Slouching posture represents graffiti and that's one of the things that we should be concerned about cleaning up. Maintaining eye contact is another aspect of cleaning up the graffiti. One of the least welcoming and least warm things that you can do for another person is to be interacting with them and not looking at them most of the time. Again I know for some people that's a habit and we're not intentionally looking away but habits can be changed and if we recognize that inappropriate looking at somebody represents graffiti then we won't either be too peering or too avoidant in our eye contact.

So again we've got enthusiasm, posture, eye contact. The next thing that I think is quite critical is the matter of active listening. I know particularly in new situations or when people feel somewhat emotionally intimidated by other people, they may spend a whole lot of time thinking about what their next remark is going to be. While you're doing that however you're not actively listening. You'd be surprised how easy it is to make an intelligent, enthusiastic, friendly remark, once you've really been part of the conversation by listening. So actively listening which is something that can really be picked up by the other person helps to clean up the graffiti, helps to make that personal impression, that presentation that you think you want to make.

You'd be surprised even if you don't say very much, if you're actively listening and actively involved in the conversation through your posture and your active listening, you'll be included. And lastly when you do make that statement, when you do get involved in the conversation then it's quite important to make your remarks with a confident voice, expressing yourself as if you are happy to be there and confident about being there. I know for some people that's not an easy task, particularly under certain circumstances. But keep in mind that you belong there.

When you're talking to somebody whether it's a social conversation, whether you're applying for job, whether you're helping somebody with directions or whatever it may be, you belong there, and if you belong there then it requires being confident about being there. Even if you have to say I don't know or I'm not sure, if you can say it with confidence and that something that I think is well worth practicing. Say I don't know with confidence or I'm not sure, that's sometimes as hard to say as I disagree with you. But at any opinion or any bit of information that may be shared with confidence is more likely to be seen as something that lets the other person know that you're there.

So if you don't leave telltale graffiti signs you're gonna find that it's going to be much easier interacting with others, you're going to get much more respect in the way that they interact with you and in the final analysis it leads to improve mental fitness. So some of you may have some additional ideas but I think if we can concentrate on those five things enthusiasm, posture, eye contact, active listening and a confident voice, I don't think anybody's gonna look at you and see you covered in graffiti, I think they're gonna see the way you want to be seen, hopefully as a mentally and emotionally healthy person who wants to be where they are and even if you don't, you know that you belong in that conversation or in that situation and that would hold true whether it's a formal conversation, whether its

meeting somebody on the street or whether it's just a brief acknowledgement of somebody that you know from the past.

The way that you present yourself determines whether you're carrying around personal graffiti and if we are lets clean it up. That's the podcast for August of 2011. This is Dr Ron Kaiser and it's been a pleasure being with you again, hope to hear from you if you have any comments on this just contact me at the website and look forward to having another conversation with you next month.