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COMM 2010

Personal Change Project

November 29, 2015

Submitted to Professor Tamra Phillips

Overview

The information in the following pages highlights my need to build a positive self-esteem. I see that my negativity strains my interpersonal relationships. In order to make positive changes I have used ideas from the book *Interpersonal Communication: Relating to Others*. The tools I use to build my self-esteem is positive self talk (intrapersonal Communication), confirmation of others, and music. Using these tools I can quiet thoughts that create jealousy and negativity. And build a positive foundation to support my family. Consequently, all changes face challenges and lack reciprocity. However, I have seen positive changes in my relationships due to my attempts. Ultimately, I plan on continuing to use these tools in the future. Furthermore, I plan on adding stop, look, and listen to my interpersonal communication skill-toolbox.

Unwanted Communication Pattern

Throughout my life I have noticed when I get down, I get down. I tend to feed my negative thoughts, with more negative thoughts. This I have come to call intrapersonal gunny-sacking. As a parent and spouse, my lack of self-esteem is interfering with providing a happy, supportive home. I truly desire to mentally be available for all interpersonal relationships. But, mostly I want to be happy for my family. Sadly, when I get down the way I interact with my family contradicts my true feelings. I become dark and hidden in my thoughts, reclusive and aggressive.

In the past I did not know how to stop the voice in my head from being negative. Ultimately, when I feel down I tell myself that I am worthless, ugly, fat, and nobody cares. Soon I start to believe it.

And the next thing I know, a week has gone by and the wife and kids are now just as miserable. At this point it becomes a fragile situation in our home and nobody is happy. Consequently, I become too negative to provide a happy foundation for supporting my family. When I get down I justify my feelings with negative attributes of myself and others.

The two situations:

- We were all sitting down for dinner and I was feeling stressed from work, school, and family. I was so deep in negative thought that I had just given up. I was convincing myself that Wendy did not love me and the kids anymore. I thought that she liked to be at work more than at home. I believed that I cannot provide what my family needed. So, I finally convinced myself that I was not wanted at our home and I was leaving. I know that sounds confusing, because it is. I slammed my fist on the table and said, "I'm sick of not being wanted here, I'm leaving." The people I love more than anything looked at me with uncertainty. I stomped off and started to collect my clothes and some things that have no value. I put my possessions in *our* truck and I go back inside. I noticed that my family was still sitting at the table, but they had their heads down, sobbing. When I saw them crying I instantly realized the huge mistake I had just made. They did not even know what was happening.
- An instance of jealousy led to the death of my cellphone. Wendy was at work and I had sent her a text message. I wanted to get some feedback from her. I waited to hear from her for an hour. I sent another message asking her what we should do for Braxten. Our oldest son got in trouble and his community service hours were due. Braxten was in need of a few more hours. And because of insurance reasons, I could not find anyone that could use a thirteen year old. So I had reached the end of my mental rope and I was reaching out to Wendy. Well two hours went by and no feedback. I grew more and more frustrated. I walked into the kitchen and threw my phone in the dishwasher. Consequently, I had to wait till she got home from work. Which this did not help the situation. When Wendy got home I instantly attacked her. It took a day or two for us to talk about what went

wrong.

I never realized how my low self-esteem and negative thoughts was destroying my interpersonal relationships. Until, I asked my wife what I could use for my interpersonal change assignment. When she explained that my perception of my self was wrong and it was very negative, I understood what she was saying. Furthermore, she said my negative feelings and observations of others could be feeding my negativity. So I began to search for strategies in the text to change my self-esteem and I found several. However, I narrowed it down to two from the text, and one from music and a memory.

Strategies

The basic strategy I use is positive intrapersonal communication (Beebe, 2014, p. 48). When we hear that inner voice, we are interacting intrapersonally (Beebe, 2014, p. 48). For the most part we are positive inside. But my voice convinces me of negative feelings. I need to control the voice with positive thought and support. I must learn to not be critical of others because you never compare yourself to others. That means to not cast negative judgment on the people I like. I need to use the voice to build my self-esteem, not destroy it. Consequently, negativity breeds negativity.

Using positive intrapersonal communication to build self-esteem is my first strategy. I will use positive attributes of my self and others to create a positive outlook on life. Positive thoughts lead to positive behavior. The thoughts I have influence how I interact with others. At the core of self-esteem is being other-oriented. In order to think positive I need to consider how I interact with my family. I need to be positive so my family likes to be around me. I need my family to like to be around me so I can like my self.

My second strategy is music. Music is very powerful as an antidote. Music can play an evil friend if you allow it to bring you down. Or, it can be the sweet topping to an otherwise harsh thought. I use music to make me feel good when I am down. Music provides feedback when there is limited feedback from others. Although it sounds cliché, music always embraces me with open arms.

The final strategy, confirming others can make you feel equally as well as being confirmed. Confirmation can be an array of words, and nonverbal cues (Beebe, 2014, p. 148). When an individual feels confirmed it makes them feel good about their self (Beebe, 2014, p. 148). To be confirmed builds confidence in the relationship. To confirm a person lets that person know that you want them around you. I need to confirm the people around me. So they feel loved and respected by me. However, in order for my self-esteem building to help my interpersonal communication feelings must be reciprocated.

Constraints

When I began to build my self-esteem I quickly noticed it was not going to be easy. The first thing I noticed is that it is who you are around. My attitude could not be changed if I faced negative feedback. To be happy is to be around people that mirror a happy attitude. I need to be with people that make me feel good to be alive. Furthermore, I need positiveness to be reciprocated. Perhaps, some people might not have the capability, desire or know how to reciprocate positive feelings. I am who I know and associate with. Ultimately, during this time of change I must limit the amount of negative outside influences.

Implementation

I began every day with positive intrapersonal communication. I look in the mirror and tell myself that I am important to my wife and kids. I say that today is going to be a good day. I reconfirm my positive feelings with more positive feelings. I repeat this throughout the day if I become negative. I tell myself that I have the power to control my feeling. I am the only one that holds me back.

I have used my knowledge of building a positive vibration around others. I know now that I have the power to influence the mood of an entire group. For example, Seth was having a bad day; furthermore his less-than desirable mood was rubbing off onto the rest the System. Braxten was starting

to become negative and so was the rest of us. And, adding to the frustration we were all packed in the car. So what did I do? I turned on the car stereo. Placed the volume at a reasonable hearing level and started my new inspirational song, Happy by Pharrell Williams.

When the song started I began to dance and clap. Wendy looked at me with a beautiful smile and started to join in. Next, I could hear the boys sitting in the back start to chuckle at me and mom dancing. By the time the song was over the whole family system was laughing and dancing together. Thanks to this project and my willingness to make a change, I feel happy. I've reasoned with the fact that I have the power to manage my emotions and change the situations mood.

Another experience where I changed my mood was after I was finished rehearsing with Team Rocket for our group presentation. The presentation was on conflict management styles. The conflict style was competition which is very negative, if used in a power struggle. Which, Team Rocket chose to use by majority rule. For the presentation me and a classmate had to be confrontational and I felt that it was counterproductive.

On my way home, I called Wendy. Wendy could tell that my mood was on the edge. She asked me if I was doing okay and asked me to check mood on the ride home. I told her thank you for being supportive and let her go. For the rest of the drive I talked to myself. I convinced myself that it was fake. I used positive intrapersonal communication that helped me rebuild happy thoughts. Moreover, I played Happy from Pharrell Williams. When I here the lyrics and think of my experience I cannot help but smile.

Results

I have noticed positive and negative consequences throughout this project. I faced individuals that allow them selves to be negative. I ultimatum, feel that you can only be as positive as the people you are around. Many times I feel happy but those around me are down. When people around you are down it is so hard. I know that I am complaining about people being down, when I get down. However,

I now understand that my attitude rubs off on the people around me. If I am negative the people that choose to talk to me can easily face changes in their mood. I think that it compounds on top of each attitude, and nothing changes for the better.

Oddly enough you can be too happy. I have been building my self-esteem for two months and I have noticed that I can be happier than the group allows. Yes being happy influences the groups mood. But being too happy can out shine the group and cause conflict. Sometimes you cannot explain the source of happiness and the people you have been depending on to reciprocate happiness get made.

Recommendation

As with anything we do we must find a middle-ground. A positive self-esteem is important to maintain positive interpersonal relationships. You cannot be more than what is expected and yet you must always be more than expected. In the future I will continue to use positive intrapersonal communication to reinforce positive thinking. And I will use it to think about the situation. Moreover, I will use positive attributes to describe people. I plan on considering the mood of the group to identify what strategies can be used to help better everybody in the group.

In the future I plan on implementing stop, look, and listen to build better interpersonal relationships. Stop, look, and listen is a three step listening strategy that shows others that we are interested and focused on them and only them (Beebe, 2014, p. 131-32). This strategy is simple. One, stop everything you are doing. This step shows the person you are interested in their feelings. Next, look at the person talking to you, acknowledge them with eye contact. Step three, listen to what they are saying, this includes nonverbal cues and context(Beebe, 2014, p. 131-32). Therefore, my future goal is to practice stopping everything I am doing at that time, look at the person that desires my attention, and listen to what they are saying.

Work Cited

Beebe, Steven A., Susan J. Beebe, and Mark V. Redmond. Interpersonal Communication:

Relating to Others. 7th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2014. Print. Al A Carte.

"Happy (From "Despicable Me 2" Soundtrack) - Single by Pharrell Williams". YouTube.

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