

The Power of Your Messages

By Stephen C. Rafe

Criticism can even kill carrots.

When your staffers aren't "getting it," do you sometimes criticize, find fault, lecture, or even scold them? Do you sometimes tell them what they did wrong, and let it go at that? If so, you may make the learning process especially difficult for them.

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You can't afford the luxury of a negative suggestion — or even a negative thought. Positive thought is essential to producing positive results. Negativity lowers the immune system, while positive thoughts and emotions actually boost people's immunity, energy, and motivation, as Linda Mackenzie, author of "The Healing Power of the Mind and Visualization" (<http://healing.about.com/od/visualization/a/powerofmind.htm>) points out.

Of course, not all negative suggestions will produce negative effects, just as not all positive suggestions will produce positive effects. The outcome of either one depends upon how each person processes what has been said.

The Negative Side: Some people you criticize may feel depressed and unable to work. Some may be resentful and unwilling to do the job. None will be inspired to put their whole heart into the task in response to your negative words.

The Positive Side: Those who hear positive suggestions are likely to feel encouraged, try harder, and feel good about themselves. Charles R. Collins, author of *The ABCs of Life*, offers proof of the power of positive suggestion. Try the following experiment yourself, and you'll be amazed. I want to share it with you, because I've tried it, and it really does work.

A Demonstration: Negative or positive suggestions can have a powerful impact on others and even on yourself through self-talk. It can affect not only people but other living things as well. If you doubt it, try this:

- **Cut half an inch** off the tops of 10 large carrots, leaving the green parts intact.

- **Fill two dishes** with the same amount of water — just enough to cover the yellow parts of the carrots.
- **Stand five of the carrot tops** in one dish. Stand the remainder in another, identical dish.
- **Set both dishes on a sunny window sill**, away from any drafts and at least a foot away from each other.
- **Prop the carrot tops up** if necessary so that they remain standing.
- **Mark one index card** with a "plus" sign and another with a "minus" sign.
- **Place the "plus" sign** in front of one of the dishes. Place the "minus" sign in front of the other dish.

Now here comes the fun part:

- **At least once a day** and more often if possible, go to the "plus" dish and tell the carrot tops how beautiful they are and encourage them to grow. Think positive thoughts about them.
- **Do the opposite** with the others: Criticize them and think negative thoughts toward them.
- **Be sure to maintain** the water levels at their original, identical depth.

The Outcome?

The odds are overwhelming that the carrot tops in the "plus" dish will sprout and flourish while the "minus" ones will wither and die. Now, if you can influence carrots, just think how your comments and suggestions influence the people in your organization. 

“If you can influence carrots, think how your comments influence the people in your organization.”

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