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'Effective Communication'
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Camp Pasquaney

If it is the practice of listening that makes a great person. It is the ability to interpret, add, and take away, but still keep the essence that makes a great leader.

Just as Robbie said so eloquently said on Monday. Listing can seem like a long lost art sometimes, truly saying something meaningful can also be just as elusive an event.

Let's all think of the last time we said something that made a difference. Did you help someone get over being homesick? Did you make someone happy? Did you swindle someone out of their Mary Lamb?

How did we get to this point of being able to make a difference? First we had seen something we had a desire to contribute to. Then we drew from our past experience of the issue and the person or persons involved and we were able to tailor our comments to fit like an old felt P-shirt.

Now I would like to take the old saying "if you don't have anything nice to say don't say it all" and throw it out, baby, bath water and all. Here at Camp where we are all trying to strive to be our best selves and we are able to do this because we can count on the people around us to hold us accountable.

Apart from public speaking, giving someone what is referred to as "constructive feedback" is the hardest thing to do right and taking it may be even harder. When someone asks if the skit they wrote is good or if their shop project is good what do you tell them if you don't like it? And more importantly how do you tell them? If you are truly their friend you won't keep your real feelings from them but you will let them know in a tactful way what they could do to improve it.

Now let's talk about a little bit of a deeper more complicated interaction. What if you don't agree with how someone is acting? How do you approach that topic? Do tell them to stop and give no reason? Do you give them a reason? What about helping them to see what they are doing by using yourself as an example. When we see things in others more often than not it is something we do ourselves or are watching for in ourselves. By taking this approach we are trying to reflect what we see so the person we are talking to can best understand. And this comes directly from how well you were listening to not only the words but the situation as a whole. Again I will lean on Robbie to bolster my tree talk. The story he read about the boy's regret for not having a warm cookie with a wise weathered woman was not about the words she spoke to him, but about the experience as a whole about her wisdom, her life and desire to pass a little happiness onto a young boy riding through a cold winter eve. The man knew that as a boy he had passed up an opportunity to experience wisdom.

This story illustrates wonderfully the way that we can listen to an experience, listen to the details, the actions, facial expressions of one another. It is only then when we are truly listening that we can construct something meaningful to contribute. Whether it is to a group or an individual bring your own self in a way that you know will add to the situation.

At Camp we not only have the opportunity but the responsibility to be the best we can be. Everyone here is working on themselves, but we can only do that through the help of each other. There is a cycle that ensues. We have an idea and express it and it comes back to us through the eyes of each other. We then think about that reaction and reflection of our idea reform it and shoot it back out. This cycle has been a continuous one throughout history and also here at Camp.

I was searching for a metaphor for this phenomenon and I came back to one of the things that I love to do most, cook. A constructive conversation is like a successful meal. All the right ingredients work together harmoniously, one not over shadowing the other, but rather building each other up to be greater than the what they started out. However, like a wise old man once told me ingredients don't cook them selves. It takes great intentionality to get each flavor just right.

The beginning of the conversation starts out with small bites of lighter talk to wet our appetites for a more substantial main course. Then we dig in to a simple yet layered discussion. And we finish off with a sweet and satisfying conclusion and our minds thoroughly satiated, but waiting for the next wonderful exchange of ideas.

And with that in mind let's take the time to truly listen to what each other is saying in our words and actions and add something that will make the end result tastier...

Are you guys hungry yet? I am too. Let's eat.