

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Admitting You Make Mistakes, Helps Resolve Conflict

“You never listen,” “People find you difficult to work with,” “You always have to be right.”

We have all found ourselves in the position where someone (a supervisor, a spouse) makes this type of statement. Blanket statements are rarely completely true. People who never listen, are always difficult and always have to be right are rare. The difficulty is that by disputing the statement:

- “I do listen”
- “Who says this?”
- “That’s not true”

We are appearing to prove the statements correct.

The problem is that the things we would do to dispute the statements end up escalating the conflict. In each case, the supervisor or spouse has a point they are trying to communicate. In fact, it is also true that it is rare for someone to always listen perfectly, to always be a joy to work with, or to always yield to the other person’s point.

Imagine what would happen if you were to apologize and agree with what the other person is saying:

- “I’m sorry, I may not have heard you. I’m listening now.”
- “I’m sorry to hear that, I want to be a team player.”
- “You’re probably right.”

The paradox is that by disputing something, you tend to prove it true, and by accepting something you tend to prove it wrong.

Why is this true? In each case the other person had a point they were trying to communicate; some criticism they were trying to make. By disagreeing with what they were saying you continue and escalate the conflict. By agreeing with their statements you are helping to bring the conflict to an end, or to defuse the tension.

Try it some time, and remember that one of the ways people use their EAP is to understand and resolve their interpersonal conflicts. Make the move, just call.

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