



## Mobley's Musings: Power of human touch

Human touch is essential to our welfare. Orphaned babies may fail to thrive because they aren't touched, and children who weren't held as babies often have development difficulties. Studies of children in orphanages found they were unable to bond with their caregivers because as babies they weren't held or touched enough. This is called attachment disorder.

How many hugs a day does a person need? Although not scientifically proven, the late psychotherapist Virginia Satir claimed, "We need four hugs a day for survival. We need eight hugs a day for maintenance. We need twelve hugs a day for growth."

Certainly, Covid-19 isn't helping in the daily hugs department. Some of us are finding creative solutions to social distancing, such as the grandparents who don plastic dinosaur costumes to be able to touch their grandchildren and the family that built a plastic hugging booth built so they could connect safely with those who may be at higher risk. The joy you see on their faces is exhilarating.

The pandemic is especially difficult for people who live alone. How can they replace the feeling of a hug from a friend, the healing touch of a massage therapist, or the simple pleasure of getting a manicure or pedicure? Perhaps hugging a pet can help alleviate the loss of human touch.

This is a good time to let people know that you care, and if you can't show it with your touch, be sure you say it.

Sandy



### Ask Sandy

#### How to handle resistance to feedback

Lately managers have told me that when they provide constructive feedback to some employees, the employees blame others or the manager for their shortcomings. Even when the feedback is presented in a way to motivate improvement, some employees just go into denial. What's the best way to

respond to resistance?

When someone points the blame at another person, it's important to cool the emotional climate. With a calm voice and demeanor, I ask them how specifically the other person prevented them from succeeding. Jacob said he couldn't complete his project because his IT resource, Laine, didn't meet her deadlines. I asked when he realized she wouldn't get the project done and what he did to help her or find other solutions. Did he raise the issue with her or her boss or did he throw up his hands and say, "It's not my fault"?

Early in my career I had a boss who said, "Excuses are for losers. Winners figure out how to get things done." If an employee makes excuses, I put it back on them to take responsibility for resolving the problem or for bringing it up to me if they couldn't solve it at their level.

The worst case of blaming I heard was when a consulting firm's multimillion-dollar proposal was rejected because it wasn't delivered to the client on time. The employee who was responsible for making sure the proposal went out saw it sitting by the door as he left that evening. First he blamed FedEx for not picking it up, and then he blamed his boss for not telling him to take it to FedEx. Needless to say, the team members who had put in long hours on the proposal were not sympathetic.

The TV show Star Trek: The Next Generation gave us the line "resistance is futile." When it comes to feedback, resistance can be suicidal to a career. Successful employees find a way to succeed in spite of difficulties; they don't give up and they don't blame others.

**Learning for Leaders:** Help employees take responsibility for their actions. Don't accept excuses.

**Coaches Corner:** Role-play feedback scenarios with your clients so they can respond calmly with feedback that the employee will hear and be motivated to act on.

If you have questions you'd like Sandy to address in future newsletters, email them to [sandy@learningadvantageinc.com](mailto:sandy@learningadvantageinc.com)



### Find Your Calm

A World War II-era British slogan has recently gained new popularity, advising us to "Keep calm and carry on." But keeping calm isn't easy lately. Many of us are juggling new responsibilities and that stress can lead to health issues, not to mention difficulty managing emotions. When we aren't aware of how we are feeling it is easy to become irritated and push people away. Leaders need to be cognizant of their behavior, especially since staff members sometimes mimic them. Harsh interactions can put people on edge and make them afraid to come to you with bad news. And it can alienate clients and business associates.

Leaders who are centered and calm are aware of their emotions and behave with intention. There are many ways to be calm and centered. Try a few and pick the ones that work the best for you.

### Mediation

Meditation can be approached in many ways but the simplest is just by becoming aware of your breath. As you breathe, say to yourself, "I am breathing in, I am breathing out" and notice where your breath is. If it is high in your chest that can lead to hyperventilating. Consciously taking a deep breath allows your breath to move down and calms you. Other ways of meditating include focusing on a candle flame, closing your eyes and letting your thoughts go, or participating in guided meditation that keeps your mind engaged for the sake of letting go. If you prefer having someone lead your meditation, look into meditation groups or a meditation app like Head Space.

### Moving Meditation

Some people find it hard to sit still while meditating. Instead of being relaxed, they get antsy. If you're one of these people, moving meditation can be calming. Try taking a walk and focus on your body: notice as you lift one leg and step consciously from your heel to the ball of your foot. Pay attention to each step until the rhythm occupies your subconscious. Observe your surroundings as if you were seeing them for the first time.

### Mindfulness

Being present or mindful means paying full attention to what you are doing without distractions. Many of us do multiple things at once, like watching TV while cooking or cleaning. While multitasking can make us feel like we're making an efficient use of time, research has shown that we're not actually doing any of these tasks well. To practice mindfulness do one activity at a time, be it peeling a potato, weeding in the garden, grooming a pet, or eating a meal. As you immerse yourself fully in the activity, notice how it feels to turn yourself over to it.

### Somatic Practices

Studying with the Strozzi Institute I learned a number of exercises that helped me be centered and align my body, emotions, and spirit. Aikido, tai chi and other martial arts also increase body awareness and the connection to emotions. With continuous practice, the exercises become second nature, helping to keep you centered physically, mentally, and emotionally.

### Children and Pets

Playing with young children encourages you to be in the present. And seeing the world through a child's eyes can bring wonder and a greater appreciation for things we may have been taking for granted.

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