



By Silver Rose

Words have power. This morning someone I love told me that when he was ten years old his father took him fishing. This is a very big event for any boy—quality time with Dad. On that trip, my friend did something his Dad didn't like and, to let him know just how much he disapproved, he said, "I used to think you were stupid; now I *know* you are."

Ouch. The impact of words last—in this case over 50 years. Too often we use words to vent negative emotions with little concern about the impact. In fact, we humans are incapable of doing something we truly believe is wrong so what do we do? We justify:

*She needs to be told.*

*It's for his own good,*

and (my personal favorite):

*I'm only telling you this because I love you.*

If that's true, could you love me a little **less**, please?

I recently heard a simple and yet powerful guideline for determining what information to communicate, especially if it's potentially hurtful. Just ask yourself these three simple questions:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it kind?
3. Is it necessary?

**#1 Is it true?** To test this, feel free to apply my *Court of Law Rule* which is, as follows: if you cannot prove it in a court of law, then you made it up.

Could my friend's father prove in a court of law that his 10 year-old was stupid? Perhaps he could if he produced the results of his son's IQ test and the score was low. In this case, I know it to be untrue; my friend, who was that 10 year-old is one of the smartest and most successful people I know.

"But Silver," you might protest, "sometimes I just *know*." We all think that. I once shared with a friend that the man she was dating would end up badly hurting her. It turned out to be true. But what is equally true is that, ten years prior I fully *endorsed* a relationship she had with a man, convinced she would live happily ever after. When they parted, that hurt turned out to be worse. In both cases, I could

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### Three Questions

not prove my opinions in a court of law. My ideas weren't *true*; they were stories I'd made up, convinced I was right.

Where do you do this in *your* relationships, both at work and at home?

**#2. Is it kind?** Another way to say this is: examine your motives. Check out how you are feeling. Are you planning to communicate this information because you are feeling kind? Or are you feeling self-righteous, smug or superior? If you are feeling any of the latter, you are probably not being kind. If, however, you are upset because you know you're about to hurt this person but you also know that, in the long run, they will benefit from it, then you are being kind. For example, intervening when someone is harming themselves with drugs, food or alcohol is an act of love and the intent is to be kind, not hurtful. This is equivalent to throwing a lifesaver to someone who is about to drown. (Just remember, they get to choose whether or not to pick it up.)

**#3 Is it necessary?** This is a tough call, no question. If the communication is a way for you to set boundaries with another, it is probably necessary. Boundaries are required when someone else's behavior is causing you tangible harm.

If the only harm you are experiencing are negative feelings because of their behavior, that doesn't count. No one else controls your emotions—how you feel is up to you. On the other hand, if they are physically harming you or putting your livelihood or safety at risk, then the communication **IS** necessary—refusing to get into a car with someone who's been drinking, for example.

Remember that the Law of Attraction says that you get more of what you focus on. When you are focused on the need to fix or rescue someone, then you will be surrounded by people who need fixing or rescuing. By routinely asking yourself these three questions, you will begin to discover that much of what you feel compelled to communicate is really none of your business.

Consider what a different memory my friend would have of fishing with his Dad if his father had simply employed these three questions. Think of how different your relationships will be when you do.

August 3, 2010