

# COMMUNICATION IS KEY!

By Donna Deos

How many times have you been having a conversation with someone who you know is not listening to you? How many times have you not been listening to someone talking to you? How many conversations have you had where it feels like you are both spouting off about different things under the guise of talking about the same thing? Finally, how frustrating is all of this to you when you are experiencing it?! Right. At least one half of communication is LISTENING. More than that if you truly want to understand someone and help them. And yet, we would rather yammer on with our point of view instead because we think we are right and need them to understand that and submit. Well, they are doing the same thing.

Watched the news lately? (I try not to but find that since the election I cannot seem to help myself.) It is the perfect example of people trying to talk about the same topic but approaching it from diametrically opposing views and skewing what they are saying (R's & D's, I'm talking about) to exaggerate and hyperbolize their views, all the while painting the other view as bad or wrong or ignorant. The end result is that the public is frustrated that no one is listening to them, instead they are fighting the same old fight still trying to win and nobody else but them cares anymore. It's actually rather comical and pathetic.

Anyway... stepping back from politics, because I do try to avoid that and religion, apply this to your own life. Most of the reason that seniors and their adult children end up arguing at cross purposes is because both of us are so sure we are right and that the other person has no idea what they are talking about that we keep arguing and pushing our view or goal.

We adult children are trying to solve the problem at hand. Mom or Dad (or Aunt Matilda or whoever the aging loved one may be) are trying to figure out so very much more than that. Do any of us try to hear what our aging loved ones are saying? Do we try to give them the time, space and attention to find out what is really burdening their heart and mind? No. We have to move on to solving our children's issues and the committee we volunteer for issues and our work issues as well.

Stop. Take a breather. If you are still reading this, I commend you! I know it sounds a bit preachy, I'm sorry. This is important. If you truly want to help your aging loved ones – and yourselves – then stop and listen to them.

Find out what they really want for the quality of life moving forward. Let them review their life up until this point. The reason they keep repeating certain stories is because they are pivotal points in their lives. They illustrate an important



point. They tell you about who they are and what they want to be remembered for.

We, as the adult children, are stuck in the middle of our lives. We are looking at the issues of where we have come from and where we are to go to from here. We are looking for purpose.

They are looking at Legacy. It's entirely different. One is not good and the other bad. One is not right and the other wrong. There does not have to be a winner and a loser.

They are simply different points in life with different views, different results, different issues and heart strings being pulled.

Your aging loved ones want and need to know that their life up to this point mattered... that they made a difference... that they influenced you in positive ways.

They want to know that the legacy they leave behind is a good one. You may or may not value their life and accomplishments up to this point, but if you value their self-worth you need to at least give them the time and energy needed to process this and work through it. They may truly have been the best parent ever and you can honestly show them that. They may not have been. If that's the case there are ways in which you can still address that without hurting them to let them know that that did in fact form who and how you are, without telling them it persuaded you to go in the opposite direction. Either way, they are having a full life review while you are having a mid-life review.

You have plenty of time to course correct. They may not. This is one of many processes that we go through in life. As we age we take stock of our accomplishments, our failures and so on. We weigh things out and hope the good outweighs the bad. Sometimes all they need from you is to know that you made the time for them, you listened, you truly heard them and you gave them some sort of positive feedback.

This is why sometimes you want to try and talk them into giving something up and they want to talk about a glory day's story of how great things were way back when. They likely know they aren't as sharp as what they once were. Harping on that and stressing safety



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issues alone won't win that battle. Admitting they did have the coolest car of any parent around back in the day and they were wonderful about taking you and your friends everywhere in it can help get them further down the path to having a wonderful memory to hold onto as they face giving up something they really don't want to.


Communication is the key. Listening is what's most important. If you listen to them, they will likely listen to you. It's a two way street. Plus, you will get to know what's really important to them, which down the road is something you will treasure. Trust me, I know. Sometimes the stories, photos and reminiscing are all we have. Gather all of that up while you can. It is well worth the time it takes and more.

Wishing you and yours many happy conversations in this wonderful new year. If you come across something you aren't sure how to talk with them about, call me. I'm really good at talking about things that people really would prefer to avoid. Plus, I can tell them (parent or well-meaning adult child) things that you likely already have. However, coming from me they may listen. Not because you said it any differently, and not because they don't respect you, but simply because it's what I do and I am a non-family member. That makes all the difference in dynamics of conversation.

*Talk with you soon!*

*Donna*





(Left) Gary and Carol Asker, formerly of Bow, catch up on the news in Florida.

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