

Pondering Point

It has been said that giving advice can be lending a helping hand or a slap in the face. Though it is very flattering to be asked for advice, it is also a big responsibility. Good advice can help people make sound decisions in life, while bad advice can have disastrous consequences. The rub is that we never really know the outcome our suggestions have on someone. Do we even know for sure what they are asking of us? Perhaps it is just to be empathetic. Or maybe they feel they need permission to go ahead with something, want your blessing or are simply looking for empowerment.

A safe way to 'offer advice' is to ask empowering questions that help the person make up their own mind. We might not know all we need to about a problem to give the best advice. Ethics can play a part in giving advice. "Am I qualified to give advice on this topic?" If we advise one thing but do the opposite, our advice may be seen as hypocritical. If we 'practice what we preach' people will be more likely to respect our advice. We may be too busy, have a conflict of interest, hidden agenda or simply do not know how to advise a person. Admitting this and recommending that the person ask someone else is respectful of our time and their problem. Remember, advice is not THE answer. It is only a suggestion. Knowing this can release some pressure on both ends--from the person giving the advice and the person receiving it.

Take my ADVICE...

Do you practice what you preach?



Imagine... finding success in life by taking the well thought-out advice we give others.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity

When someone comes to you for advice:

- If they are emotional – ask them to talk about what they are feeling and why.
- Ask them what they are really looking for in your help. (empathy, encouragement, permission)
- Are you qualified to give them what they need?

If so:

- Ask clarifying questions about the problem.
- Ask what would happen if you did this – what would happen if you didn't?
- Put yourself in their shoes and base your advice on *their* circumstances.

Celebrate that you were able to help someone problem-solve.

Self Reflection Activity

Think about a time when you went to someone for advice. When it went well:

- What were you looking for from the other person?
- Did you follow the advice or come to the conclusion yourself?
- How did that make you feel?

And when it backfired:

- Why do you think it turned out that way?
- What were you asking for from the other person?
- Did they understand the facts presented?
- Did you take their advice?
- How did it make you feel?

"Generosity gives assistance, rather than advice."

- Marquis de Vauvenargues