

It is Better to Empower Your Children/Friends than to Give Them Advice

Often in our interactions with family and friends, problems being encountered would inevitably be brought up. Inevitably too, in trying to be helpful, we often react by giving advice on how to solve the problem. However, this is generally not recommended, for the following reasons: We assume we know what the problem is and forget to be a listener, to find out enough details about the problem and the other person's point of view. We forget to extend empathy to the woes of the other person. We get 'credit' for being the one to give the advice since the advice is likely to be something that the adviser has done or others have done that was successful. So if the listener does not succeed or had done it before but it was not successful, the implication is that it is not because the advice was not good, but the listener has not applied it well. This tends to make the advisee feel stupid and incompetent. When we give advice, we're talking 'down' to the other person as we become the 'expert'. We're so eager to talk and show our knowledge and 'wisdom' that we do not interact at an 'equal' level with the other person. We take on the position of 'expert' and might tend to forget that the other person also has knowledge to share with us. We are giving the message that we think the person cannot work out the solution himself. This is disempowering for the other person. We belittle the efforts that have been taken by the person. We become the evaluator of what the person has done rather than helping him/her to self-evaluate. Example of Advice Giving: A: Jolyn and I are having problems. We have been having more quarrels lately. B: Hmm... I'm always thought both of you were not suitable for each other. (B is getting credit for his prediction. B is not asking questions to find out more about A's problems) A: Well, we were getting along pretty well. But I've been very busy with work recently and haven't had time to go out with her. She feels I'm spending too much time on work. B: It shows she does not understand you (B is assuming he knows what the problem is). Maybe you should break up with her (advice giving, implying A cannot work out a solution). It could be a blessing in disguise. A: I'd be miserable. Don't know what I'd do without her. B: You'll get over it (B is not extending empathy to A). I did too when I broke up with Doris 2 years ago. (B is giving himself credit) A: I sent her roses to make up but it doesn't seem to work. B: I don't think that will work with her (evaluating what A has done). Since she wants time with you, just put aside your work and make time for her. A: I have deadlines to meet. B: Well, you have to decide what you want (this is not likely to be helpful to A's dilemma and might make him feel stupid and incompetent instead.)

Using Questions in conversations is generally more helpful as it helps the other person think through the issues that they have. Example is this conversation below: A: Jolyn and I are having problems. We have been having more quarrels lately. B: I'm sorry to hear that (extending empathy). Would you like to tell me more about it? (being a listener, to find out details of problem) A: I've been really busy with my work and haven't had time to go out with her. She feels I'm spending too much time on work. B: Has it always been this way with your work? A: No, it's these recent two months because of a big project. Deadlines to meet and other work pressures... B: Must be tough on you... (extending empathy to A and indirectly giving credit to A for holding up) A: Yah... but I do need to make time for Jolyn... I have been working too hard. I should ease up a bit (self evaluation). I think I'll send her some flowers afterwards and then call her for a dinner date tomorrow. (coming up with his own solutions) B: All the best ...

References: www.succezz.com/StresstheSilentKiller.html

www.succezz.com/How2BHappy.html

www.succezz.com/S2/7WaystoLiveLifttotheMax2.html

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