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Changing Your Faulty Filters

Seeking inspiration, I just pulled Thomas A Harris' bestseller "I'm OK-You're OK," from my bookshelf. On the back cover of this classic book, Harris includes the following commentary, "Are you OK? It's probably the most important question you'll ever have to answer. Because right now—whether you're aware of it or not – all the relationships with the most important people in your life are strongly influenced by a combination of how you feel about yourself (OK or *not* OK) and what you think of them (again, OK or *not* OK)."

Okay, I'm inspired. In fact, I'm really inspired, because from experience, I know that what Harris states is true. Our relationships *are* strongly influenced by how we feel about ourselves. They're also significantly affected, either positively or negatively, by the perceptions, or filters, that we have of others.

If we have healthy self-esteem and self-confidence, then we are likely to act in a way that will induce the same others. If we believe in ourselves and in our abilities, then we are likely to have the same belief about others. On the flip side, if we're not happy about our lives, the choices we've made, or who it is that we perceive ourselves to be, this leads us to communicate in a way that is counterproductive to building healthy relationships.

Several years ago at a workshop, when discussing how our perspectives guide our communication, I was encouraged and inspired by a participant's insight. She shared: "Sometimes I feel like I speed read people." She explained, "Usually, it only takes me a few seconds to sum a person up. And, once I get the main concept of who it is they are, (and whether or not they have something to offer), I communicate to them through my filter."

You could have heard a pin drop

When I asked for a show of hands to see if "speed-reading" was common practice, the majority of participants agreed - they were guilty as charged.

Encouraged by the group's response, she offered additional insight "I admit," she said, "there were times when I needed a remedial reading course. Some of the people that I've initially judged the harshest, have ended up being the best people I know. She concluded, "Therefore, it seems that I had a faulty filter."

My thinking is that *many of us* have, and use, faulty filters and would benefit from a remedial "speed reading" course. And what would we learn? That, instead of approaching people from the perspective of "I'm OK, you're *not* OK," or worse yet, "neither one of us is ok," we would benefit by embracing the perspective of "I'm OK, You're OK."

Change your faulty filter and you'll adopt a new perspective—one that, as Maxwell House would say, will keep your communication "Good to the last drop."

Susanne Gaddis, PhD, known as the Communications Doctor, is an acknowledged communications expert who has been speaking and teaching the art of effective and positive communication since 1989. Gaddis' workshops, seminars, and keynote presentations are packed with tips and techniques that can be immediately applied for successful results. Gaddis also provides quality training and executive coaching for organizations, corporations, and associations across the United States. For more information, call 919-933-3237 or visit www.CommunicationsDoctor.com.