



## NOTES FROM ARS

In September, Noella Ashley came on board as our MSW Practicum placement. Noella comes to us with many years experience in addictions and mental health as well as her work with women in family violent situations. Her current work position is with Mental Health and Addictions as the After Hours Mental Health Outreach worker. We welcome her expertise and her capacities to our team. She will be working on Mondays and Wednesdays until April.

The coming year for the ARS will bring many challenges. One major focus will be on our current member companies and ensuring that we are providing the quality of services they are requiring. From the surveys sent back by users of the service, 98% tell us they are pleased with the service they receive. This is very encouraging and helps us to know that we are doing our job. Please keep sending those surveys back and please include any comments you might have. They are read and taken seriously.

The other focus will be revamping our website and reaching out to new local companies. With the downsizing in the forest industry and the layoffs at Catalyst, UIARS also suffered some loses. My goal for 2010 is to contact two large companies and three small companies to increase our membership.

Finally, I would like to extend to everyone a very Happy Holiday season and a Happy New Year.

*Garth Greatheart*, MSW RSW  
Executive Director



## The Art of Giving Effective Feedback

Throughout our lives we are presented with opportunities to give feedback. Many of us experience giving feedback as a difficult, even uncomfortable, task. Often our style of communicating does not have the desired impact of improving the other's performance or behaviour; and in fact, at times, it has the opposite effect! Feedback, when offered correctly, provides a wonderful opportunity for growth for all parties involved. When an opportunity to offer some feedback to a partner, spouse, child, friend or co-worker next arises, consider applying the 8 simple steps provided below.

1. **Check your intention.** Before providing any feedback, make sure your intention is not to fix or change the other person. Creating the highest good for the person is a key ingredient to sharing valuable feedback.
2. **Ask for permission.** While we hope that our feedback will be perceived as a 'gift', this is not always the case. Unless you are a performance evaluator in a business setting or a parent to a small child, you should always seek permission to give feedback.
3. **State your purpose for giving the feedback.** The receiver should have at least a cursory understanding of the purpose of the feedback discussion before it begins. This provides them with the best opportunity to prepare to *openly* receive the feedback.
4. **Describe the behavior.** Present your perceptions, reactions and opinions as such, *not as facts*. This step includes the usual suggestion to use "I" statements but also requires that you give specific examples of the individual's behaviour, sticking to only one topic area of concern. Feedback should be also given in a way to show acceptance of the receiver as a worthwhile person and someone who has the right to be different.
5. **Describe the impact of the behavior.** Feedback about performance should provide examples of what are 'high' and 'low' areas of that performance, as well as how specific behaviours appear to be contributing to or limiting effectiveness. Avoid repeating yourself or 'driving home your point'. Watch your tone of voice when describing behaviour and its impact so that the feedback is not perceived as its close cousin... criticism.

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Worrying is like a rocking chair, it keeps you moving,  
but going no where. Anon

Nine tenths of education is encouragement.  
Anatole France

6. **Provide an opportunity for the receiver to respond.** Open the floor for a response, making it clear that the receiver is welcome to take time out to absorb your comments before responding.
7. **Offer suggestions and explore solutions.** Where there are established procedures or solutions, specific suggestions should be given to improve performance. Otherwise, solutions are best explored jointly.
8. **Review the decisions made and state a positive commitment.** Summarize the outcome of the discussion and review the commitments of both parties. In a business setting, follow-up by way of a letter or email is appropriate and recommended. In all cases, remember to let the receiver know that you appreciate having the opportunity to give feedback.

Challenge yourself to practice this technique. You might be pleasantly surprised at how effective you can be at helping others grow.



### Office Hours for Holiday Season

ARS offices will be closed the week starting Dec. 28<sup>th</sup>, re-opening Monday, January 4, 2010. Crisis services are available through the Crisis Nurse attached to local hospitals.



### Calm Down

Five quick and easy ways to regain your calm so you can deal with whatever situations are at hand:

- **Take a Walk:** Exercise can be a great stress reliever in itself, as it helps you blow off steam and releases endorphins. Taking a walk when stressed provides the bonus of getting you out of the stressful situation and providing some perspective so you can return in a new frame of mind.
- **Take a Breath:** If you're not in a position to leave, you can feel better right away by practicing breathing exercises. Getting more oxygen into your body and releasing physical tension are two ways that breathing exercises can benefit you, and you can do them anytime or anywhere, even if your demanding situation isn't letting up.
- **Take a Mental Break:** If you can steal away a few minutes, visualizations and guided imagery are a wonderful way to restore peace of mind. They're easy to do, and can relax you physically as well as mentally.
- **Reframe Your Situation:** Sometimes we intensify our experience of stressful situations by the way we look at them. If you can look at your situation differently, you may be able to put it into a different perspective--one that causes you less stress!
- **Try Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR):** This is a technique where you tense and release all of your muscle groups, leaving your body feel more relaxed afterward. With practice you can fully release virtually all the tension you're feeling in your body in a matter of seconds!

Once you've been able to calm down, you should be in a better position to address whatever stressful situations you're experiencing.

Elizabeth Scott, MS

## Making Resolutions That Will Last

The New Year is traditionally a time to take stock and resolve to do better, be kinder, lose weight, etc. Resolutions allow us to reassess our priorities and the directions we are taking. Following are some suggestions to help make your resolutions more achievable:

- Limit the number of resolutions and prioritize them: three to five resolutions are not as daunting as ten and will not overwhelm you before you even start.
- Make only those resolutions you have been thinking about for some time and do it for yourself.
- If the resolutions are the same ones you have made previously, before trying again examine what obstacles blocked you on previous occasions.
- Write them down. Putting your resolutions into writing serves to increase your commitment.
- State your goals in objective or behavioural terms. Have an action plan. Write what positive actions you will take.
- Keep your list handy. Post it where it can serve as a reminder.
- Seek the support of others. They will encourage and challenge you to keep going.
- Treat yourself kindly. Stay positive and counter negative thoughts with positive ones.
- Start with the easiest one. It is not necessary to start working on all your resolutions at once. Begin with the one with which you are most likely to be successful. Success with one resolution will make it easier to tackle the next.
- One day at a time. Resolutions do not need to be a commitment for the whole year. Plan for just three months. Chances are good that any changes in behaviour that last for three months are on the way to becoming a habit.

Many people attain their goals by starting with small changes. With success comes more small changes or even, with the gained confidence, slightly larger changes. Most of our bad habits did not develop overnight but resulted from an accumulation of small things. Good habits can also result from small changes.

The RCFEAP Newsletter



### Couple's Corner

Do you remember when you used to just talk? Not about who's going to take out the trash, pay the bill, or book the flight, but just talk to be with each other. Many couples don't talk anymore--unless they have something to communicate, a decision to make, or a task to complete. But the most important thing about talking to each other is not communicating; it's connecting. Try a "Talk Charge" which is a 60-second personal conversation with your spouse about something non logistical.

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### Marriage Building Exercise: "We in Word"

*Do this:* Write down several "we" statements that describe your current likes, dislikes and opinions as a couple.

*Why:* How often do you talk about yourselves as a united couple? Verbalizing shared values and opinions puts you in a "we" mindset.

From Marriage Advice.com