

## Communicating Goals & Desires Pay Off



*"I feel like I'm always walking on eggshells around you!"*

*"I never seem to know what will make you happy!"*

*"Why can't you make up your mind?"*

If you have ever made these comments or heard them from others, then you know how exasperating this kind of relationship can be, whether it is a personal or business relationship.

Never really being sure where you stand with the other person leads to this problem. Either you are not being clear, or the other person is holding back. Often, the reason for the reticence is fear of appearing selfish.

A side effect of being "nice" but unclear is that the woman often develop resentments because she is not being recognized. These resentments grow and do not go unnoticed by others. Unfortunately, others do not know why she is annoyed, but do feel as if they are walking on eggshells around her. If the spouse, friends, coworkers or employees are not able to cut through the communication problem, they may also begin to hold back for fear of an argument. Then no one knows what anyone wants or what is going on. Obviously this is not good for business relations—not to mention the marriage.

The reason this problem is more common for women than men is that women are usually more concerned about maintaining balance in their relationships whether they work in a family firm or not. Unfortunately, most women tire themselves out trying to keep everything in balance, when a few shake-ups are actually in order. For example, in one study researchers found that career women (including entrepreneurial women) are very reluctant to change things in their work environment if it will upset their spouse, their employees or their customers. Instead, these women just do more and more and more to accommodate the wishes of others, growing more tired, annoyed and depressed as time goes by. While balance is a nice goal, it is not always the way to get there. In order to keep creativity alive, in order to grow a business (or a family) there are many changes and corrections that need to be made along the way. Maintaining the status quo may mean stagnation.

The best gift you can give the people you care about and work with is to be clear with them about your goals and desires. Even if they don't agree with you or don't necessarily appreciate the goals you've chosen to give top priority to, at least they know where you stand. Nothing is hidden. The agenda is on the table and negotiations can proceed. It also may be that your difference of opinion is just what the system needs to be more profitable and productive.

BY KATHY J. MARSHACK, PH.D.

## A Threat from Adverse Drug Interactions

No one knows the true prevalence of adverse drug reactions, but it is clearly a major public health problem in terms of morbidity and mortality, not to mention cost. And it is almost always preventable.

But not all harmful drug reactions can be foreseen, in part because new medications are approved after being tested on an average of 3,000 people over a relatively short period. So the toxic reactions that occur in rare circumstances are often detected after the drug hits the market and many more people have used it.

Still, much is known about the common reactions to drugs, so it should be possible to avoid most problems, especially the harmful interactions among different medicines.

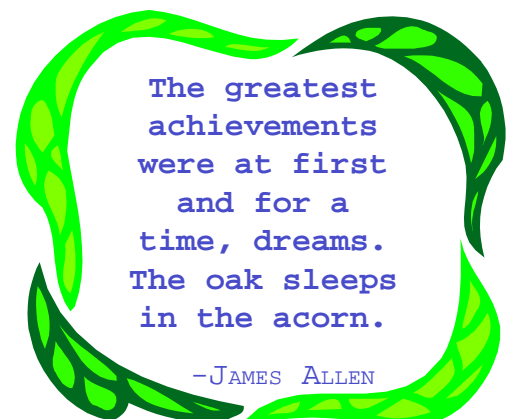
Drug interaction software, which is now widely available, can help prevent such medical mishaps. A doctor enters all the drugs a patient is taking and then punches in the new medication. The software then identifies undesirable interactions. But even this is not foolproof.

Studies have shown that even though the crucial information is available, it is not always used in medical decision making. For example, pharmacists still fill prescriptions for medication combinations that are known to be potentially harmful, even when the drug interaction software is at hand.

Many patients who use herbaceuticals and dietary supplements don't tell their doctors, perhaps because they don't consider them real medications or they think their doctors won't approve. But these so-called natural remedies are biologically potent and can interact strongly with prescriptions.

Patients have to tell their doctors about all the drugs they are taking—not just prescriptions, but natural supplements and recreational drugs, too. What your doctor doesn't know can be hazardous to your health.

BY RICHARD A. FRIEDMAN, M.D.



## Children and Adolescents with *Panic Disorder*



Panic disorder is a common and treatable disorder. Children and adolescents with panic disorder have unexpected and repeated periods of intense fear or discomfort, along with other symptoms such as a racing heartbeat or feeling short of breath. These periods are called “panic attacks” and last minutes to hours. Panic attacks frequently develop with-

out warning. Symptoms of a panic attack include:

- Intense fearfulness (a sense that something terrible is happening)
- Racing or pounding heartbeat
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Shortness of breath or a feeling of being smothered
- Trembling or shaking
- Sense of unreality
- Fear of dying, losing control, or losing your mind

Panic disorder often begins during adolescence, although it may start during childhood, and sometimes runs in families.

If not recognized and treated, panic disorder and its complications can be devastating. Panic attacks can interfere with a child's or adolescent's relationships, schoolwork, and normal development. Children and adolescents with panic disorder may begin to feel anxious most of the time, even when they are not having panic attacks. Some begin to avoid situations where they fear a panic attack may occur, or situations where help may not be available. For example, a child may be reluctant to go to school or be separated from his or her parents. In severe cases, the child or adolescent may be afraid to leave home. This pattern of avoiding certain places or situations is called “agoraphobia.” Some children and adolescents with panic disorder can develop severe depression and may be at risk of suicidal behavior. As an attempt to decrease anxiety, some adolescents with panic disorder will use alcohol or drugs.

When properly evaluated and diagnosed, panic disorder usually responds well to treatment. Children and adolescents with symptoms of panic attacks should first be evaluated by their family physician or pediatrician. If no other physical illness or condition is found as a cause for the symptoms, a comprehensive evaluation by a child and adolescent psychiatrist should be obtained.

Several types of treatment are effective. Specific medications may stop panic attacks. Psychotherapy may also help the child and family learn ways to reduce stress or conflict that could otherwise cause a panic attack. With techniques taught in “cognitive behavioral therapy,” the child may also learn new ways to control anxiety or panic attacks when they occur. Many children and adolescents with panic disorder respond well to the combination of medication and psychotherapy. With treatment, the panic attacks can usually be stopped.

## Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

An obsessive-compulsive personality has a preoccupation with rules, orderliness, and control—shows perfectionism and inflexibility, usually beginning in early adulthood. Perfectionism may interfere with the ability to complete a given task because rigid standards cannot be met. People with this disorder may emotionally withdraw when ill, or when not in control. Individuals who are high achievers, competitive, sense urgency in everything, or are often hostile or aggressive are at a high risk for this disorder.

### Symptoms:

- Perfectionism
- Inflexibility
- Preoccupation with details, rules, lists
- Reluctance to allow others to do things
- Excessive devotion to work
- Restricted expression of affection
- Lack of generosity
- Inability to throw things away, even if there is no value in the object
- Tendency to annoy others to such an extreme that relationships become difficult or impossible to develop or maintain
- Depression
- Hypochondriasis and sexual dysfunction
- Chronic guilt

A specific form of obsessive-compulsive behavior is called obsessive-compulsive disorder; OCD. The symptoms are characterized by obsessions or compulsions that cause significant distress or interference with every day life, and are not due to medical illness or drug use. The person recognizes that the behavior is excessive or unreasonable.

An obsession is a recurrent and intrusive thought, feeling, idea, or sensation. A compulsion is a conscious, recurrent pattern of behavior a person feels driven to perform.

This behavior can be a physical action (e.g. handwashing) or a mental act (e.g. praying, repeating words silently, counting.) The behavior is aimed at neutralizing anxiety or distress. One example of this is excessive handwashing intended to ward off infection.

OCD was previously believed to be rare. However, recent data show that 2-3% of people, or about 7 million Americans, suffer from this disorder.

OCD is treated using medications and psychotherapy.

If you believe you're suffering from OCD or have an attitude of perfectionism, which is interfering with your employment or relationships call HBA at 1-800-937-7770.

### Human Behavior Associates, Inc.

HBA is the provider of your Employee Assistance Program. Employees and their family members can call **1-800-937-7770** 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to request assistance with personal or family problems.