


A Safety Net for Mental Health

Edit and Issue


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Schedule a counseling appointment

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Monday through Friday 10:00~20:00
Saturday 10:00~18:00

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※We will reply to you within two business days
after receiving your message.

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You can also schedule a
counseling appointment
through the LINE app.

(*Reservations only.

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Can advice be harmful?

When talking with a friend or a subordinate on their concerns, we tend to think "You would better to ..." or "It would be more effective if you considered it this way", and we feel compelled to offer advice. Even counselors, who are trained to listen, frequently experience this inclination.

Even though it is unintentional, advice can easily be felt as denial of the way the recipient of the advice is trying to do. This perception may make the person feel being blamed. As a result, the advice becomes harmful like a poison. While this "poison" sometimes can act as a beneficial remedy, more often it causes gradual discomfort to the other person. Have you ever given advice during a consultation, only to feel the atmosphere becomes tense? This discomfort usually stems from the underlying implications of giving advice.

However, you need to give some advice at work if you are a manager or a team leader. The first thing to keep in your mind in such situation is to "not deny." Regardless of what the other person says, the priority should be to listen to their story. There is another important tip: if you listen with your arms crossed, it can give an impression that you are being critical or dismissive, even if you are fully engaged in the conversation. This is a form of non-verbal communication; even if you do not mean to convey blame or rejection, your body language can send a negative message and affects the atmosphere of the conversation.

What should you do in this situation? Nod along as the other person speaks and actively listen while making comments such as "Ah, I see," and "That's right." This attitude communicates the message that you are engaged and not being critical, which helps the other person feel more comfortable to speak, and they are likely to share their thoughts and the reasoning behind them. This concept is referred to as psychological safety and is now considered important in the business world. This kind of communication will enhance the quality of your interaction with the others and improve your work performance as well.

To give effective advice, it is important to first listen to the other person. Once they have expressed fully what they want to talk, and a good rapport is felt between you and them, it is time to give advice. Even if the advice may contradict the other person's views, they are more likely to accept it if they felt they have been heard. By listening attentively, you can help alleviate any tension, which makes your advice more effective. Begin by nodding and making affirming comments as they speak, and then offer your advice after they have finished! Give it a try.

References: Ito, Aya (2023), Taijin Enjoshokunotameno Soudanshien Skill Zukan [Encyclopedia of Counseling Skills for Human Services Professionals]. Tokyo: Chuohoki Publishing CO., Ltd.

Hayashi, Kentaro (2022), Hiteishinai Shukan [The Habit of Not Denying] . Tokyo: FOREST Publishing Co., Ltd.

Counselor's Oasis

I am at an age when I need to consider decluttering my belongings. My mother gave me many kimonos when I got married, and I find it difficult to part with them. Since the year before last, I have been working with a teacher to transform these kimonos into dresses and pajamas. For instance, I turned a mourning kimono that I had only worn once into a black dress suitable for a wake and a farewell party. It turned out so well that I proudly showed it to my mother, and she was left speechless (lol). The dress is made of 100% silk, making it incredibly comfortable to wear. Sewing is also a wonderful way to lift my spirits. I often wonder what feelings my mother experienced when she passed these kimonos down to me, and I feel a deep sense of gratitude. Despite struggling with presbyopia, every time I finish creating a new dress, I experience a satisfying sense of accomplishment.