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Planting Positive Seeds

In a room of fifty participants, Katie was one of the quiet ones. I could tell she was with me, by the way she nodded frequently and the way her eyes followed me around the room. Still, all morning she hadn't said a word. The discussion that day was about the characteristics of people who are ego boosters and ego busters.

After covering ego busting behavior such as being overly critical, being a micro-manager, and gossiping, we progressed to discuss people who always seem to be in a bad mood. Suddenly, Katie's hand shot up. She said, "I was in a bad mood once." She followed with, "for about a year. And I remember the day I snapped out of it."

Katie said she was incredibly sour-spirited that day. She hated her job, she was mad at the world, and she wasn't afraid to let others know exactly how she was feeling. That day, when I came home, she said, "my Grandmother greeted me at the door. Seeing the scowl on my face, she sat me down, looked straight at me, stuck her finger in my face and said, "Katie, I love you. But if you keep spitting negative seeds, you're going to walk in an awful ugly forest one day." To make sure it would sink in, she repeated herself. This time she spoke slower, putting emphasis on each word, "If you keep spitting negative seeds, you're going to walk in an awful ugly forest one day."

As tough as it was to admit," Katie said, "Grandma was right."

Katie was well aware that she had been spitting negative seeds. She knew that what she was doing wasn't working, and yet she, like so many others, continued her negative behavior. The result was that Katie was having to walk daily down the path that she'd paved herself – one that looked less and less like the life she truly desired.

Grandma's advice may very well be some of the best I've ever heard. In my opinion, it is advice worth committing to memory and sharing with others, because it can have a profound impact on the way that we choose to behave.

With every word and every action, we are either building a relationship up or tearing it down. We are either planting a positive seed or planting a seed that will grow up to block the sun one day.

Knowing this, how can we share words intended to intimidate and harm an individual and expect for them to react with kindness and consideration? How can we criticize, belittle, lie, manipulate or be sarcastic without expecting an equal and opposite response? Similarly, how can we with our actions -- ignore others, show up late or not at all, wear a frown, roll our eyes, grit our teeth in anger, and not expect others to respond in kind? The answer is – WE CAN'T.

We are all gardeners of our own life. What we sow, we will one day reap, so we need to choose our seeds wisely. Of course, the flip-side of Grandma's advice is, "If you keep spitting positive seeds, you're going to walk in a beautiful forest one day."

What will you choose? What seeds will you plant? It's your choice. Think about it.

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.