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ALL DESERVE RESPECT

Every person has a right to feel valued and respected in society. Donna Hicks writes in *Psychology Today*: “The glue that holds all of our relationships together is the mutual recognition of the desire to be seen, heard, listened to, and treated fairly; to be recognized, understood, and to feel safe in the world.” This lack of respect for other people also includes a lack of respect for ourselves. We do not value ourselves enough.

A lack of respect permeates our culture. Too often we talk over, we talk down, we talk around people. It is time we start talking to people. If we fail to recognize the value in others, we will continue to see discord and opposition in our personal, professional, and corporate world. This conflict will extend into racial, ethnic, political, and global settings. We are often at war with each other, and it largely stems from the fact we no longer respect each other.

The growth of social media happened for many reasons, but one persuasive reason cited is that people are longing to find somebody who will listen to their issues and problems. Most are just looking for a friendly ear. Fears, anxiety, and uncertainty are all parts of the human condition. All humans have to deal with emotions. Finding people who listen and instill hope is a goal of many. Some manipulate the misery. We know that when sage advice is missing or truth distorted, we end up off course.

Listening to others does not mean that you have to agree with that person. Nevertheless, if you understand the perspective of others, it can help refine your viewpoint and beliefs. We learn ourselves better by interacting with others. In a world of nearly 8 billion people, there are 8 billion different opinions---all unique. We can reach the same conclusion by looking at different facts or looking at the same facts to reach different conclusions. I always reserve the right to change my opinion, when I have additional information or facts.

Many are on a lifelong quest to find that which is real and true. Eventually, we all have to confront who we truly are as individuals or we will lose our way. We are human beings with a moral compass. Bob Segar sang it best in *Against the Wind*: “The years rolled slowly past and I found myself alone. Surrounded by strangers I thought were my friends, I found myself further and further from my home.” There is much truth in music.

The Governor and the Tennessee General Assembly often get criticized for various legislation they pass. However, I am very proud of the \$250 million trust fund set aside for mental health by the state. This is something I have championed for many years. I would hope that adults also have access to mental health counseling when needed. Opinions from social media only goes so far.

Issues like bullying, self-harm, suicide and substance abuse are something educators are challenged with daily. Confronting those issues begins when we elevate the value of the individual, instill courage in students, and teach respect in our schools. Showing empathy and compassion is a critical skill. We must feel safe in our classrooms, our schools, and our communities. We have to start talking to one another and listening.

SUMMARY

How different would our family, friends, schools, communities, state, world—especially politics---look if we listened more? Perhaps we should find out.

The world would be a better place if people talked less and listened to each other more. In *Caring Enough to Hear and Be Heard*, Theologian David Augsburger writes, “Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable.” How different would our family, friends, schools, communities, state, world—especially politics---look if we listened more? Perhaps we should find out. That journey begins when we agree that every person has a right to feel valued and respected in society.

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