

**FIT/UCE Employee Assistance Program
212-217-5600**

**Honesty Hangover: Don't Get One!
Tips for Mindful Communication**

- Isn't it always good to say everything you think and feel?
- Isn't it best to get your true feelings out and not hold back?
- To have a "real" relationship and be true to yourself, don't you need to "share" what is really going on inside you?
- Doesn't unexpressed or repressed anger cause possible physical problems?

The EAP would answer no to all of the above. When we are working with our psychotherapy practices we often tell our patients that the only person, to whom they can say everything they think and feel is to us. For individuals not in psychotherapy, the ability to truly acknowledge to "themselves" all thoughts and feelings, determine what might be faulty thinking, and then "decide" how and when to deal with them is advisable.

But it is not always best to say what you discover. Learning **if, when, and how** to let a loved one (partner, colleague, supervisor or friend) know what you are feeling and thinking is extremely important.

The IFS

- Ask yourself what is the intent of your communication? Is it to help someone get to know you better? Or to improve or change some dynamic in the relationship? Or, is it just to prove a point and make the other person feel bad, so you can feel better?
- What are the possible consequences of speaking your truth? What are the possible consequences of not speaking it?

If you know that your motivations are going to enrich or improve the situation, and are willing to accept the possible consequences, go for it.

(over)

The When

- Timing is everything. If the situation is not dangerous, waiting until your thoughts and feelings about an emotionally charged topic are clear can be helpful. Often people reflexively respond out of habit, a sense of self-righteousness, or because they have a difficulty tolerating or sitting with feelings that make them uncomfortable.
- Make sure that the person you want to communicate with is emotionally available at the time—e.g., don't talk to someone about a drinking problem when they are drunk, or share a personal anxiety or insecurity with someone who may be anxious at that moment themselves, as this will not get you the desired result.

Since your goal is to improve the situation, make sure the person is in the right frame of mind to hear what you say is imperative.

The How

- The “how’s” will be influenced by what information is being shared. Is it something personal that is difficult to talk about? Something embarrassing that you want to keep private? Choose wisely whom you decide to tell or ask advice from, and possibly even state some of your concerns at the beginning.
- Use “I” statements about your feelings, especially when it involves something someone might have done that has upset you. “You” statements set off a defensive reaction and can be experienced as an attack.

How you communicate your message will impact how it is received.