

Eeyore and Yoda Walk into a Bar

"Listening is the Language of Respect"

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So, Eeyore and his master, Yoda walk into a bar. They order a few drinks and are talking about their ex-wives and Yoda's persistent rashes. Eventually the discussion turns to business. Eeyore is stressed because the people he is trying to manage don't listen to him.

Eeyore is just about at his wits end and explains his saga to Yoda.

He laments that he tells his staff what he needs and when, but they don't respond. He asks them for their input on how to solve problems and hears crickets in response. He tries to hold them accountable but it feels like no one willingly does anything without being told.

He has started to apply more pressure but it feels like he is "pushing a rope" or trying to sweep water uphill. Nothing is improving. In fact, in response to his pressure they are either pushing back or going passive-aggressive on him.

Eeyore is even starting to feel like his employees don't like him and as a result he is starting to not like them either. Things are bad.

He knows he is at the beginning of a very nasty and dangerous downward spiral.

When people who have to work together begin not liking one another the only thing being managed are stress headaches.

It has gotten to the point where Eeyore is about to start firing people out of frustration but he can't afford to lose the institutional knowledge of his workforce. He also can't risk missing a beat with his customers out of fear of losing them to his competitors who are already aggressively trying to steal them in an attempt to survive in this economy.

So, if he stays nice, no one listens to him. If he pressures them they do what they have to do while he is around but stop as soon as he isn't. But if he starts firing people morale will go down, people will get angry and production and quality suffer. All of which means he will have to work harder in all phases of his company at a time when he is just about tapped out.

Its no wonder Eeyore looks warn out.

After listening intently as only one with the great wisdom that Yoda possess can, the master speaks:



“Never listen you have. Never listen you will. No listening means no connection. No connection means no work.”

“Oh great!” thinks Eeyore. “I need help and now I have to spend the next 2 hours trying to figure out what the heck this guy just said. If I wanted this experience I would have stayed married!”

But always the committed student he regains his composure as best he can and proclaims "What are you talking about? I hear every word these people say!!"

"Hear me you may, but from listen you stray. Hearing not listening." Mumbled the master. "Hearing only hearing. Listening is feeling. Listening is connecting."



Yoda continued. "Hearing is about you. Listening is about them."

Eeyore's frustration is growing because at first he was only exhausted, but now he is exasperated. Its bad enough his people are wearing him out, but his mentor is this little green warty dude who mumbles and refuses to speak in normal sentences. With

his patience already wearing thin he has to deal with "Mr. Wizard" talking in riddles just to get an answer.

But before he can say anything the master continues: "People know connection. No connection to them means no connection with them. If no connection to them have you, no connection to you have they.

"If no connection to you have they, then only hearing you will get. Hearing inspires others not. Only listening untangles your knot."

Eeyore was still unclear as to what was being said but he instinctively knew his master was on to something.

"Tell me more oh little warty rashy one." Eeyore requested.

To which Yoda responded: "If you flatter them as you flatter me I can see why from you they flee. Besides making fun of those short with warts endears you not to them."

After apologizing for his sarcasm Eeyore asked his mentor to continue.

"Hearing is done with the ear, listening with the heart. Ear only connects to head yet your heart connects to them. Then people follow your heart with their heart and their head and hands will follow."

"So then how do I go from hearing to really listening?" asked Eeyore.

"But before you answer that, may I please ask a favor of you?" inquired Eeyore.

"Ask anything about anything at anytime." responded Yoda. "It is always my choice to respond or to not."

"OK, could you please quit talking in riddles? I know you like making statements that cause me to find my own answers within the riddle so that our understanding is deeper. But yer killin' me dude."

Yoda sat silent for a moment looking at his friend. "Help me understand why that is important to you, Eeyore."

"Well because I'm really too tired to sort through the pile to get what the heck you are talking about. I am frustrated and concerned and I just don't know how to help everyone to perform better and to be happier at work. That would help everyone to go home and pet the

dog and not want to kick it; to have the energy to play with their children and connect with their spouses instead of feeling much like I do right now."

Yoda leaned forward a bit and looked directly into Eeyore's eyes. Yoda knew that listening began with connecting and connecting starts with the eye's, not the ears.



Speaking in clear terms Yoda said: "That troubles you doesn't it Eeyore? It troubles you that what is happening at your office is not only damaging to the company but that it is being carried home by your people and is affecting their families. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, that is so." stated Eeyore

Eeyore began to relax. Yoda just proved to Eeyore that he understood him. Eeyore also began to realize that he was being listened to. Not only was Yoda hearing him, but he was actually listening to him. And he could literally feel the difference.

"Tell me more Eeyore. Help me to understand a bit more of what you are struggling with. I'm curious about what you see?"

Yoda also knew that listening is about being truly curious about what the other person has to say.

With that Eeyore's sense of helplessness began to fade. He felt a sense of connection to the little troll looking critter who he always saw as his master, but now he really saw him as his friend. He felt

heard. He felt respected. He felt understood. And in that moment he began to feel confident that somehow everything would be alright. He no longer felt alone in his problem.

Over the next hour Eeyore was able to clearly explain his dilemma without the emotions that accompany frustration and fear. All the while Yoda was asking clear questions out of curiosity and interest and was answering in a way that was easy for Eeyore to understand. As a result, ideas were generated, solutions devised and a real sense of optimism arose.

Creativity
and curiosity
are cousins!

Eeyore was beginning to experience the difference between being "heard" and being "listened" to. And his master, with all his wisdom, was teaching him not by simply explaining but by giving him the opportunity to actually experience what was being explained. The efficiency of Yoda's teaching was impressive.

The next thing that Eeyore noticed was that once the engaging discussion was over and after having been listening to the master did not offer a list of solutions for Eeyore.

He merely asked one simple question: **"Now how can I help?"**

Even with that Eeyore saw the master always made everything about the student. Yoda had many answers for the student but he was not about to speak them. The wise one knows that the teacher's answers are not nearly as important to the student as are the student's questions.

In response to the Yoda's question Eeyore replied: "You already have helped. What I learned from you today will transform not only my company but it is transforming me. So thank you.

"You have helped me, my company, my employees and our families as well. Heck, I even think that now I won't be kicking my dog anymore he will become your biggest fan!



"In fact," Eeyore continued, "is there anything I can do to help you in return?"

"Well, as a matter of fact there is." Responded the great master.

"My arms are far too short to reach some of the places I itch. Would you mind?" While that skeeved Eeyore a bit he decided that it was a small price to pay for such a gift of understanding from his friend.

"Sure, Yoda, I'll be happy to help you out." Eeyore said. "But can we do it outside? I don't want people to talk."

On the way outside Yoda could be heard telling his friend, "**When people get that you get them they will let you lead you them where you need them.**"

Jeffrey S. Deckman has been a small business owner in Rhode Island since 1983. During this time he also spent eight years as a pro-bono lobbyist working to protect small business interests at the General Assembly. He currently is a business consultant focusing upon top end leadership development training and working with owners of small to medium sized businesses to increase profitability by maximizing their current capabilities.

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