

*Just because your done with your feelings does not mean their done with you*

Oh, how I get offended sometimes. There have also been instances when I've offended others. We went to a friend's house one night and his wife came out in what I called hooker boots. My wife, at the time, asked me what I thought on our way home. I said they were sleazy boots. She later told my friends wife what I thought. I did not know. The next time we went over to their house my friend confronted me in front of everyone. I was so humiliated. Yet, it was my opinion.

I have not insulted my current wife often but when I do all hell breaks loose. Does that mean hell is inside her just waiting for me to screw up? I don't know but hell, has no fury like the scorn of a woman. To a man, it's always a misunderstanding. For the woman, not so much. Men and women were meant for relationships. Yet, thinking on different planes was an ill-advised character flaw. Trouble is just waiting for a place to happen.

I know it's not all about gender. A company slogan might be misunderstood. Balfurd Cleaners in Pennsylvania had a slogan on their sign that said "drop your pants here and get prompt service." A meat processing plant in California says on their trucks "our animals are dying for you to taste them." Finally, in Chicago the homicide department had a mug that said "our day begins were yours ended." Are the slogans ok? Are they insensitive? They could be misunderstood?

Well meaning executives obviously sat down in a meeting and devised a plan for an ad. Did they consult anyone? I went to a beer tasting session many years ago. They not only had us taste beer, but they asked us to rate slogans. What is offensive? I know a take-out place that says "bring us home and make us hot." It's perception. White cops and black assailants. How about

taxi drivers, corner stores, or retail counter service? Who are usually working there? Do we think ethnic groups do things one way or work in one type of job? Perception.

I know that the female C... word creates chaos. The look by a female is real. Trust me, I know. Again, people are people. It appears that this generation is more sensitive. Are they? Maybe the internet and social media had enhanced what was already there. Maybe people were more passive and polite fifty years ago. Today's generation might be more honest. Speaking out about poor word choices seems trivial. Has it gone too far these days? Maybe it has not gone far enough.

In my youth, we made racial slang remarks. No, I will not give an example. Yet, I bet, we have all heard the types. Am I a racist? I don't think so. However, certainly I was raised to have two things. One is a tolerance to dumb remarks. It's human. Secondly, I have an indifference to misunderstandings. Right or wrong, I don't feel the way others do over dumb actions or harsh words. I probably should though. It's interesting: trained racism or trained tolerance?

I think part of the trouble we find ourselves in comes from the word "understood." Do people think that we should know what their saying? Should we get their meaning? Someone called a girl in a show "my little heifer." Yikes, that was suicide. I jokingly called my wife that as we watched the show. I was kidding around. Three days later she let it go. I was joking in the moment. Yet, for whatever reason I was misunderstood.

Relationships and words are a double-edged sword. Humans use words. I doubt a monkey insults another monkey. Maybe I'm wrong? Countries have insulted countries. Yet, it's people who run those countries. No matter the culture or race, people misunderstand people. Is it a flaw? See, I don't think so. We need words to communicate. A grunt is fine or a nod of the

head. Yet, we developed words to be clearer in our intent. Unfortunately, words have caused harm too.

The other side is actions. They say actions are louder than words. I gave my wife flowers and that was good. While giving my wedding vows I screwed them up. I was supposed to say “if you are down, I’ll lift you up.” Instead I said “I will always let you down.” She still brings that up. I was nervous, so sue me. In one past relationship my girlfriend loved pajama’s. I bought some from Victoria Secret. She was so insulted because it was not lingerie. She accused me of thinking she was not sexy. Not true, but, honestly, I was screwed no matter what I did.

We mean well and say the wrong words. Why is it that people don’t understand? The Fresh Prince Will Smith sings “*I can't believe it, I just made a mistake, well parents are the same no matter time nor place, so to you all the kids all across the land, take it from me parents just don't understand.*” No matter if it’s a spouse or your parents, our communication gets mixed up. I will admit that every year, when I buy presents, there is a nervousness. Did I get the right thing? Did I listen to what they wanted? Being in a relationship is tough when actions and words matter.

It seems that in human relationships were just treading water. We don’t say quite enough to sink ourselves, yet were not floating either. A work mate is quiet for a month. Did I say something wrong? Later, you find out it was their marriage, not you. Whew. Then on the other hand a friend on Facebook is giving one-word answers. You made a post that offended them. Yet, they literally said nothing. People just shut off and assume you know their mad. Who knew that they ran back in the panic room without telling anyone? ESP would be helpful at times.

At least in water you can have fun, splash around and dive. In a relationship pool there are proximity mines and sharks. Within social media it's the same thing. Be careful what you post. Sometimes it's just an innocent review of a book we read. All of a sudden someone is offended because they disagree. Certainly, I am not about to please them all. It would drive me insane. Can't we be ourselves in the company of others without misunderstandings?

The word 'mis' is a prefix. Meaning it is attached to understanding. Understanding is a good word. We read books by people to understand better. We go to school and read the news to understand. People ask us if we understand. There is a tradition of nodding our head up for yes and sideways for no. We all get that. Add "mis" to it and all hell breaks loose. Suddenly were offended, slighted, or "mis" read. In war a "mis" is good. In a relationship, it usually means were blown to hell.

I just think people are strange. They want us to communicate. It's said that there are 988,968 words in the English language. What could possibly go wrong? Could I use the wrong word? Duh! Yet, people say we did. In the book 1984 by George Orwell there is a term called *Newspeak*. The idea is to make words simpler. In a way it's a short cut. Making the English dictionary smaller. Good idea. My question is why did we make it bigger in the first place? Caveman "speak" would do. Just say ugg, grunt, humph, or whistle. Do we really need anything more?

If I use one in about a million-word choices I get an eye roll. A humph. The look. Possibly a slap. They are all misunderstandings. Yet, I can walk past a man and nod. Nothing is said but we know and agree. I can give a slight smile or wave of a hand and a woman is fine. You see, silence is golden. Use a word and my chances of death increase exponentially.

Then we have the mental telepathy thing. A woman says she told me. Yet, clearly, I was supposed to read her mind. A boss says I should have known. A friend of mine had instructions to pick up a load of pipe. The company phoned ahead, cancelling the order. They did not tell my friend while he was on route. He arrived to get the load and there was no work order. One side took his work order assuming it was a mistake and gave him the load. He brought it back. Smart to improvise. Believe it or not his boss fired him for picking it up without checking first.

It's all about communication and misunderstandings. What I find astounding is what we know. A guy crushes a player with a bad hit in hockey. Yet, he says that was not his intention. Really? It's a misunderstanding. We all know teams that regularly fail like the Cleveland Browns. Why? Possibly it's a bad owner that picks bad staff. Consequently, you get a bad team. Maybe he didn't communicate about winning? Sometimes a person or organization is just dysfunctional and we all can see it.

What astounds me is the hiring. I have watched teams over the years. The coach might have six losing seasons in a row. His contract is up. The fans are saying "finally", fire the bum. Then the news breaks that they have extended him for another 5 years. The owner says he needs more time. Are you kidding me? We all know, but someone says it's a misunderstanding. People don't have all the facts. Yet, we know, don't we?

Could relationships be better served if we just acted on a feeling? People say don't, feelings could be misunderstood. A friend makes a slip of the tongue. They said to me after my split-up "maybe it's your fault?" Was that the right words or timing to say something like that? Especially if I'm sitting on the bed crying in heartbreak. Possibly it was an ill-timed observation. I know they felt sorrow for me, but it came out wrong. Were they acting on a feeling?

It's like this. I feel we should say something. What people think and believe are important. Yet, timing is everything. On the other hand, if we say nothing at all, then people complain "why didn't you warn me?" Misunderstandings suck! Yet, there are gut feelings. We have emotions. I have often wondered if those feelings are a prompt to say something.

It's all about timing and the fluffy side. It's nice to hold our words and be respectful. It's not great when someone uses all kinds of fluffy words to say something harsh. What they're really doing is trying not to be misunderstood. My mom used to say when I was stuck for words "spit it out George." I feared that spiting it out would come back and hit me in the face. I want to talk and explain myself. What happens when misunderstandings get in the way?

I remember the golden rule in Winnie the Poo. *If you can't say something nice, then don't say anything at all.* It's good, fair, and nice to be respectful with words. Are there instances when a harsh word works? I think there is a line, but there is also timing and circumstances. In school I got into a fight. My teacher knew I could become trouble. He pulled me aside and challenged me to not become a worthless piece of skin. It worked. Boy did my marks improve.

I tried to do the same for my youngest boy when he needed a boost. He still holds that talk against me. Sometimes a word works well. Other times it ends in a fiery ball of misunderstanding. I meant well. He did not believe me. In public speaking they say to know your audience. My teacher was a veteran. He knew how to push me. Clearly, I did not read my boy that well. It was a good line, but wrong audience.

That's what makes relationships so hard. So many words to choose from. When is the right time? Do you know one inch of how your actions will be received? The only way to be better at relationships is to navigate misunderstandings. Master them? Oh no, people are people. We're all

different. That means we take words differently. We misunderstand in different degrees. I know twins that are totally different people. I'm stunned they're from the same family. Each of them looks at situations differently. No two people think alike.

I fear that how we deal with misunderstandings these days is different than in the past. Men, man to man, used straight talk face to face. Women had coffee and worked it out. Today we text. Our phone vibrates and we ignore the call. It's easy to ignore trouble. People are becoming as disposable as electronics. Just move on instead of solving and understanding. Is a safe space really an acronym for hiding place? A panic room to avoid misunderstandings. We have a face for a reason. The other person does to. We were meant to read faces. Faces were made to communicate. It's becoming a lost art.

So, people hide. They hide in relationships. Some hide from people. I still believe that we all need people. It's near impossible to live alone apart from relationships. So, we hide. Misunderstandings are complicated and hard on the stomach. Stress and misunderstandings probably make great partners in crime. Just throw up the hand and toss the phone. Problem solved. Yet, people hide in a bottle, within sport on TV, or stay late at work. We hide from understanding because we might be wrong.

I don't want us to misuse the prefix "mis." Hiding from confrontation is a missed opportunity. This was completely crazy. My wife and I talked on the phone for a month before we officially went on a date. One of our last calls got me into hot water. I said that you are not much of a Christian if you don't read your Bible. I am still in that court. My wife (at the time) was insulted.

She said she was an honorable person and agreed to go on one date with me. Who knows why? It was customary for me to take a first date to church Saturday night. It's a safe environment. Plus, I can check out their passion for God. It just so happened that the pastor said that you're not much of a Christian if you don't read your Bible. I got to tell you, the drive home was filled with angry tension.

A week later we had not spoken. Duh! Yet, I thought she was the best girl I had ever met. I decided to phone her and try and fix the misunderstanding. The fact that we began for a month talking had helped. The fact that I phoned her to talk helped. We have been married now for about 15 years. Imagine if I had just moved on without trying to fix a misunderstanding. Without talking?

She could have hidden from me. It's lucky for me that she still had a land line in those days. No LED displays. She had to answer it. Certainly, I could have let it go without talking. I hid in my first marriage. I rarely tried to talk it out. Would it have hit deaf ears? I don't really know because I never tried. I hid at work. We hide in sex. People do a ton of hiding to avoid the very thing that might make the situation better: talking.

I find misunderstandings are more about the "mis" part. An understanding is there. We just miss the opportunity to find understanding when we hide from confrontation. Right from the beginning Adam and Eve hid. Why hide at all. We can talk. We have a mouth, brain, and communication. There are almost one million words at our disposal. Yet, people tend to hide.

It's interesting that human-kind may have begun in caves. A great hiding place. We continue that great tradition by hiding from relationships. Avoiding misunderstandings. They say Baseball is the greatest past time. Oh no, it's hiding from misunderstandings. For some reason



avoidance seems better than talking. I think that the truth hurts. It's a big part of why we avoid talking. Relationships are fun in bed and at a movie. It's not as fun hashing out misunderstandings. To do relationships better we need to venture out of our caves. Out of our comfort zone. Let's move on and try and uncover the world of hiding.