

Fostering a Fertile Future



By Karen Perry

Have you ever been the "outsider" in a group of friends, family or coworkers when a word or phrase is uttered and they all start laughing?

Typically this group quickly realizes that the "outsider" is unaware of their "insider's" joke and they all begin to share the story of their shared memory. Pretty soon you too are in on the joke and laughing right along with them.

While the above example is one of laughter invoked simply by a word or phrase, other stories can stir our hearts with compassion, bring us to tears, or inspire us into action for a cause or to create change we wish to see. I've discovered that when shared, a person's story can help ease pain – theirs and others – and help them process through a difficult time, teach valuable lessons, and even bring laughter.

Throughout human history, stories of people and peoples have been passed from generation to generation. In the corporate sense, this is so we remember, learn and carry on traditions. Yet even more powerful is the story of one person:

- What brought them to where they are?
- Where have they lived, worked and played?
- What is their greatest life lesson?

- How did they come to learn this lesson?
- What wisdom would they like to share with future generations so their path is easier and filled with more love, joy and laughter?

Each and every one of us wants to know that we matter. We want to feel that we are truly seen, heard and loved. So, if we want this for ourselves, then surely others must too.

So often when we engage in conversations, as the other party speaks, our minds are quickly shuffling through our memory banks for relatable information that we can tell them. These interchanges are commonly referred to as shallow or superficial conversations. Deep and meaningful conversations occur when one party truly listens and the other party feels and knows that they have been heard. This type of active listening, for most of us, takes practice.

One of the greatest gifts we can give and show someone that we respect, honor and value them as fellow human being is to actively listen to them.

Have you ever walked away from a conversation with someone and they depart saying, "Wow, you've really *continued on page 7*

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