

Where is your **GO-TO** place?

"Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right use of strength."

Henry Ward Beecher

BY CAROL L. BROOKS, SR/WA

We've all dealt with unfortunate mishaps in our lives, where we resort to behavior that intensifies the situation rather than diffuses it, even though we didn't intend to go there. I call this our "go-to place," and it can either work for you or against you. For example, where is your go-to place when the property owner loses his cool, and nothing you've said has worked to calm him? Or when your boss decides to lend a hand at your next meeting, but creates an awkward situation instead?

When we're blindsided by a situation, it's not uncommon for us to overreact and say things we don't mean. Afterwards, we'll replay the situation over and over again and beat ourselves up for what we said or should have said. Once this happens, it's essential to find the "go-to place" that gives us the strength to overcome those negative thoughts. When the going gets tough, here are the go-to places I focus on to help me stay positive.

ATTITUDE: Remember that tough times don't happen to you, they happen for you. Tough times are like sandpaper, and without it, you're likely to stay rough and unpolished. Sometimes we can only learn from a struggle. If you can keep an open mind and maintain a good attitude during the tough times, you will benefit from these key learnings in the long run.

CLARIFY VALUES: We all have a set of core values we follow. Yet in stressful situations, our emotions can take over, and we may act in a way that's inconsistent with those values. It takes effort to do the right thing, especially if the other party was in the wrong. But if you can learn to turn the other cheek, this will enable you to stay on the high road, and a better result is likely to follow.

DO THE OPPOSITE: Let's say an owner refuses to sign a document, saying the compensation isn't worth the powder to blow it up. Your normal go-to



place might be to get angry and then blame the owner for being so ungrateful and greedy. Rather than follow your emotional response, think about doing the opposite of what you'd normally do. In other words, create a new go-to place. For example, let your feelings of anger be transformed into calmness. You'll be surprised with the results.

STAY FLEXIBLE: Being flexible helps us accept those things in life that cannot be controlled. Think of it as the capacity to bend without breaking. When we possess an attitude of flexibility, we can overcome our natural tendency to resist change. We can start to view change as an opportunity, something we can actually do to make the most of those situations that we don't have any power or control over.

CULTIVATE GRATITUDE: Sometimes a life lesson may seem extraordinarily long and deeply painful. Your patience is tested, and you may feel like nothing makes sense. A thankful mindset will help you see a situation more objectively. Try to remember that challenges and obstacles are exactly what we need to build our character and strengthen our resilience. So bless the struggle. It will help you to become the person you are meant to be.

More often than we'd like, we're given the opportunity to strengthen our weaknesses and improve our interpersonal skills. So the more we can stay focused on our core values — a good attitude, gratitude and joy — the easier it is to stay true to ourselves. Taking the high road during a challenging interaction will always reflect well on us. ✪



Owner of Cornerstone Management Skills, Carol is an internationally-recognized author and lecturer on conflict management, interpersonal skills and success strategies. She has nearly 20 years experience in the right of way profession and is a Master Instructor for IRWA courses. ©2013 Carol L. Brooks All Rights Reserved. For more information, visit www.cornerstonemanagementskills.com