



For you, your career, and your life

# RAP

Resident Assistance Program Newsletter  
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## Better Conversations: More Listening, Less Negativity

*Editor's note: This article is part 1 of a 2-part series.*

We could do this better, you think as you come away from a meeting. What should have been said wasn't said, people weren't listening to one another, and there was a lot of friction in the room.

We all come up against barriers that prevent clear, open and effective conversation. In organizations where certain communication styles are entrenched, it can be difficult to get past those barriers.



The first ingredient in conversation is truth, the next good sense, the third good humor, and the fourth wit.

- William Temple

### Communication Barriers

"It was impossible to get a conversation going, everybody was talking too much," Baseball Hall-of-Famer Yogi Berra once observed. Our communications can feel like that sometimes. When people talk without pausing to really listen, there's less opportunity for real understanding to take place.

So why aren't our conversations aren't as good as they could be?

"Time is a big issue," says speaker, author and coach Karen Susman, Karen Susman and Associates. "It takes time and patience to communicate effectively. We tend to think the other person needs to change. Also, an organization's leaders might not value 'soft skills.' Listening skills are limited, even though people tend to think they are effective listeners. And, change has to come from the top down and the bottom up. C-level folks have to buy in, lead, model, mentor, promote and live the change."

We can sometimes create our own barriers when we

Listening skills are essential to your career as a physician. The more you know, and practice, good communication techniques, the smoother your path will be. You will likely come across communication barriers during your residency program. When you need some extra help resolving them, your Resident Assistance Program (RAP) is a good place to turn. A professional can help with feedback and perspective to get you past the hurdles that can impede your success. Available 24/7, RAP is your local, caring and confidential resource.

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forget to focus on the group's interests rather than our own.

"To successfully present ideas to a group, keep in mind that it's not about you," Susman says. "Professionals can improve their effectiveness and group buy-in by saying—sincerely—'What this means for you is...' Many times professionals are so focused on their message or agenda, that they overlook the needs, fears and aspirations of their audience."

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## Resources

Read more about communication in the workplace. Many of these are available in Kindle editions.

*Conversations at Work: Promoting a Culture of Conversation in the Changing Workplace* by Tim Baker and Aubrey Warren (Palgrave Pocket Consultants, 2015)

*The Accountability Conversation Habit: Creating a Personal and Organizational Pattern of Speaking Up Effectively* by Quinn Price (Change Leadership, 2014)

*Effective Communication Skills for Doctors (Progressing Your Medical Career)* by Teresa Parrott (Bpp Learning Media Ltd., 2011)

*Everyone Communicates, Few Connect: What the Most Effective People Do Differently* by John C. Maxwell (Thomas Nelson, 2010)

## Your Resident Assistance Program

The RAP newsletter is provided as a benefit to medical residents at the USF Health Morsani College of Medicine and their dependents.

*We welcome your comments on newsletter topics, however, we cannot provide RAP services by email.*

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## Better Conversations Start With Listening

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### Hard-Wired for Conversation

Judith E. Glaser, CEO of Benchmark Communications, Inc., consults for Fortune 500 companies. She has written four best-selling business books, including “Conversational Intelligence®: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results, (Bibliomotion, 2013).

An Organizational Anthropologist, Glaser studies the way people converse and has identified the patterns that both facilitate and those that interfere with effective conversations.

“We are hard-wired for conversation,” Glaser says. “Our language genes help us stay connected. Each human being maps the world through their experiences. They label those experiences and learn what to seek and what to avoid. Through conversation, people have a way to touch and inspire, and engage with the outside world.”

### Better Conversations for Innovation, Partnering

“To get to the next level of greatness depends on the quality of the culture, which depends on the quality of the relationships, which depends on the quality of the conversations,” Glaser explains.

Every person has instincts for greatness, she writes in a blog post titled “Quality Conversations: Alchemy for

cultivating a healthy, thriving organization.”<sup>1</sup>

“We instinctively want to do well, to contribute, and to be included on the winning team,” Glaser says. “No one needs to teach us to have these desires; they are built into our DNA.”

“Yet many organizations often become toxic environments filled with politics, power, and control, arrogance, and competing egos. They develop into unwelcoming places with invisible street signs that say, ‘Don’t go there,’ ‘You can’t do this,’ ‘You don’t know that,’ ‘Save face,’ ‘Blame,’ and ‘Protect.’”

These negative elements erode relationships and take energy out of productive teamwork.

Among the solutions Glaser offers are more open conversations and candor; banishing organizational politics; and showing appreciation for great ideas.

“It’s not about how smart you are, but how open you are to learn new and effective powerful conversational rituals that prime the brain for trust, partnership, and mutual success.”

*In the next issue, Judith E. Glaser will share her roadmap for successful, quality conversations in the workplace.*

<sup>1</sup> “Quality Conversations: Alchemy for cultivating a healthy, thriving organization,” Psychology Today blog post by Judith E. Glaser <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/conversational-intelligence/201502/quality-conversations> (accessed January 6, 2016)