

Mental hygiene

You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. Wherever and whenever people work together unfortunate things occur. Intentionally or unintentionally. When these things are spoken out they can usually be resolved quickly, but if this does not happen, the emotions are pent up and this will at some point lead to an (unexpected) explosion.

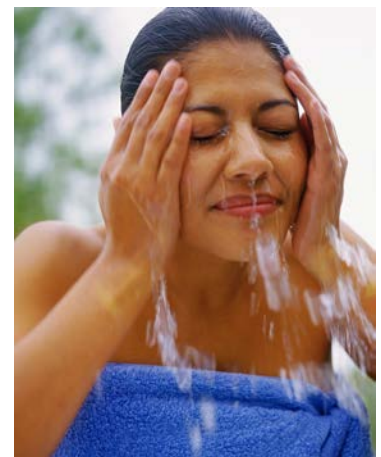
When we had a collision with someone else, it is important to resolve the issue as soon as possible. If we don't, the emotions stack up, after which they are perfect soil for other negative thoughts or feelings about the same person. When the person, after the occasion, behaves in exemplary fashion, the negative feelings will wither and finally disappear.

However, each time this person says or does something we don't like, we tend to think: "I knew it..." or something like it. This negative thought is added to the existing brew in the cauldron of our emotions. There they can happily simmer and boil until one day when it will come to an eruption.

This can be either an emotional outburst, or the beginning of a gossip campaign against the person. They will not be able to understand (the extent of) the outburst and do not get the opportunity to make any changes in their behaviour, which does not improve the relationship between you and them.

Mental hygiene

We use the term "mental hygiene" for the regular and timely expression of thoughts and feelings, so that we have a clean and clear mind. Several times a day we wash our hands, certainly after they have become dirty. If we don't, the bacteria can do what they like, which can affect our health in a serious way.



The same thing applies for our 'mental hygiene'. One carries one's unexpressed emotions, they cost energy and this hardly ever leads to something better.

Here are some tips for keeping our relationships with others clean.

Practical tips

To keep our mind and relationships with others clean

1. Don't pen up your emotions, but express them in a way that is safe. For example by talking about them, but also by getting them out of your systems in other ways, such as getting some fresh air or by hitting a punching bag.
2. Don't wait too long before venting your emotions, do it preferably on the same day. Express your emotions after you have cooled down enough, when you're still angry you may say things you might regret later.
3. Preferably, don't talk about someone's behaviour with others. They can't do anything with that information, you are the only one that can change things. But sometimes it can be a relief to air your frustrations to someone else. Then choose a person that can stay neutral or someone of whom you are sure that they know how to handle it.
4. If you approach someone to resolve an outstanding issue, then do this one on one and not in the presence of others.
5. Try to separate the person from their behaviour. The fact that someone has done or said something that is not very nice to you doesn't make them a bad person.
6. Express your emotion in a constructive way. Firstly describe their behaviour, substantiated with facts. Then describe how it affects you, which emotion it causes. Then try to come to clear agreements for the future. Often others are not aware of the effect of their behaviour. By talking about it they get a fair chance to adjust their behaviour. Moreover, you will not build up unnecessary tensions, that have a negative influence on the atmosphere at work.
7. Try to understand why the other person acts the way they do. The better you understand why someone does what they do, the better you will be able to handle it. However, this should not be a reason to not speak about the unfortunate event.
8. Take care that you have your ways of getting rid of the every day minor nuisances that may build up during the day. A good walk, sports, singing, a shower, these are all things that help to clean yourself up physically and mentally.

And finally: not all emotions need to be expressed. Some things are taken more seriously than necessary. Saying to yourself things like: 'nobody is perfect', 'everyone makes mistakes' or 'it is not all that important', makes that small irritations are relegated and thus rendered harmless.

Obviously this counts for groups of people too. In the light of mental hygiene it is good to have regular process evaluations. Discuss together what is going well in the communication and cooperation, and what things could or should change.

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