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**Dr. N. Smith**

**Interpersonal Subject Paper:**

Stop Listening to Accusing Voices!

**Introduction**

There are many struggles I must face when addressing lies, half-truths, exaggerations, and misinterpretations regarding my honest and pure intentions. Recently, I decided to return to the open arms of my fiancé, who not only welcomed me whole-heartedly, but who now encourages me to avoid punishing myself for some unfortunate relationship choices I made when he and I were apart. It is not easy to forgive myself when I am often hearing or reading (via text- or Facebook message) gossip/rumors and pitiful, hateful remarks about my character. I must remind myself that these people do not know me like they think they do, and nor do I want them to know me. If they truly were my friends, then they would not be calling me horrible names or shoving my past at me like a flaming ball of disdain and regret. Doubtlessly, I have realized that I have achieved much in my life so far, and if I do not stop listening to these accusing voices, then I will surely hold myself back from a multitude of worthwhile goals and aspirations.

**Description of Problem:**

There are a few reasons I decided to leave Thomas, and very few of them pertained directly to him and/or anything unsatisfactory he was perpetrating in our (then almost-two-year) relationship. In point of fact, I began to listen to the voices of individuals who had mostly derogatory statements to make about Thomas and his treatment of me. Instead of heeding my own opinions and in-depth understanding of the inner-workings of the situation at-hand (which then included Thomas’s short-term absence from Job Corps during his summer break), I allowed others to claim that Thomas did not deserve me and that he was not at my intellectual level—even though I knew that was not the case one bit!

Eventually, it all sank in, and *it got to me*. The first handsome face who took an interest in me steered me away from Thomas while he was vacationing in California during the month of July, and after that guy moved to Minnesota for college, I had a string of three boyfriends after that. All (including the “handsome face”) within a period of two-and-a-half months. And they all had something negative to say about Thomas, which helped to deter me from fully agreeing to go back to him. (I tried to return to him a couple of times, but found myself incapable, and inadequate, for several reasons, until the end of October.)

These people used *coercive power*, defined by the textbook as “the power to punish . . . since we often follow another’s bidding when failure to do so would lead to unpleasant consequences” (*Communicating at Work*, pg. 247). I believed that, if I chose to be with Thomas again, I would be considered flighty and indecisive, as well as inconsiderate of my own well-being, since many thought Thomas and I were not a good match. However, there are also many individuals who have been supportive of the relationship in its varying stages, especially close friends/students at Job Corps. Just as well, although I have often found conflict with Thomas’s family, I knew that they may actually encourage Thomas and I getting back together (which they now have, in some small form). My immediate family also knows that I have recommitted myself to Mr. Ross. These entities are both resources, as well as constraints. Now, let me explain.

**Resources and Constraints:**

At one point in time, after my parents kicked me out of the house in the spring of 2011 due to problems related to my disorder (bipolar) and the medication for it, I lived with Thomas and his mother, father, and brother. I did so for three months. After about two months of searching, I finally secured a job at Vons (a grocery-store chain based in California), but soon lost that when I experienced a delusion related to my “illness” and was taken by the police to a local hospital in L.A. County. During the time I lived with the Ross family, I experienced many clashes between my immediate and extended family members and those belonging to Thomas. Despite the fact that I found some measure of safety and comfort there in La Puente, I could not seem to dodge the harmful words and deeds coming from both the Drummonds side, in Redlands, and the Ross side. Thomas was reproached for allegedly being an unfit boyfriend/fiancé, and while Thomas’s fiery-redhead of a mother was hurling back angry comments at the accusers, I was stuck in the middle. This is an example of a poor *communication climate*, which the textbook explains to be “the quality of personal relationships in an organization”—or a family unit (*Communicating at Work*, pg. 127). Even though I had access to the resources of food, water, clothing, and shelter, I additionally was forced to endure time and again the classic Montague/Capulet feud between grown adults who enjoyed calling each other bad names.

**Recommendations:**

As religious-television personality Joel Osteen once put it, “Too many people live under condemnation, constantly listening to the wrong voices. The Bible refers to the enemy as the ‘accuser of the brethren’ who would love for us to live our lives guilty and condemned. He constantly brings accusations against us, telling us what we didn’t do or what we should have done. He’ll remind us of all our past mistakes and failures” (*Become a Better You*, pg. 85). Yes, Thomas and I both had to bear the brunt of false and unfair criticism—a commonality that allows us now to relate better to one another and come closer together as future man and wife. I know now that, in order for this relationship to work and function well, I am going to have to focus on the positive and the good about Thomas, and less on the things about him I may sometimes wish were different. For I have realized that, although I did search for love after we broke up, I looked for it in all the wrong places (as the saying goes). I must remember that “the grass is not always greener on the other side,” that “hope springs eternal,” and that “the man who got away” is now mine again. Praise the Lord!

**Conclusion:**

I chose to reunite with Thomas due to my recognition that the central communication error of listening to accusing voices, instead of the Voice of Truth, was never going to permit self-actualization or self-edification. I noticed that wherever I turned, I sought a man just like Thomas—in word, in action, in gesture, in sentiment, and even, one time, in appearance—yet could not yet come to the conclusion that he was the man I wanted all along. I still occasionally self-deprecate, using the names so many have called me, but then recall the fact that, by the Grace of God and His Son Thomas, I am already forgiven. So why continue to beat myself up over simply a naïve mistake? I barely just turned 20, for goodness’ sake! I must give myself a break, and reflect upon the concept that the communication skill I must develop now is, of course, **TRUST**—as well as the **FAITH** that I can accomplish it, for my own good.

**Works Cited:**

Adler, R & J. Elmhorst. (2010). *Communicating at Work* (10e). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Osteen, Joel. (2007). *Become a Better You*. New York City: Simon & Schuster.