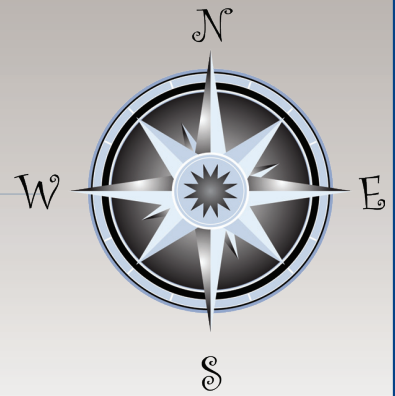


# The Character Principle of **RESTRAINT**



*A quick response can ruin everything.*

## PRINCIPLE OF THE WEEK

The principle of restraint means to hold back our words, take time to think before we speak and to consider how to best deliver what we have to say (our attitude). It is impossible to retract words once they are spoken but it is possible to stop the words before we allow them to come out of our mouths. Restraint is key to any successful relationship both personal and professional. The wrong words at the wrong time can burn bridges that are impossible to repair. Conversely, the right words at the right time can breathe life and energy into a person like nothing else. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment."

One of the biggest challenges regarding restraint is remembering we do not have to communicate everything that comes to our minds. How many times have we gotten ourselves into trouble by talking too much? Gossiping and spreading rumors creates rifts that will separate us from our family members and friends. It will also detract from our credibility and cause others to not trust us. While it is good to be friendly and sociable, we must actively discipline our tongues when it comes to bragging, exaggerating, or talking about others. Expressing our thoughts may come easily and quickly but can carry consequences that are painful and long-lasting.

A wound in the body can take months to heal, but wounds to our spirit can last a lifetime. "No man has a prosperity so high or firm, but that two or three words can dishearten it; and there is no calamity which right words will not begin to redress." - Ralph Waldo Emerson. Words have power that can bury dreams, demolish self-esteem, and destroy potential. Many times we point out the faults and bad habits of people, but

fail to recognize and express their talents and potential. This causes people to lose hope and to withdraw from us. It can take years for people to recover and be healed from hurtful things we say to them.

Words can bring solutions or tie us to problems. Complicating this further is the fact that WHAT we say is just as important as HOW we say it. The tone, expression and attitude in which we convey our thoughts speaks volumes and has tremendous impact on the listener. Most of us think twice before striking someone, but often do not think twice before we strike out in anger with cruel, insulting and intimidating words.

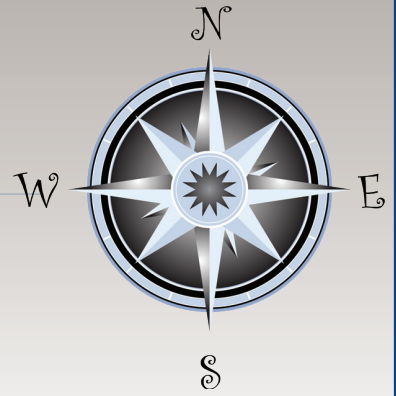
An old proverb says "It is better to say nothing and be thought of as stupid rather than opening your mouth and removing all doubt!" Be sure of this: the words we say will forever be in the air. Things we say will come back to us. Restraint is a discipline that is achieved through a steady and conscientious practice. We have the ability to create good or bad situations by the power of our words. So be careful with your tongue; your future depends on it.

## Benefits

- When we control the impulsiveness of our words, we eliminate the regret that comes after saying something wrong.
- Other will trust us and be open to our opinions because we have established credibility by avoiding idle and destructive talk.
- Restraint helps us grow in our ability to analyze. When we learn to think things through, it makes us good listeners and we gain insight into people and situations. We can use this insight to form better answers and to speak so that others can hear us.

# Action Plan for

# RESTRAINT



## Characteristics

When you exemplify restraint:

1. You are consistent and keep your integrity intact. The person who has integrity has a unity of thought, word and action. You realize that others will interpret what your convictions and principles are by what you say and how you say it.
2. You think before you speak. You do not have outbursts or talk over others. You recognize that your words are an expression of who you are so you choose them carefully.
3. You look for opportunities to lift others up and encourage them.
4. You maintain an attitude that is geared to bring help and healing to others rather than an attitude that is condescending, dismissive or aggressive.

## Steps to Follow

1. Consistently take a moment to think before you speak. Your words have power. Use your power wisely.
2. Recognize the power of the right words at the right time. Congratulate others and encourage them. On many occasions this could transform lives and circumstances and change destiny.
3. When in a conflict with someone, write down the things you want to say. You will then have the opportunity to evaluate, correct and polish your words. This will help you to keep your thoughts straight and prevent you from giving responses based on emotion and the heat of the moment.
4. Work on staying calm. When you feel negative emotion start to well up, take a deep breath and give yourself a few seconds before you respond. If you still feel the urge to speak in haste, ask a clarifying question instead and listen to understand rather than listening to respond.

*Remember... Thoughts become actions. Actions become habits. Habits become our destiny.*

## Reflect and respond

1. In what situations is it the most difficult to control your quick response?
2. Which aspect of restraint presents the biggest challenge to you: stopping yourself before you say hurtful things, taking part in gossip, exaggeration or bragging, or building others up?
3. Recount a time when you have been affected by the power of another person's words either positively or negatively.

Evaluate yourself from 1 to 10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Why did you give yourself this rating										
What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating?										
What specific action can you put into practice to test the benefits of this principle?										
Check list for the daily reading of this principle	M	T	W	T	F	S	S			

Completed

Not completed