

GDHS teacher finds conflicts resolved easier after training

By ANI FEDERIAN
Herald Staff Writer

When you're at loggerheads with someone and it doesn't look like either one of you is going to give in, Chris Bertelsen has a method of smoothly resolving the conflict and leaving both of you feeling the winner.

The 43-year old Georgetown District High School (GDHS) teacher has trained in conflict resolution at Guelph's Human Services Community (HSC) - training that comes in useful in his chosen profession.

In traditional ways of solving disagreements, you rarely end up with both sides feeling satisfied. Usually one person feels the winner because he gets his way, and the other the loser because he gives in - or both feel they've lost.

A teacher for 18 years, seven of them teaching science at GDHS, it wasn't until three years ago that Mr. Bertelsen became involved in the HSC approach to problem solving.

WORKS WELL
"I find it works really well in dealing with my colleagues and students," Mr. Bertelsen said. "I used to yell and scream before and I'd deal with the problem-kids in front of the class."

However, he found he wasn't getting at the root of the problem with that method. Although he would end up the winner at the time, the problem would fester to come up

again later on. "I was using suppression methods rather than resolving methods," Mr. Bertelsen said. "Now, since I've become aware of what works best I have a lot more people who want to talk to me, and

The really hard part is that you have to put your own feelings aside...

my classes have been going really well." What is the win-win method of conflict resolution espoused by Mr. Bertelsen?

"The really hard part is that you have to put your own feelings aside and focus entirely on the other person's feelings," he said. "It's hard to do because people get caught up in their own position."

During an argument there's a need for reflective listening and empathy instead of just blowing your own horn.

COMMUNICATION
"The major problem is communication. Very definitely people don't talk to each other, don't find out what the other person is feeling and doing. There's a lack of communication about where the other person is at," Mr. Bertelsen said. "We get so busy accumulating material things we don't deal with the human side of life."

With the economic situation necessitating that both partners work to maintain their standard

of living, it's meant less opportunity to communicate and establish family bonds between husband and wife or parents and children, he said.

"One of the first things you should realize is that most conflicts come from

within yourself and have less to do with the other person than with you," Mr. Bertelsen said. "If you continually point the finger at yourself, you'll probably be very successful at resolving the conflict."

Mr. Bertelsen related an experience he had with a student, who, 20 minutes before a three-day lab was due to be handed in, said that he didn't understand it.

ANGRY
"My stomach tightened up. My face flushed, and I got angry," Mr. Bertelsen remembered. "I said, 'How dare you say, 20 minutes before, that you don't understand. You should have come to me before. You sit down!'"

In his thinking at the moment, the student should have known better and deserved everything he got, including a zero, Mr. Bertelsen said.

Reflecting upon it, he realized the student had made a perfectly innocent question, and wasn't rude or insolent - although he was negligent in that he should have asked his

question before, but it was nothing to warrant the response he was given.

Mr. Bertelsen realized he was actually angry with himself, because on this occasion, instead of spelling everything out in

the usual format for labs, he had tried to save time and write the information for the students on the blackboard.

"As soon as I realized that, I walked down to Steve and apologized. I told him 'I wasn't really angry at you but at myself for not having written it up when it should have been,'" he told the surprised student. "And added, 'But that doesn't excuse the fact that you waited three days to get clarification!'"

RESPECT
This method of trying to solve the conflict by looking into yourself then deciding what is causing your side of the conflict can earn the respect of the other person.

In this situation, Mr. Bertelsen dealt with the problem by looking at both sides. Although the student was berated in public, he was also apologized to in public, and the relationship between the two was not damaged.

The student was able to perform in class afterward with no bitter feelings left over from the

incident. "whereas for quite a while he would have been resentful and thought I was an ass, otherwise, you don't get much performance when you end up with that kind of attitude in students," Mr. Bertelsen said.

However, this method will not work if the other person isn't willing to resolve the conflict. If the other person still wants to hold a grudge, the problem can't be solved.

Emphasizing there's no magic solution to daily conflicts with others, Mr. Bertelsen said the basis of conflict resolution is showing personal emotions aside and devoting yourself entirely to looking at the situation from the other person's point of view, right or wrong.

Then, the chances for the conflict to be resolved, with neither one losing face in the process, are greater.

The Human Services Community is a non-profit organization funded by the United Way, presenting support courses that help people cope with "their human side", as Mr. Bertelsen puts it. Workshops are open to everybody.

Mr. Bertelsen will be teaching at the HSC in ten weeks and anticipates offering the courses in Georgetown soon. Teachers with the Halton board of education will be hearing his conflict resolution strategy April 22 as part of their professional development day activities.



It's important for teachers to put aside their own anger when they face defiance of authority in students, Georgetown District High School teacher Chris Bertelsen said. But it's the best thing to do. There's usually something at the root of it and if teachers try to empathize with the student they'll often surprise the student who'll fall apart, apologize, and open up.

Asthma class starts April 9

The Halton Lung Association will be re-opening a Family Asthma Program in Georgetown.

Starting Saturday April 9 at Georgetown District High School, the program has been developed for families with children who suffer from asthma. Courses will provide exercises to develop physical conditioning, better breathing and relaxation techniques, as well as swimming.

Speakers include allergists, paediatricians, nutritionists, pharmacists and others expert in the field. Dr. R.W.T. Haddon of Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital in Burlington is medical advisor for the Halton Lung Association and directs the program. For more information call 827-7973.

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Travel barriers



By PAT WOODS
Herald Special

Travel presents a welcome change from the routine of everyday life. For the handicapped it presents a whole new set of barriers.

Planning ahead not only includes deciding on where to go but also which spare parts to take along for appliances and finding a travel agency you can get into.

"Assist," is a group of travel agents that have taken extra effort to keep an up to date library of tours for the handicapped. "Travel Helpers," at 2 Valley Brook in Don Mills is the largest of these agencies in this area.

In addition to publishing a news letter, Assist members try to keep on top of what is accessible and what is not for various forms of disabilities.

It is not necessary to leave Halton Hills to obtain most of the information

you will need. If you phone a day or two ahead to a local agent, he will have time to sort through his files and get the information ready for you.

Acton Travel and Roo's Travel have parking and grade level access for those that are not favorably impressed by stairs, steps and steep grades.

Air Canada has a computer system called Reservac that enables them to be prepared for people with disabilities. Other airlines have similar systems and will generally try to assist the handicapped.

The "Incapacitated Passengers Air Travel Guide," is now available from the Publication Agent, International Air Transport Association, 200 Peel Street, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2R4. The Halton Hills library has a new book called, "A Travel Guide for the Disabled: Western Europe," which may be of limited help.

Unfortunately nothing can prepare you for all the barriers that will be encountered during holidays. Perhaps the best help and recommendation still come from those that have been there before and can give you the benefit of their experiences.

Dual energy systems

Many Ontario homeowners can heat their houses with a combination of electricity and oil cheaper than with oil alone, according to Ontario Hydro's Marketing Manager, Paul Vyroshko.

To enable homeowners to take advantage of these savings, Hydro and the province's two municipal electric utility associations are introducing a furnace conversion assistance program, he announced today.

The conversion involves installing a 9-kilowatt electric heater in the furnace plenum (main air duct) which would heat the house in all but the

coldest weather, when the oil burner alone would operate.

Based on January 1983 statistics, the dual system would be cheaper for those now depending on an oil furnace with 65 per cent seasonal efficiency.

The total cost of the conversion is just over \$1,000. With a \$320 taxable grant under the Canada Oil Substitution Program (COSP) and the absorption of \$200 by the utilities, the cost to the customer is about \$320 plus tax on the federal grant. With this program, customers could expect to recover their investment in three years.

Ontario Hydro's program starts today.

For further information, call Paul Vyroshko or Mike Crompton at (416) 222-2371.

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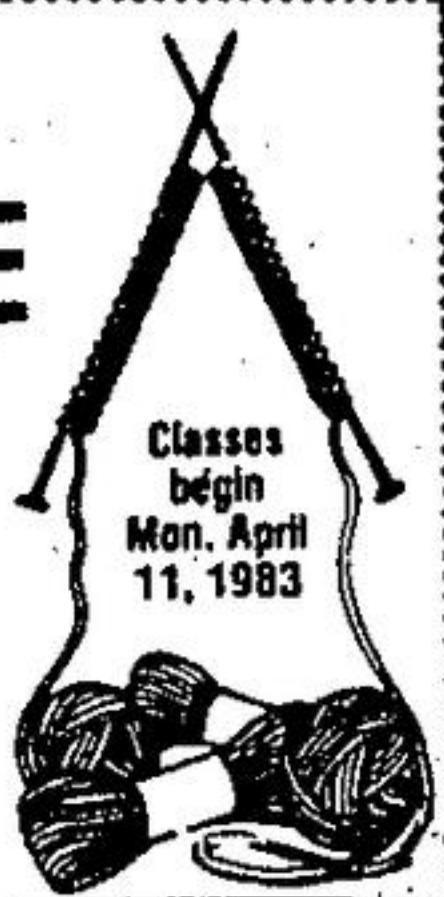


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