WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for April 8, 2024
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about courageous communication, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

This week I had an opportunity to speak to women at the Southern Ohio Women in Agriculture Conference. We discussed courageous family communication. Can you recall a time when you initiated a tough conversation with a family member? Depending on the circumstances, conversations like this can be very stressful. But we initiate them because we desire change, and we know that change is more likely to happen with a discussion.

Do you remember the story of Queen Esther? She had an opportunity to save her people, but it meant purposefully entering a life or death situation for herself as well. Her cousin encouraged her, "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

She prepared for the conversation with the king by praying and fasting and asking others to do the same for her. Then she strategically created an environment suitable for a tough conversation. And finally, she brought up an uncomfortable topic with confidence and humility.

Courageous communication certainly takes initiative and preparation and confidence. But in my personal experience, I think self-control is the key to fruitful conversations. The book of Proverbs is full of reflections on our words and how we use them. Like Proverbs 17:27, "Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding." And Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

We don't always have the luxury of preparing for a conversation. Sometimes another person brings up a topic we may not be prepared for. But often, no one is bringing up the topics we most need to discuss. It may be decisions about an aging parent with clear signs of dementia. Or maybe a financial situation that is not getting any better as the credit card balance increases more each month. Or maybe a destructive behavior you see in a loved one that is affecting their physical and/or mental health.

In the book “Crucial Conversations: How to listen when others blow up or clam up.” by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler, they share there are three ways to handle these conversations. We can avoid them. We can face them and handle them poorly. We can face them and handle them well.

Often, we have not observed these conversations handled well by our family and friends. And we certainly don’t see this modeled in healthy ways by the media, whether social media or television and movies. Let’s face it. Calm, quiet, thoughtful conversations don’t sell. But can bring peace, resolution, and reconciliation.

Patterson and others suggest that the first thing that degrades during a crucial conversation is not our behavior, but our motive. They suggest we learn how to stay focused on what we really want to get better results. Have you initiated a conversation with a noble goal in mind only to watch your goal turn into “winning” the argument? As soon as you notice this in yourself, take a breath, and ask a question. “What do I really want here?” It is amazing how this clarifying question can redirect your motive.

You are responsible for your own actions and reactions in a conversation. Think before you initiate a conversation. Take the time to clarify what you want to achieve and what you want to avoid. When you approach a conversation with humility, you may learn new information and gain a new perspective that helps to make a necessary change.

And now let’s see what else is new from OSU Extension. This is a perfect time of year for testing the soil in your lawn or vegetable garden or field. Soil testing gives you a better idea of what you really need to be applying to your grass or crop. If it has been more than 3 years since your last test, consider a soil test this year. Tests are $17 each. Contact our office for more information.

And this week we celebrate 4-H Week! We are proud of the more than 600 4-H members across Coshocton County and the 150 volunteers who are helping them gain confidence and life skills. This is the time to join 4-H! Learn more on our website coshocton.osu.edu.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and empower our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!