

The Difference Between Being Adaptable And Evidencing Insecurity, Insincerity, Or Low Self-esteem

I recently watched two close friends interact over a misunderstanding. It was fascinating. Let's call them Ann and Bea. Ann invited Bea to a Friday overnight retreat and she accepted. They usually saw each other on Saturdays at a self-help group that I also attend. However, at the meeting the week before the event, they didn't get together to finalize their plans because Bea was indisposed. She assured Ann that she would connect with her by the middle of the following week.

The entire week went by and Bea never made contact. Ann chose not to do anything about it. The day of the retreat, Friday, came and went. Shortly before our scheduled meeting on Saturday, Sue called to say she was going to be late. Ann checked with me and we agreed that was fine. Then, Ann asked her what happened regarding their Friday overnight. Bea was upset when she realized she had forgotten all about it.

Ann suggested they do it that night and Bea agreed. They met and from what I have heard, had a wonderful and very special overnight together.

What I found amazing about their interaction was the complete absence of either making the other wrong, and I loved watching to see what their joint efforts produced in recreating something meaningful for them both.

My experience has been that most of us get into some variety of emotional entanglement when something like this happens. We come up with "how could you" and "it's too late now" stuff. Forgetting is often interpreted as a slight and if it is brought to light, being reminded of it is seen as criticism.

It seems to me that being too adaptable sets a person up to be walked on and being too rigid causes a lot of problems to escalate. People pleasing bring us too quickly to the "oh, that's all right" kind of position, and being too insecure makes us prickly pears to deal with.

What I saw my two friends do was to step back and reassess. They were honest with themselves and each other and looked for a possible way to repair the issue. I don't think it's always possible to do that but if we take a moment to digest and assess the circumstances, there's probably a much greater chance that we will respond in a sincere and mature way to such surprises.

Humans are. It's not a truth we like, but we have to work around it. Seeing ourselves as imperfect--while still doing our best--offers the possibility of seeing others in the same light. In the circumstances that I have described there was no "bad guy." What a relief! They acknowledged the problem, put their heads together, and resolved it.

The next time I'm surprised in a way that feels negative to me, I'm going to borrow my friends' tool chest and see if I can work with whomever I'm relating to in a win/win way. When we change ourselves, we change the world, at least our little corner of it.

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About the Author

Luise Volta's life has included careers in nursing, teaching pre-school, interior design, Real Estate sales, insurance adjusting, and dairy herd testing. Visit <http://www.momresponds.com/category/personal-advice/techniques-of-conflict-resolution/>