



THE WEIGHT OF OUR WORDS

by Michael Angier

ABC Television has a new reality show called *Brat Camp*. The show takes place in the high desert of central Oregon and is part of “Sage Walk,” an actual therapeutic wilderness program for at-risk teens.

According to program’s Web site (www.sagewalk.com), it’s a highly structured and intense intervention program for troubled teens between the ages of 13 and 17 who may be experiencing emotional, academic and/or behavioral problems.

Rocks in the Pocket

One of the episodes shows how the counselors handle bad language. Most of the kids curse with almost every sentence when they get there. But when a student uses profane language, he or she must pick up a stone and place it in his or her pocket.

Each time they use bad language, they must pick up another stone. It’s challenging enough to trek through the desert with 50 or 60 pounds of gear, but it gets even harder when you’re carrying all those stones.

The calm, well-trained and intuitive instructors explain that we must learn to understand the “weight of our words.”

Sticks and Stones

What we say affects our lives and the lives

of those around us positively or negatively. And it doesn’t have to be a “bad” word to do harm. Sometimes thoughtless remarks and things said with no ill-intention can be devastating.

I remember the old elementary school ditty, “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” It was so untrue.

It’s true that we all have the power to choose how words from others impact us, but they can be—and often are—very hurtful.

Our words can do great good or irreparable harm. They seldom have little or no impact. And once they’ve been uttered, they can never be called back.

Choose Carefully

Your words DO carry weight. Choose carefully what you say, when you say it and how you say it. Your words can be inspiring, encouraging and uplifting; or they can be denigrating, hurtful and discouraging.

Commit to becoming a master communicator. Give your words not only great weight, but great purpose and power. ❖

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