
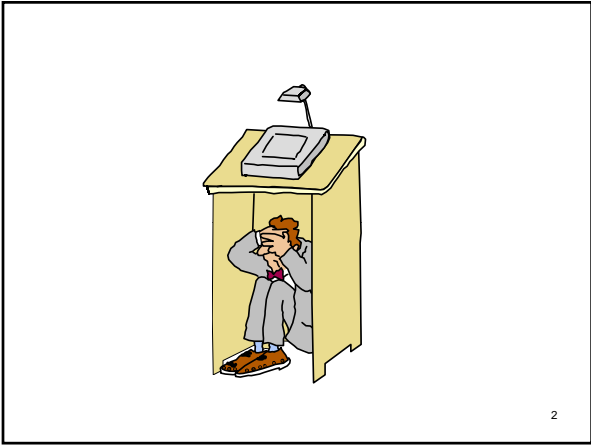


***Risk Communication:
building & maintaining trust &
credibility***



**8th Annual IAQ Tools for Schools National
Symposium
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**Working With Your
Community***



**Trust & Credibility:
How To Earn It
How To Keep It**

*And living to talk about it!

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I was an angry parent!

I was a defensive gov't official.

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Radon Blamed for 18,000 Lung-Cancer Deaths in U.S. Each Year

Introduction

- Topic is more broad than title implies.
- How to get along on a crowded planet.
- It may even help with your teenager!

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What this talk will NOT do!

- It won't teach you how to "deal" with people.
- It is not public relations.
- It is not Star Wars Jedi mind tricks OR verbal judo.
- And it won't work if you're NOT SINCERE!

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What this WILL do for you!

- It will help you work WITH people even if they're frightened and angry.
- It will help you understand the public's fears and reactions to you - and your own reactions when you're confronted by the public.

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What this WILL do for you!

- It will help you understand the level of concern and the speed at which it can grow.
- We'll focus on building trust - and how to get it back if you've lost it.

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Who are (is?) the "public?"

- We are!
- We know how we like to be treated.
- We know how we do NOT like to be treated.
- Which way are we treating our public?

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Emotions

- Obvious:
Fear - for children's health
 - Not So Obvious:
Guilt - could I have done more for my child?!
- EGO
Ya think?

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Emotions

Risk Perception = Hazard + ?

Risk Perception = Hazard + **OUTRAGE!**
(Peter Sandman)

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Emotions

In parents, the public or your own staff, fear and guilt, combined with the feeling that they lack control will quickly turn into **ANGER** which will probably be directed at you or whoever is believed to be in authority in any way!

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Technical problems rarely remain technical.

- Fairness
- Control
- Trust

Our goal should be to move past these so that we can get back to the technical problem.

Can't use technical info to calm emotional issues!

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Whose school is it?

- Ownership is very important
- Like the Starship Enterprise: Whose ship is it? Capt. Kirk's?, Scotty's?
- Parents?
- Teachers?
- Dir. of Facilities?

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COKE

- Commitment
- Open-ness (spelling??)
- Knowledge
- Empathy

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COKE

- Commitment
- Open-ness
- Knowledge
- Empathy



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Emotions

People become less fearful when you acknowledge their fears!

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Monitoring objectivity

Public's Point of View:

Frightened for your health and your child's.
Angry about perceived slow response.
No control over situation

Easy to assume evil motives.
Easy to assume mistakes were intentional.
Natural to go into attack mode.
Difficult to distinguish allies from enemies.

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Monitoring objectivity

School Official's Point of View:

Your on the hot seat.
Pressure from public and boss to come up with answers.
Not expert on subject.
Problem is complex.

Easy to become defensive.
Natural to start building stone walls.
Stop returning phone calls.
Afraid to release information.
Credibility and trust are first casualties.

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Monitoring objectivity

When you see yourself doing these things: **do the opposite.**

- Admit what you don't know.
- Return all calls.
- Release all information (?).
- Ask for help.

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Building & maintaining trust

- Trust - once its lost, its very difficult to get back
- Genuine respect - trade places, find out, understand

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Building & maintaining trust

Trust comes from knowing you share in the fear and guilt:

"What could I have done as an official to have prevented this?"

"What can I now do to fix it?"

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Building & maintaining trust

- Trust comes from going out of your way to share information when its available.
- Trust comes not from denying that \$\$\$ is an issue, but from allowing the community to help set \$\$\$ priorities.

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Building & maintaining trust

- Trust comes from telling people the good things you're doing and apologizing for your mistakes. If you screwed up - say so and move on.
- Trust can be lost by surprising people even with what you THINK is good news.

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How to do it?

- Take control of yourself - but be yourself and be flexible.
- You can't CONTROL people or meetings - but you can and must control yourself.
- If you were in their place, you might be just as angry.

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How to do it?

- Share information quickly (good news and bad news)!
- Talk to people personally - on the phone - face-to-face.
- If organizing meetings, notify everyone but make sure you involve a cross-section of the community. Some people may have their own agenda. Assure a balanced cross-section.

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How to do it?

- Don't promise more than you can deliver, especially decision-making power.
- Make sure that everyone knows the implications of actions, eg. closing portables means relocating kids.
- When you don't know, be upfront about it.

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How to do it?

Ask for help!

- Committees to help organize meetings and serve refreshments.
- Committees to make decisions or determine criteria.
- Committees to check out credentials.
- Committees to research products, gather information.
- ???

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How to do it?

- Involve the media early. It will probably happen anyway so do it THE RIGHT WAY!
- Develop 3 short, clear messages (nuggets) and state them often. Bring your main nugget into each response to any question.

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How to control yourself?

William Ury, *Getting Past No*

- Go to the balcony!
- Will my next action get me closer to where I want to be?
- If not, don't do it!

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Summary

- Acknowledge concerns
- Give people the facts - not just those you know, but those you're thinking about!
- Explore several approaches to solving the problem

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Thanks for your attention!



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