



Curiosity over judgement

Three Phases That Should Make Us Pause

There are 3 phrases that we often hear, think or say about others – especially the people we support. If we find ourselves saying, or thinking, these phrases should serve as a caution flag for us; asking ourselves to check our attitude and ask the important why questions:

The person is:

- Being manipulative
- Knows better
- Just seeking attention

While these phrases might be true of the person in that moment; they might know better, maybe they are being manipulative, maybe they are seeking attention, when we think these of the other, it tends to lead our response in the wrong direction. We tend to respond in a more punitive fashion if we believe these to be the motivation of others.

Think about yourself. Do you ever try to manipulate others to get what you want? Have you ever done something to seek attention? Do you ever do something even when you know better? We all do these from time to time! When we hear, think or say these 3 phrases we need to stop and think about: what the person is trying to communicate, are they feeling safe right now, how could I meet their need in this moment (or in the moment prior), why do they feel the need to respond this way in this moment / environment?

Sometimes these responses show us how the person is truly feeling, sometimes these are simply learned responses, sometimes people just want to be pampered or nurtured, there can be so many reasons for these responses to be present. As John always said, they may be true but, they are irrelevant in terms of how we should respond to the person.

What Did John Say?

“We make a common error in putting the cart before the horse. The center of the human condition is not the mind, but our feelings... The basic question is not what we know, but what we feel... We must help caregivers develop a strong empathy for the needs of those whom they serve. Gentleness goes for the heart, not the head— feeling safe, engaged, loved, and loving. A hallmark of a spirit of gentleness is that it goes for each person’s heart. It does not make any difference what a person knows if the individual does not feel safe and loved.”

Q1

When do you hear, think, or say these three phases about the people you support?

What might the person be communicating in these moments?

Q2

Q3

How can we increase gentleness in our responses?

Connecting to Our Purpose

When we label behaviour as manipulative, attention-seeking, or “knowing better,” our responses often move us away from our central purpose. In these moments, it becomes easy to slip into correction, control, or punishment rather than care. Our central purpose in the lives of others is to nurture, teach, and sustain the experience of connectedness, companionship, and community, especially when other actions feel challenging or uncomfortable. Removing assumptions and become curious, we open space to ask different questions: What is being communicated? Is this person feeling safe? What need is going unmet right now? Responding through this lens allows us to meet people with compassion rather than judgment and strengthen relationships.