

BE A LEADER

For Life-Enhancing Change



Is this childhood chant true or false? "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me?" Do words have power, can words hurt and can words heal? Does language create our reality?

Justice Is Our Work!

The Aberdeen Presentation Sisters willingly go forth to any part of the world to work for justice, alleviate oppression and promote human dignity, especially among the poor. This is done in a spirit of love and joy.

Power is often associated with governments, authority and physical force. It can also be found in words, controlling negative and positive emotions. Labels, stereotyping and name calling can intimidate and assign a harmful impression. Statements such as these: "You are an idiot or that is a horrible idea" can damage self-esteem. However, when positive words are present they can communicate support and encouragement. "Wonderful idea; keep up the great work!"

Language creates reality in business, church, family and government. One should keep in mind, that even if the intent is not to cause harm, it may be the perception of the person receiving the words. In cases where conflict exists, the words spoken or written can have a larger negative impact because the person listening or reading may already be hurt and on the defense. In these circumstances, extra care by the initiator of the words should be carefully considered. Thoughtfully choosing positive words can give an opportunity to have respect and compassion present in the conversation.

Many of us have witnessed sticks and stones being thrown capriciously without considering the harm they cause. Unfortunately, this has been more evident in our political arena today. These words can draw focus away from the real issues and attention needed to work together towards constructive solutions. In a

recent debate, political candidates were asked to say something positive about their opponent. The body language that followed was astounding. Immediately after the compliment was given the candidates seemed more relaxed and less on the defense. What a wonderful world this would be if we could all learn to lead with positive words, even in a conflicting situation.

The words we choose become the thoughts we think and the actions we take. One word at a time, our language can create a different reality.

Words do have power and words can heal. Difficult conversations seem to be less intimidating when we are honest, truthful and speak with respect, kindness and compassion. Think about what you say to your loved ones, neighbors and coworkers. May today be the start of more positive and healing words. One word at a time, our language can create a different reality.

Challenge Question: How can your words create a positive reality for others?



Sister Pam Donelan is Director of Mission at Presentation College and **Mike Levsen** is Mayor of Aberdeen. Both are advocates for nonviolence in language.



Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

In Joyful Service

Through dialogue our voice becomes clearer. United we are stronger. Justice flourishes.

Please visit: www.presentationisters.org to learn how you can become a partner for justice.