

The intricacies of human venting

by Mark Pavilons

Venting:??... to give often vigorous or emotional expression to ... to relieve by means of a vent.?We all do it. Sometimes it's as if the human shell is one giant pressure cooker, hissing inwardly until she blows.

And the results can be quite loud and messy.

Specialists say venting is a way to relieve stress and it's vital that we do it, lest we, well, combust. Is it cathartic, a way of hitting restart?

For the person doing the venting it may be okay, but those on the receiving end are often left speechless, attacked, and helpless. It's one of the more confusing human outlets, that often don't have a response or solution.

Most of the time, venting takes the form of loud outbursts ??etting loose the old-fashioned way. It would be great if we chose jotting down our thoughts in a journal as a way of venting. Or baking; yes, baking is a great way to get out your anger!

Engaging someone in a conversation while they're expelling the inner demons isn't always the best approach.?You need to listen, and listen good. There may be some quick fixes or simple solutions, or there may not be.

Research has shown that the difference between positive and negative venting can be focused on the ways in which the person hearing the vent responds, both through speech and action.

The key is empathy ?empathy is active validation, sympathy is not.

We hear the saying to ?walk in another person's shoes,? but frankly I've never been able to do that. How can we??People are so different, unique and interpret the world around them in different ways.

Unless I?had those very same physical ailments and psychological traumas, then perhaps I could empathize. But only to an extent.

Apparently sharing our feelings is healthy but unfortunately, a lot can get lost in translation here, especially when the opposite sexes are concerned.

Men and women are different. We feel and share differently. Yes, we are apples and oranges and shouldn't really be in the same fruit basket, unless we're both destined to become jam.

I'm a Boomer and was taught to be tough, keeping most of the mushy stuff inside. Yes, we were allowed, even encouraged, to show love, compassion and respect. We were brave, chivalrous, the proverbial hunter-gatherers.

But a lot has changed in the past few decades, changes that have kept men's heads spinning.

Letting out our emotions hasn't always been easy.

I admit that it's getting easier, and I have broken down and cried more times than I?care to remember. Does it help? Somewhat.

My youngest often asks me why I don't get teary-eyed talking about my late parents and sister.

I?don't know.

In their final stages, all were in a certain amount of pain and in and out of consciousness. They suffered. Watching a family member suffer is like getting a red-hot branding iron to the gut.

For all three of my family members, who passed within a 10-year time frame, there was always something to do, something to arrange, to plan for.

I couldn't fall apart because I was the rock, the logical and organized male who had to take control.

Sure, the tasks required focus and took your mind off grieving, but in the end, you simply didn't have time to feel sorrow. So, you packed it away.

But venting helps us cope, doesn't it?

I never saw much use for it.

In our family circle today, venting is usually the result of some minor household annoyances ??the kids' bathroom, dishes in the sink, and forgotten chores.

My wife says I'm hard on the kids, demanding they rise to the challenge and pitch in. I don't see why they can't and I don't believe in coddling them.

When my mom came home from grocery shopping, I felt compelled to run to the door and grab the bags from her. It was second nature ?? didn't have to be asked. Doing things for my mom particularly was just natural.

My dad, on the other hand, had a not-so-subtle way of telling me what was next on the to-do list. He never asked if I was busy or had plans ??t didn't matter.

So yes, out I'd dash and return when I was sufficiently covered in dirt and sweat. Thanks, or any form of appreciation, were understood.

But these things didn't hinder my ability to function. They didn't damage me emotionally or cause me to vent.

I understood the importance of family and pitching in when and where needed. It's pretty simple if you think about it.

We would never think about ?fixing??or ?changing??our old school parents. Heck, they went through a lot, including picking up the pieces after the Second World War, going through tough times and moving to a foreign land to start over.

To this day, I feel that any whining on my part was ridiculous, given their struggles.

My kids have it pretty easy. We have given our kids so much they have no reason to complain, feel neglected, restricted, poor, under-fed or emotionally starved.

Yes, I was spoiled, but kids today ...

Often I'm dumfounded when they vent over what I see as trivial matters. There's really no reason getting worked up over stupid things ??ife to much too short to waste precious time on such things.

I have been guilty of it, too. But I'm going out of my way to curb this bad habit.

I think we can all contribute if we really listen, validate and offer our support. It's really not that hard.

To those who vent, I say let it out and scratch where it itches!