

I was the host of my own TV talk show in Boston for many years. Nothing makes you learn about human communication and what doesn't work faster than trying to interview, talk with, or handle people on live TV before almost a million viewers and hitting a wall! Talk of damp hands!

Here's how I learned about handling anger: I was slated to interview a famous movie star who was making a film on location near Boston. We had promoted it very heavily on air. Yet, although he had initially agreed, he had put us off several times, and we were now at the last possible day for shooting the interview. Armed with a definite appointment, we packed a full TV crew and went trekking off (in mid-December) to a cold, bleak forest glade where they were shooting the film.

Our movie hero again stalled us, with a rather acid greeting:

"Oh, of *course*. We'll just stop shooting this silly little movie and do *your* little old interview. " Here's where the lesson begins.

My approach was to smile sweetly, turn the other cheek, and placate by saying:

"No. no, please. We'll just wait until you're done."

A clear case of denying the anger—to myself *and* to him!

Result? We waited all that freezing afternoon (overtime clock ticking for the crew) until our hero was ready for us—at 5:00 P.M. Five P.M. in Boston in December means DARK!

Again, ignoring the seething messages we were getting, we scrambled around, rigged up lights in a by-now/reezmg setting, and sat down to begin our—uh—talking/sharing/listening/experience. Right.

The next experience provided Lesson Two—one I have never forgotten and that I teach as a major strategy all the time.

Still denying the truth of what was really going on, I started what I hoped would be a pleasant interview with a . . . snarling tiger. The more questions I asked, the testier he got. I continued on my Goody Two-Shoes path of pretending all was well, convinced that it was my fault. I kept looking for a great question and he kept being more openly abusive and ridiculing. All of this was, of course, being captured in living color by our TV cameras, to be edited and shown the next morning, as advertised. Finally, my producer signaled the cameras and me to wrap it up and, undaunted, still smiling sweetly, I said, "Thank you," and called it a night.

And ran to the truck and broke into tears. Do you know what? I didn't blame our movie star. I blamed *myself* for being so inept! I felt that if my *questions* were better, maybe I could have gotten him to turn around.