OUR PUBLIC IMAGE

What Works, What Doesn't and Why

"Hi, how's it going?"
"Great."

"Can you get this to me by four?"
"Sure, no problem."

"Okay. Now you understand what I want, right?"
"Yes. Sure. Of course I understand."

Sound familiar? Do any of these answers usually describe what's really going on? Or aren't these the answers we give because we'd *like* them to be true, they're *supposed* to be true, and, most of all, we think that's what the other person *wants* to hear?

What am I prescribing instead? Describe what insoluble obstacles you've hit the next time someone asks you how the project is going? Tell your co-worker that you can't figure out how to—or just won't—get it to him or her by four?

Sounds like you'd be admitting weakness or ineptitude if you did that? Pretty self-destructive, right?

Wrong! Isn't it more destructive to deny yourself and your co-workers the opportunity to deal with reality? Isn't it constructive and much more efficient to explain what the problems really are, what's not working, and then find a realistic solution *together?*

If the job *isn't* getting done well, your fear of being honest and therefore vulnerable to imagined rejection or criticism can make you experience stress and *still* not solve the problem. What are the possible consequences?

- You may do a less than satisfactory job.

- You may not meet a deadline.

- You may take out your frustration on the people who work for you.

All because you couldn't find a way to deal with and communicate the truth constructively.

Wearing a public image that looks like "I'm totally competent at all times—I know what I'm doing—I'm nice, cooperative, and always in control" traps you in a bind that can actually hinder your work and diminish your competence. You may spend so much energy continually shoring up this artificial image and filling in the cracks that you have less to give to the actual business of *working.*