

COACHING CASE A PHYSICIANS STORY

A physician we coached on his interpersonal skills spoke about how he resented being “taken to the woodshed” and having to be punished by seeing us. We explained that there was basically nothing wrong with him, and he didn’t have to change his personality, as he had suggested the management wanted him to. We said, “Think of yourself like a person who has chosen to live overseas; we are here not to change you, but to show you the language and culture—to help you be happier and more successful.” He had come from a very different corporate culture; and soon, the coaching helped him assimilate into his new culture, much to his surprise and the surprise of the staff who saw tremendous growth and change in him.

The coaching experience with this physician consisted of an initial meeting with the hospital administration and the nursing care managers who described their concerns regarding negative interactions with the doctor. Some particulars of this hospital’s culture:

- Quality of the working relationships were stressed and cultivated.
- Consensus decisions were made when possible
- All team members were important.
- Socialization among different levels was promoted.

His previous hospital’s culture said:

- We will be autocratic and silo functioning.
- Feelings are not important.
- Do your work and go home.
- Boundaries are very important.

As you can see, the conflict was apparent. After two coaching sessions that focused on leadership styles, interpersonal skills and dealing with perceptions (Chapters 5 & 6 of our book, “Harnessing the Power of Conflict”), he was able to get past “being taken to the woodshed,” and set goals involving a more collegial and democratic approach.