

ABSOLUTES

By Gary L. Richardson, noted trial lawyer and author of *Black Robe Fever*, *Fear Is Never Our Friend*, and *Thank God They Ate the Apple*.

www.garyrichardsonspeaks.com

How dangerous and destructive is the habit of using "absolutes" in everyday conversation? Have you ever thought of this? Do you hear yourself using absolutes? If so, you most probably are steering your relationships and reputation down an unpleasant rocky road.

A few years ago, totally by accident and without initially realizing it, I became a mentor to a young man. Over the last five years I have mentored a few other people. In doing so, I came to recognize one common thread when my mentees talked about conflict with a person close to them (sometimes it was a spouse; other times it was a fellow employee, employer, and/or a friend). When one of my mentees related a conversation he/she had that led to a conflict, the "common thread" stuck out like a sore thumb. It was the frequent use of "absolutes."

I also learned that those that I have mentored who had a penchant for using "absolutes" in their conversations were quite oblivious to the fact.

Many of us have heard counselors stress that we should not use absolutes in our conversations – words such as "always," "never," and the like. However, until I started mentoring, the frequency with which some people use absolutes and the damage that practice often causes in relationships had never before become so obvious to me.

Here are a few examples of what I am talking about when I speak of absolutes:

- "You never pick your shoes up off the floor," rather than saying, "I have noticed that quite often you don't pick your shoes up off the floor," which, by-the-way, is probably more accurate.
- "Those referees always get that wrong," rather than saying, "Those referees often get that wrong."

Question: Which sounds like a friendlier and less tension-filled conversation style?

The problem is, if people have the habit of using absolutes, they usually don't restrict that usage to only certain types of conversation but will use absolutes in talking with everyone, including those closest to them.

There is a high price to pay for this style of communication. To prove it to yourself, just notice as you are with others what their conversation style is and see how it affects you.

One young man recently asked if I would mentor him. I responded by asking if he was sure he wanted that. He inquired why I would ask him such a thing, and I said that it could become quite painful. I further explained that he had a style of communication that simply did, at times, drive me "up the wall." Upon further discussion I explained that the source of my annoyance was his unbelievable use of absolutes in his conversation style and that for every 100 statements he made that contained an absolute, there was, in fact, maybe one that actually might be an absolute.

I then shared with him three statements he had made in the thirty minutes or so that we had been visiting that contained an absolute. None, of course, actually was an absolute. He freely agreed that I was correct.

So, during our mentoring sessions, not using absolutes became largely what we worked on, and within less than a year later, this young man could give testimony to the great change that accomplishment has made in his life when it comes to relationships. Furthermore, when he and I visit today if he does use an absolute, he immediately corrects himself.

Next, I want to talk about what the use of absolutes does when utilized in a conversation style.

What absolutes do is build walls with those we communicate with; cause the loss of at least a degree of integrity and credibility (we all know there aren't many absolutes); often create arguments and challenges; and is not nearly as friendly a style of communicating as when absolutes are avoided in a conversation.

What I have found to be most often the case with someone who uses absolutes in conversation is that the person is insecure and using absolutes enhances his or her odds of getting attention.

We probably have all heard the comment, "Insult me; just don't ignore me." That is what I am talking about. A person that laces his/her conversations with absolutes does quite often attract attention from someone in the group that takes issue with the statement that includes the absolute. Ah, attention!!!! This is what I found to be the most frequent conclusion with those I have mentored that use absolutes and that is that they get attention. They have found it to be a way to keep from being ignored in group settings. Forget the fact that they most often receive negative responses; they find negative reaction to be better than being ignored.

Also, I want to emphasize what using absolutes does to destroy confidence in the "absolute-user" among those who are around him/her on a frequent basis. Simple. It causes others to recognize that much of what the person says is just absolutely wrong, over-stated, and not accurate. This then causes the question to arise as to what else is it that the "absolute-user" says that is not accurate. Sure, it is often passed off as "well, that is just the way the person is." That's the point!!!

I challenge you to become aware of your use of absolutes, and as you do, work on voiding your conversations of absolutes and see how much more friendly and enjoyable you find yourself being with others. I promise you will like yourself better. Guaranteed!!!

What will it do for you if you void your conversation of absolutes, 99 percent of which aren't absolutes to begin with, just stated as such? Here are some real possibilities:

1. You no longer will leave the impression with others who don't know you that you think you know everything.
2. It will stop so much negative feedback/response.
3. You will start on your road to recovering integrity.
4. You will no longer place yourself in a position of having to defend an "absolute" statement you have made and cannot defend because there is no evidence to support it.
5. You will be a more friendly person to be with, more pleasurable.
6. You will develop better relationships.

I must say, in finishing this article, that none of what I have set forth herein is ABSOLUTE. See if you think you are an "exception" to the rule.

###

ABSOLUTES

By Gary L. Richardson, noted trial lawyer and author of *Black Robe Fever*, *Fear Is Never Our Friend*, and *Thank God They Ate the Apple*.

www.garyrichardsonspeaks.com

How dangerous and destructive is the habit of using "absolutes" in everyday conversation? Have you ever thought of this? Do you hear yourself using absolutes? If so, you most probably are steering your relationships and reputation down an unpleasant rocky road.

A few years ago, totally by accident and without initially realizing it, I became a mentor to a young man. Over the last five years I have mentored a few other people. In doing so, I came to recognize one common thread when my mentees talked about conflict with a person close to them (sometimes it was a spouse; other times it was a fellow employee, employer, and/or a friend). When one of my mentees related a conversation he/she had that led to a conflict, the "common thread" stuck out like a sore thumb. It was the frequent use of "absolutes."

I also learned that those that I have mentored who had a penchant for using "absolutes" in their conversations were quite oblivious to the fact.

Many of us have heard counselors stress that we should not use absolutes in our conversations – words such as "always," "never," and the like. However, until I started mentoring, the frequency with which some people use absolutes and the damage that practice often causes in relationships had never before become so obvious to me.

Here are a few examples of what I am talking about when I speak of absolutes:

- "You never pick your shoes up off the floor," rather than saying, "I have noticed that quite often you don't pick your shoes up off the floor," which, by-the-way, is probably more accurate.
- "Those referees always get that wrong," rather than saying, "Those referees often get that wrong."

Question: Which sounds like a friendlier and less tension-filled conversation style?

The problem is, if people have the habit of using absolutes, they usually don't restrict that usage to only certain types of conversation but will use absolutes in talking with everyone, including those closest to them.

There is a high price to pay for this style of communication. To prove it to yourself, just notice as you are with others what their conversation style is and see how it affects you.

One young man recently asked if I would mentor him. I responded by asking if he was sure he wanted that. He inquired why I would ask him such a thing, and I said that it could become quite painful. I further explained that he had a style of communication that simply did, at times, drive me "up the wall." Upon further discussion I explained that the source of my annoyance was his unbelievable use of absolutes in his conversation style and that for every 100 statements he made that contained an absolute, there was, in fact, maybe one that actually might be an absolute.

I then shared with him three statements he had made in the thirty minutes or so that we had been visiting that contained an absolute. None, of course, actually was an absolute. He freely agreed that I was correct.

So, during our mentoring sessions, not using absolutes became largely what we worked on, and within less than a year later, this young man could give testimony to the great change that accomplishment has made in his life when it comes to relationships. Furthermore, when he and I visit today if he does use an absolute, he immediately corrects himself.

Next, I want to talk about what the use of absolutes does when utilized in a conversation style.

What absolutes do is build walls with those we communicate with; cause the loss of at least a degree of integrity and credibility (we all know there aren't many absolutes); often create arguments and challenges; and is not nearly as friendly a style of communicating as when absolutes are avoided in a conversation.

What I have found to be most often the case with someone who uses absolutes in conversation is that the person is insecure and using absolutes enhances his or her odds of getting attention.

We probably have all heard the comment, "Insult me; just don't ignore me." That is what I am talking about. A person that laces his/her conversations with absolutes does quite often attract attention from someone in the group that takes issue with the statement that includes the absolute. Ah, attention!!!! This is what I found to be the most frequent conclusion with those I have mentored that use absolutes and that is that they get attention. They have found it to be a way to keep from being ignored in group settings. Forget the fact that they most often receive negative responses; they find negative reaction to be better than being ignored.

Also, I want to emphasize what using absolutes does to destroy confidence in the "absolute-user" among those who are around him/her on a frequent basis. Simple. It causes others to recognize that much of what the person says is just absolutely wrong, over-stated, and not accurate. This then causes the question to arise as to what else is it that the "absolute-user" says that is not accurate. Sure, it is often passed off as "well, that is just the way the person is." That's the point!!!

I challenge you to become aware of your use of absolutes, and as you do, work on voiding your conversations of absolutes and see how much more friendly and enjoyable you find yourself being with others. I promise you will like yourself better. Guaranteed!!!

What will it do for you if you void your conversation of absolutes, 99 percent of which aren't absolutes to begin with, just stated as such? Here are some real possibilities:

1. You no longer will leave the impression with others who don't know you that you think you know everything.
2. It will stop so much negative feedback/response.
3. You will start on your road to recovering integrity.
4. You will no longer place yourself in a position of having to defend an "absolute" statement you have made and cannot defend because there is no evidence to support it.
5. You will be a more friendly person to be with, more pleasurable.
6. You will develop better relationships.

I must say, in finishing this article, that none of what I have set forth herein is ABSOLUTE. See if you think you are an "exception" to the rule.

###

ABSOLUTES

By Gary L. Richardson, noted trial lawyer and author of *Black Robe Fever*, *Fear Is Never Our Friend*, and *Thank God They Ate the Apple*.

www.garyrichardsonspeaks.com

How dangerous and destructive is the habit of using "absolutes" in everyday conversation? Have you ever thought of this? Do you hear yourself using absolutes? If so, you most probably are steering your relationships and reputation down an unpleasant rocky road.

A few years ago, totally by accident and without initially realizing it, I became a mentor to a young man. Over the last five years I have mentored a few other people. In doing so, I came to recognize one common thread when my mentees talked about conflict with a person close to them (sometimes it was a spouse; other times it was a fellow employee, employer, and/or a friend). When one of my mentees related a conversation he/she had that led to a conflict, the "common thread" stuck out like a sore thumb. It was the frequent use of "absolutes."

I also learned that those that I have mentored who had a penchant for using "absolutes" in their conversations were quite oblivious to the fact.

Many of us have heard counselors stress that we should not use absolutes in our conversations – words such as "always," "never," and the like. However, until I started mentoring, the frequency with which some people use absolutes and the damage that practice often causes in relationships had never before become so obvious to me.

Here are a few examples of what I am talking about when I speak of absolutes:

- "You never pick your shoes up off the floor," rather than saying, "I have noticed that quite often you don't pick your shoes up off the floor," which, by-the-way, is probably more accurate.
- "Those referees always get that wrong," rather than saying, "Those referees often get that wrong."

Question: Which sounds like a friendlier and less tension-filled conversation style?

The problem is, if people have the habit of using absolutes, they usually don't restrict that usage to only certain types of conversation but will use absolutes in talking with everyone, including those closest to them.

There is a high price to pay for this style of communication. To prove it to yourself, just notice as you are with others what their conversation style is and see how it affects you.

One young man recently asked if I would mentor him. I responded by asking if he was sure he wanted that. He inquired why I would ask him such a thing, and I said that it could become quite painful. I further explained that he had a style of communication that simply did, at times, drive me "up the wall." Upon further discussion I explained that the source of my annoyance was his unbelievable use of absolutes in his conversation style and that for every 100 statements he made that contained an absolute, there was, in fact, maybe one that actually might be an absolute.

I then shared with him three statements he had made in the thirty minutes or so that we had been visiting that contained an absolute. None, of course, actually was an absolute. He freely agreed that I was correct.

So, during our mentoring sessions, not using absolutes became largely what we worked on, and within less than a year later, this young man could give testimony to the great change that accomplishment has made in his life when it comes to relationships. Furthermore, when he and I visit today if he does use an absolute, he immediately corrects himself.

Next, I want to talk about what the use of absolutes does when utilized in a conversation style.

What absolutes do is build walls with those we communicate with; cause the loss of at least a degree of integrity and credibility (we all know there aren't many absolutes); often create arguments and challenges; and is not nearly as friendly a style of communicating as when absolutes are avoided in a conversation.

What I have found to be most often the case with someone who uses absolutes in conversation is that the person is insecure and using absolutes enhances his or her odds of getting attention.

We probably have all heard the comment, "Insult me; just don't ignore me." That is what I am talking about. A person that laces his/her conversations with absolutes does quite often attract attention from someone in the group that takes issue with the statement that includes the absolute. Ah, attention!!!! This is what I found to be the most frequent conclusion with those I have mentored that use absolutes and that is that they get attention. They have found it to be a way to keep from being ignored in group settings. Forget the fact that they most often receive negative responses; they find negative reaction to be better than being ignored.

Also, I want to emphasize what using absolutes does to destroy confidence in the "absolute-user" among those who are around him/her on a frequent basis. Simple. It causes others to recognize that much of what the person says is just absolutely wrong, over-stated, and not accurate. This then causes the question to arise as to what else is it that the "absolute-user" says that is not accurate. Sure, it is often passed off as "well, that is just the way the person is." That's the point!!!

I challenge you to become aware of your use of absolutes, and as you do, work on voiding your conversations of absolutes and see how much more friendly and enjoyable you find yourself being with others. I promise you will like yourself better. Guaranteed!!!

What will it do for you if you void your conversation of absolutes, 99 percent of which aren't absolutes to begin with, just stated as such? Here are some real possibilities:

1. You no longer will leave the impression with others who don't know you that you think you know everything.
2. It will stop so much negative feedback/response.
3. You will start on your road to recovering integrity.
4. You will no longer place yourself in a position of having to defend an "absolute" statement you have made and cannot defend because there is no evidence to support it.
5. You will be a more friendly person to be with, more pleasurable.
6. You will develop better relationships.

I must say, in finishing this article, that none of what I have set forth herein is ABSOLUTE. See if you think you are an "exception" to the rule.

###