



DISPENSE NO ADVICE



BY LORI WALD
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STEP 1

Listen closely, then repeat the speaker's words doling out every syllable with a simple and elegant cadence. Repeat what they have just said to you as if it is undoubtedly and indubitably true, as if the speaker's experience was justified and the only rational reaction possible. To be honest^[1], had you been in their shoes, you would have experienced the same outrage or humiliation or terror or anger they experienced.

STEP 2

Do not look at your watch or check your phone even if you suddenly realize there are people biologically related to you who were expecting you to take care of that thing you said you would take care of yesterday. A few more minutes will not make any difference. Probably.



STEP 3

(A) Exhibit patience. Timing is crucial. Wait for the look of surprise and relief and delight.

Although it seems unbelievable they have never before encountered this, you are their first ambassador to the land of acceptance and validation.^[2] This part is the easiest part when you are in no way to blame for this situation. If there is no possibility this was your fault, proceed to Step 4.

(B) If you feel that familiar prickle that starts around your ears and then quickly travels to your cheeks,^[3] it is possible what has happened is because of something you've done or something the speaker thinks you have done.

STEP 4

Recognize that it is impossible to understand what is going on in anyone else's mind. Do not assume you know all the facts or any of the facts.^[4] Best now to take a long drink from your water bottle and if necessary, pretend it has gone down the wrong way.

STEP 5

Relax with the alarm that arises within you as your own thoughts begin to yank you around. When you could not swallow food or find any sleep and your heart beat so loudly you had to press your chest against the squish of the mattress so it would not pound out of your chest, you too sought wisdom to dissolve the stone of grief and anger and extinguish the anguish. Trust the stillness deep within you and know that fear and denial will not serve you.

STEP 6

Try to laugh with her as she tells you about the preposterous phone call she received early that morning. Some lunatic accusing her husband of having an affair with his wife. The evidence was paltry. Hundreds of text messages between her husband and his wife. Obviously^[5], there was no affair since her husband had frequently mentioned the woman he worked with at the bank. They had a working relationship. DO NOT COMMENT! The man on the phone thought she was missing the point. Your job is to assure her to trust her instincts. Or don't trust them. Most importantly, dispense no advice.^[6]

STEP 7

The less you say and the more you nod, the better. Do not suggest she unite her inner



knowledge with her outward life, allow her life to blister apart and let all that is familiar and comfortable become unfamiliar and painful. Tell her she is sweet, a good wife.

HELPFUL THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

1. If you do this during your appointment with a dental hygienist, you will receive much more information than you are comfortable hearing about your hygienist's irreconcilable differences with her hormone levels and a detailed description of inconsistent menstrual cycles and hot flashes.
2. If you try this with a married man, he will assume you are a little in love with him.
3. Should you use this method with your husband's children, they will talk to you all night long until you think you will scream. They will also wish their actual mother could listen as patiently as you— which in the end will cause them to hate you.
4. Do not attempt this with your husband's girlfriend.^[7]
5. *When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time, Maya Angelou.*

[1] As if honesty had anything at all to do with this.

[2] This does not mean you believe the story. It does not mean you have no opinion about why the experience is a result of something stupid, political or ridiculous.

[3] Symptomatic of dealing with a catastrophe junkie, those angsty people who thrive on chaos.

[4] Always remember, everyone is lying.

[5] Observing the obvious is not for amateurs.

[6] Seriously, you have no business giving advice to anyone on anything.

[7] Do not give her your evil eye bracelet to protect her from the bad juju. You're going to need it.



Lori Wald believes that sitting in stillness and not accomplishing a single thing accomplishes quite a bit. As a lawyer, she believes meditation is more effective than mediation. When she's not sitting still with her eyes closed, you can find her showing achievement-addicted worrywarts how to stop and do nothing. You can read more of her thoughts on meditation and other matters at IntentionalLawyer.com. Lori has a memoir-in-progress and has been published in *Lilith*, *Ruminate*, *Lumina*, the *Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Journal* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

You can read her musings on meditation at nothingdoingdaily.com.

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