



Cornhusker Economics

Disagreements and Proper Respect in Farm/Ranch Succession

I received a phone call last fall from a farmer that had a disagreement with his sister over the estate plan that their parents implemented. The parents felt that the son, who farmed with them for several decades, should get credit for his sweat equity and divided the farm accordingly. Sister thought that everything should be equal. In this case, the disagreement was going to likely end up in court.

This is just one of countless stories that have been shared highlighting one of the main problems with farm/ranch estate planning. The main problem is good communication to let the succeeding generation know that there are plans and to let them know what those plans are.

Not keeping all parties up-to-date with the plans leads to this disagreement because of lack of trust. It turns out to be a form of disrespect.

How can we identify disrespect in our family? Jennifer Gill Rosier, PhD (The Family Coach) presented five ways family members can show disrespect (Salomon, 2014).

- **Disgracing.** Criticizing or insulting others by name calling, shaming, or attacks on a person's character.
- **Dramatizing.** Using absolute language such as "always," "never," "all," "none," etc. to describe family members in a negative way. Such as "you never did care about me;" "you never listen to me;" "you always boss me around;" and "you will always be a loser;" etc.
- **Dictating.** Giving orders or commands to other family members that place an individual on top in hierarchy over them.

- **Disregarding.** Ignoring or rejecting other family members' comments, feelings, or interests.
- **Dominating.** Controlling the conversation by inhibiting others' involvement by interrupting, talking over, or simply overpowering the conversation. Or dictating how others should feel, think, etc.

It is important to note that there is an important distinction between rude, disrespectful actions and bullying and harassment. Where disrespectful or rude comments become physical or become blatant personal attacks, that must be addressed and not ignored. It is also OK to realize that sometimes you need to put your foot down and make it known that you won't accept rude comments or behavior. Harassment or bullying is never OK from anyone, even family members.

Do you remember the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you?" Consider the possible long-term ramifications of your reactions. Controlling how we react towards someone who is being disrespectful can help us stay in control while helping to break the cycle.

We can choose to help diffuse a situation or make it worse. While we may not be able to change the other person's behavior or attitude, we can at least walk away knowing we didn't contribute to or spread the negativity. First, don't personalize the negativity. While the other person may try to make it all about you, remember, it's about them, not you. This can help remove a big weight from your shoulders as you try to address what is really going on.

Sometimes simply ignoring the comments can be an effective strategy. Avoid dropping to their level or engaging in their negativity. Other times you may need to engage a person who is acting disrespectful.

You may still need an appropriate response to help diffuse the situation and keep you from getting sucked into the negativity. We find some responses that may be helpful at PowerofPosivity.com. Choosing to show kindness in the face of negativity can be very powerful by addressing disrespectful comments without lashing back. In addition, it can help to diffuse an otherwise heated situation. For example, you could respond with:

- **Thank you.** Combating rudeness with kindness can go a long way. Saying “Thank you” acknowledges the person’s rudeness while letting them know you won’t allow it to affect you. It also reflects your maturity. You didn’t get angry or ignore them.
- **I appreciate your perspective.** This may surprise them as you acknowledge their comment but wish to communicate in an adult manner. Further rude comments from the other person only reinforce the lack of self-confidence in themselves as they try to bring you down.
- **I love myself and I love you too.** While perhaps not appropriate in all settings, when dealing with family members expressions of love and compassion can help remind everyone who they are talking to.

You may find that you are the one being disrespectful. There are several strategies to help us turn our own disrespectful comments around:

- **Encourage.** Build up family members by making positive comments. Honor them with words.
- **Deal with situations as they come.** Avoid using absolute words such as “always” and “never.” Rather, deal with each situation as it comes up.
- **Invest in your family.** Make chores and other duties a family project, including everyone, especially yourself.
- **Honor your family members with your attention.** Turn off the TV or video game and focus on family time.
- **Include everyone.** Take time to listen and look each person in the eye in conversation.
- **Get curious.** Take time to understand each person’s feelings, thoughts, and desires and consider them when making plans.

Article adapted from: **Does Disrespect Have a Place in Your Ag Legacy?**

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