

The Three Most Powerful Letters -A-N-D-

By Shelley A.W. Roy

We are surrounded by people whose minds are stuck in the linear, mechanical thinking of Descartes. This thinking is easily captured by two words: OR and BUT. Our use of these two words polarizes our thoughts; we engage in black and white thinking in which we are unable to recognize the power of AND thinking.



I had held tightly to the dream of independence for many years. Whenever I would bring up the subject with others, they would say, “You need to be the mother you have always wanted to be.” OR “You can take the job.” It didn’t occur to many other people that because the brain is a very powerful instrument, when it is faced with a complex question, it keeps working on the question until a solution appears. The problem was that those around me and I were asking the wrong question. We were asking which one of the two paths I should choose, when the real question was, “Can I find a new path on which I can be the mother I had always wanted to be AND take advantage of the job opportunity of my dreams.” I am not alone in asking the wrong question or engaging in either/or thinking. Throughout our lives we get stuck in OR thinking when shifting to AND opens up new doors and includes the added bonus of creating less stress in our lives.



This idea is priceless when it comes to relationships. A famous quote states, “You can either be right or be in a relationship”. Perhaps there are times when you can be right AND be in a relationship. There is a way to talk with those with whom we are in personal and professional relationship that allows us to be both. The real problem is that we want the other person to bend to our opinion or vision of what is true. What we need to remember is simple, that our truth may not be their truth. A good friend of mine often says to me, “I agree, but that doesn’t



make us right.” Pairing these two ideas can offer us a relationships guide for communicating with others and being right. We must remember that “rightness” and “truths” are always personal. We can then be right AND be in a relationship when we remember to use those three powerful letters, –A-N-D-. Our communication might sound something like this, “I understand that’s what you believe, AND are you interested in what I believe?”

Did you catch the communication shift in that example? I used the word AND instead of using BUT. When we here the word “but,” we catch our breath. We have learned to recognize that the first part of the statement or question is probably going to be negated by the second half. In a great scene in the movie *Holiday*, Cameron Diaz is talking to Jude Law. She is going on and on about how their relationship may play out in the future, painting a very bleak picture. The entire time, Jude and the audience are holding their breath waiting for the BUT, hoping that she will say something to negate everything she has just said, hoping for a vision of happily ever after. When the BUT does come, it isn’t what everyone is hoping for. She suggests they just walk away from each other. BUT is a classic breath holder. It has become the way we deliver unkind words, voice an opinion that opposes someone else's, or twist what has been said. If we can replace it with AND, we won’t be holding our breath. We will be waiting in anticipation of what more is coming. That was a great report, AND I’d like to know more about your projections for the future. Wow! “That dress looks wonderful on you, but it would be better if it were green.” can be replaced with a WOW! “ That dress looks wonderful on you, AND it would be even greater in green.”

The next time you catch yourself in the black and white thinking of OR and BUT, see if you can replace that thinking with AND. The word AND is filled with anticipation, speculation and creativity.