

FERRIS BLOG: FEEDING THE FLAME

Say something.

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." –Eleanor Roosevelt

Where do you want to go to lunch? I don't care. What movie should we see? You choose. When should we meet? I'll leave it up to you. How do you want to divide this up? You tell me.

Most people have a friend who rarely speaks up. The dialogue above is one you have quite frequently with this friend and frankly, you thought I was inside your head for a minute. It seems that regardless of the topic of discussion, this friend simply does not have an opinion. You see them as easy going, agreeable and cooperative.

If you can't think of anybody in your life who is like this, I'm going to go out on a limb here and say you are probably the voiceless friend in your circle!

Now, before anybody gets agitated and feels the need to point out that it isn't necessarily a bad thing to allow others to make decisions when it *really, honestly* doesn't matter to you, let's take a pause.

Get this, I AGREE. Questions about what restaurant you want to go to or what you want on your pizza aren't exactly reason to get on a soapbox and tell the world why you think Olive Garden is way better than Applebee's. Why rock the boat when you are just as happy with either?

I need one more little pause to slightly amend my previous statement- I agree, *most of the time*.

Speaking up does not have to be done for the sole purpose of "winning". Sometimes using your voice is simply an exercise in advocating for yourself so you are prepared to do so in other, more important situations. Maybe the mere act of you throwing your opinion in the ring gives someone else the confidence to speak up.

For example, where do we learn to trust our opinions are worth contributing? Where do we learn to negotiate? If you believe you are a fantastic negotiator, take a minute to think about how you acquired that ability. I bet you can think of at least one or two people who exemplified that skill and encouraged you to do so as well. Be that positive example for someone else.

My mom was my best advocate in all things as I was growing up. She always fought for me and stood behind me, or in front of me, when it mattered. To this day I go by my given first name rather than a common nickname associated with my name. You see, my name is Cynthia. Many people would automatically shorten that to Cindy without asking if that is what I prefer– but my mom wouldn't have it.

I distinctly remember sitting in the waiting room at my doctor's office and having a nurse come out and call for "Cindy". My mom would grab my arm and tell me not to get up – my name was NOT Cindy. After the nurse called for Cindy a couple more times and was looking around confused, my mom would say, "Do you mean Cynthia?" As I got older, I remember being a little more than slightly embarrassed whenever this happened.

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However, now that I am older and still go by Cynthia, I am so proud of my mom for fighting to keep my name my own. She spoke up. She let people know that it mattered – that I mattered. She gave me the confidence to speak up and gently let people know that Cynthia is my name, not Cindy, regardless of who that person is.

Say something. Trust your voice. Be confident that your ideas and opinions are just as valid as anyone else's. Realize that speaking up doesn't mean fighting or confronting. Learn to express yourself politely, professionally and confidently. It is a skill that will take you far.

Find your voice. Put it to work for you. Watch what happens.

Blog follow up Facebook post:

Top 5 ways to find your voice.

1. Believe you are worth listening to
2. Know your audience
3. Practice with small things first
4. Choose your person
5. Listen. Two ears. One mouth.