

ARE YOU KILLING YOUR ECC **SOFTLY**?

Why language matters, and why silence is never neutral.

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MEET YOUR PRESENTER

- 10+ years in 9-1-1, CTO, Training Team Lead
- Former Traveling Dispatcher, Now Forever 911 Advocate
- Public Speaker, Instructor, Keynote Speaker
- ECC Engagement Lead, ThisGen 911
- Former Chair, APCO International's Editorial Committee

...and a certified sour gummy worm addict.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Three things you'll walk out with.

01

RECOGNIZE

How language impacts team dynamics, performance, and morale in the ECC.

02

REFRAME

Use positive language to strengthen ECC relationships and effectiveness.

03

APPLY

Proactive techniques for clear, constructive, outcome-driven messaging.

**THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY
TO COMMUNICATE.**

**AND IT DOESN'T START
WITH YOUR WORDS.**



BEFORE YOU SPEAK

What do people see when they see you coming?



Your presence arrives first.

When you enter a room, what feelings does your presence bring to the people in that room?



They're reading you either way.

Does your body language say that you hate what you do — or hate where you do it?

PERCEPTION

**Perception isn't always reality.
But body language tells a convincing story.**

*What kind of day are you giving yourself with
your attitude?*

**Remember: You are more the thermostat
than the thermometer...than you know!**

**The behaviors you do in
“moderation,” your newest
employees will do in excess.**

QUICK ACTIVITY

Know Your Audience

A tale of little white boxes

- **Are the words you're saying relevant** to the person you're speaking to? What about the people around you?
- **We all make assumptions** about people based on a few visible details — before you can choose the right words, you need to know who's really on the other side of them.
- **Let's put that to the test.** Here's a mystery audience member.

GUESS THE AUDIENCE

Who is this audience member?

Read the clues — who do you think we're describing?

1 Born in England in the late 1940s

3 Famous for decades and known around the world

5 Practically British royalty

7 Extremely wealthy, with rather impressive homes

2 An influential, instantly recognizable British public figure

4 Married twice

6 At the center of some very public controversies

8 Has faced health issues that drew significant public attention



THE ANSWER

King Charles III

King of the United Kingdom

Every clue on the last slide was true — for this audience.



ACTUALLY...

Elton John

Legendary British singer, composer, and pianist

Same clues. They all fit perfectly.



OR...

Ozzy Osbourne

Late rock 'n' roll legend, godfather of heavy metal

Same clues. Three completely different people.

So — who are you talking to?

Who are you sitting next to?

Who are you in the trenches with?

Who are you training?

SECTION A

The impact of language in the ECC



A. IMPACT OF LANGUAGE

Words do the work before people do.

- Word choice affects team morale and performance.
- Ask yourself: **do your words inspire work to happen, people to perform, calls to be answered?**
- There's a difference between sounding merely present and caffeinated, and sounding **cheerful and ready to work.**
- Words shape perception — are you creating a **positive atmosphere**, or just a passive one?

Authenticity is key, not word play. Are you faking it until you make it — or do you really want to make today a great day?

A. LANGUAGE & RELATIONSHIPS

Your audience isn't just the public.

- **Careless language creates conflict and stress** inside the team.
- Every word must matter — make sure none go to waste in supporting teammates and building working relationships.
- Understanding your team's communication styles, personalities, and challenges is **crucial**.

YOUR REAL AUDIENCE

Team members

Trainees

Supervisors

Admin

Fellow first responders

A. NEGATIVE LANGUAGE HABITS

Every word leaves a mark.

- Our words infuse emotion into the workplace — they tear down barriers or **erect walls**.
- Words set the tone whether we realize it or not — so start being mindful of what you say.
- Every word leaves a mark — **on the speaker and the hearer**.
- Tone, delivery, and attitude. That's the whole package.

**Not every mark is a badge
of honor.**

A. PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Resiliency training was never designed to offset the toxicity of a psychologically unsafe environment.



DECISION MAKERS

If our words set the tone, what message are supervisors, managers, and decision makers sending about mental health?



TRAINERS

Are you practicing what you preach?



TEAM MEMBERS

Does the language you use in your ECC support and bolster mental wellbeing?

SECTION B

Reframing challenges through positive language



B. REFRAMING

Trade problem-focus for solution-focus.

- The power of reframing: **shift from the problem to the fix.**
- Mind what you say, even when giving constructive criticism or corrective guidance.
- It's what you say — but also **how you deliver it.**
- Consider what motivates the person you're correcting, and what language will resonate with them.

Not everyone responds the same way. Some need direct feedback. Others need a more supportive approach.

B. LANGUAGE & PERCEPTION

What you say can become their reality.

- The words we use may only reflect how **we** see a situation — that doesn't make it truth.
- If you're a trainer, supervisor, or anyone with influence in your center, **what you say can become reality for your team.**
- Sometimes the details are in the big picture — personality tests and demographics don't always show it.

You don't know the whole story until you know the whole story.

B. DESTRUCTIVE PATTERNS

Scold in private. *Praise in public.



Public criticism, dismissiveness, and sarcasm erode trust.



The language you use publicly is the language you endorse others using around you.



Silence is about as loud an endorsement of negative language as writing it into policy.

SECTION C

Problematic phrases — and better alternatives



C. SWAP THE SCRIPT

Five phrases to retire today.

INSTEAD OF...

“That's not my job.”

“We've always done it this way.”

“I don't have time to explain it.”

“You should already know this.”

“Figure it out.”

TRY THIS...

→ **“This might not be something I'm trained for, but I'm willing to be a team player and learn.”**

→ **“I understand we're used to one way — let's explore if there's a better approach.”**

→ **“Let's go over this quickly so you're set up for success.”**

→ **“We may have gone over this, but I'm happy to review it with you.”**

→ **“I want you to grow comfortable applying what you're learning — I can guide you if you need help.”**

SECTION D

Proactive communication



D. PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION

Fair, clear, and consistent — not identical.

- Ensure clarity and consistency in messaging.
- Fair, clear, and consistent doesn't mean communicating with everyone in the **exact same manner**.
- Make sure a shared message reaches everyone fully — through policy or an in-service.
- Account for generational and cultural differences in communication preferences.

There's more than one way to communicate. And it doesn't start with your words.

D. INCLUSIVE & SUPPORTIVE LANGUAGE

Words infuse emotion — even pain.

- How you deliver the message matters as much as the message itself.
- Communicate a message of **unity and community** through your words.
- A psychologically safe workplace depends on language that supports a culturally aware, inclusive environment — as diverse as the communities we serve.

**Choose yours with
care.**

D. ADDRESSING CONFLICT

Silence is the loudest mistake.

01

**Never ignore or
downplay conflict.**

02

**Silence in the
moments we most
need to say something
is just as destructive.**

03

**Encourage respect and
understanding in every
professional
interaction.**

D. THINK BEFORE YOU SAY IT

Five questions before you correct anyone.

- 1 Is it relevant to the job?
- 2 Did you observe it yourself — or is it documented?
- 3 Is it something they have control of?
- 4 Can they change it in the moment, or within the next hour?
- 5 Does it fall under policy or procedure?

If the answer is no, ask yourself why you're saying it at all.

Use your words to tear down barriers
and the things that divide us —
not to tear down people.



THANK YOU!

Let's bring more training like this to your center —
in person or virtually.



Stalk me on LinkedIn (*BEFORE I STALK YOU!*)

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