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Go Ahead And Try It: A Little More Tenderness

The last Friday of 2012 found me listening to the *Afternoon Shift,* a program produced by Chicago's WBEZ Public Radio station. In his wonderful voice, the host Rick Kogan was discussing New Year's resolutions and how people tend to make them. Needing all the help I could get along those lines, I turned up the volume.

The truth is that I'm a horrible resolution maker. Most of mine don't stick, including those perennial pledges to "Get Skinny" and "Get Rich." (Alas, I like to eat and shop just a little too much, and most of my associates will tell you that I've never met a casino I don't like.) But back to the *Afternoon Shift*…

Kogan detailed how he had gone about selecting his own 2013 resolutions and referenced several outside sources he used for inspiration. One of those ideas grabbed my attention: "Try," as Otis Redding advised in the old Jimmy Campbell and Reg Connelly song, "a little tenderness." Bingo! I had *my* resolution!

I may never achieve my desired weight or bank balance, but I'm confident I can be nice (or nicer) to everyone in my life—*from a personal, as well as a professional standpoint*. Interestingly, many people don't realize how empowering the right kind of tenderness can be for those on the receiving end, even when it's extended in the workplace. I do.

Several years ago, I sat in a room surrounded by a number of successful publishing executives who were vigorously interviewing me for a magazine job—*a position for which I admittedly had neither training nor experience* . In retrospect, I still don't know how I got to that interview. Recently divorced after 25 years of marriage, my life was in shreds. I'd been floating from one dead-end job to another for the past two years, and my self-esteem (all of it) was long gone.

Having convinced myself that I didn't have the slightest shot at being hired as an editor, I was eager to creep out of the building and start my long, dismal drive home. Just as the session appeared to be wrapping up, however, one of the men in the room stepped forward to say he had a final question for me (according to him, "the most important question of all"): "What's your favorite Elvis song?"

All I could think of was "Love Me Tender." It must have struck a chord with my interviewers. I later learned it was their policy to ask the same "most important" question of every applicant they grilled, but nobody had ever answered it the way I did. Long story short, I got the job. Furthermore, during the years I worked for the company, I was treated with a great deal of tenderness (i.,e., nurtured, supported and respected). That, in turn, helped me grow professionally and eventually led me here.

Perhaps it's just my way of paying it forward: In 2013, I resolve to call on my better angels more regularly than last year, and to ensure that the "T-word" is a bigger influence in my life. I encourage you to give it a try as well. With all the bad, sad, mean-spirited things our country has seen of late, and all the ugly words we've been hearing, more than a little tenderness is certainly in order. **LMT**

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Here's Wishing Everyone An Awesome 2013!