

A Courageous Friend

By Pam Schaffner, PA Key ERS Assessor

Today you woke up and just knew it would be a great day. The earth had been warmed by the sun and you couldn't wait to show off your new spring wardrobe to your co-workers. After all you had lost ten pounds over winter and today, a nice spring day, was perfect timing for the gorgeous new jeans that showed off your new figure.

After showering at seven in the morning, you decide to walk to work, a two mile journey. You were quite familiar with the route as you run those miles a few times per week. On the way you stop at a little coffee shop and order yourself a skinny latte. Your pace slows as you savor each sip of the treat you allow yourself once per week. As you walk several people pass you as they hurry off to work along the crowded street. Some notice you as they go and others keep focus on getting to their destination. What is strange is that those who notice you let their stare linger on you longer than you are used to experiencing. "It must be the way I look today," you think. After all, your new jeans are great; you paid more for them than the everyday average pair of jeans

You enter the child care center where you work and say hello to each co-worker as you pass them on the way to your classroom. Interactions begin immediately as the children eagerly await you. Today, even the children look at you differently- are they noticing the new you? You have a good morning, but you are anxiously awaiting lunch. An old college friend is meeting you in town to reconnect after you lost touch years ago. She had been your best friend for several years and you are very excited to reconnect with her.

Lunch time, thankfully, came quickly and you left work to meet your old friend. When you entered the restaurant she immediately took notice of your figure and clothes reporting you look great. But after sitting down together, she demonstrates how great of a friend she really is. She leans towards you and whispers, "your zipper is down."

Today you realized that your zipper had been down for several hours and so many people must have seen it. Those on the way to work were glaring at the openness of your pants rather than admiring your looks. What sheer embarrassment! How would you walk back into work? Your co-workers must have also noticed this fashion blunder.

Are you wondering? Why is it that so many people are afraid or unwilling to give you uncomfortable or critical feedback? Thankfully, you have such a good friend that can be honest with you despite the embarrassment and the setback.

Now, how does this story relate to having an Environment Rating Scale assessment? The ERS team is that best friend who wants you to always look and perform at your best.

Like the friend in the story, the ERS team first takes notice of your accomplishments and strengths (how good you look). Secondly, they take careful time to identify those areas that could be better; those downed zippers, if you will. Perhaps there are elements of quality that you have every intention of providing to the children. Perhaps these elements have not been developed to their full capacity or potential. After all, the person in this story never intended to go to work with a less than good look. The fashion blunder was not intended, but, a consequence of an oversight. You are more likely to be your best with a critical, yet helpful eye to enlighten you with better knowledge of your practices; someone who can oversee the entirety of your practices and give the feedback that will help you grow both as an individual and also in the greater context of the setting where you work.

Although most people do not want to be the one who tells you that your zipper is down, when someone does take that initiative we are SO thankful for their courage. So today, be thankful that you are a part of a quality initiative program that employs assessors that are your friendly critic.