

THE SET FREE LIFE

Gratefulness and Giving

This past weekend, I happened across “Tabatha’s Salon Takeover” on Bravo. For those of you who don’t know the premise of this show, Tabatha Coffey is a consultant invited by struggling beauty salon owners to assess their businesses and help turn things around.

There’s the usual drama resulting from overly-played strong personalities clashing with one another, and the dust-ups with staff who aren’t on board. The show I watched focused on Nikki, owner of a salon in Miami’s South Beach, whose beaten down, fearful workers performed with cameras trained on them all day.

I wondered why Nikki had even bothered to ask for help. She was a bitter, nasty woman who considered everyone who worked for her a slacker and a burden. Her ungrateful comments and constant naysaying over things she was receiving for free were appallingly rude. Tabatha fought a losing battle as she tried to explain through various means that people cannot work well when they are never given positive feedback and are consistently viewed as thieves of the owner’s goodwill. One employee spoke of Nikki demanding to see a death certificate when a family member died and time off was requested. Yes, you read that right. The woman was an absolute witch.

“I don’t need to be liked,” Nikki spat at her interviewer. “These people are here to do a job! Do I have to thank them for coming to work every day?”

Folks, I am the first to subscribe to the Be-Grateful-You-Have-A-Job lesson of life. An employer should not have to bless you every moment over what you agreed to do for money. Another acerbic consultant, Larry Winget (“The Pit-bull of Personal Development,”), puts it this way in the title of his book: *It’s Called Work for a Reason*.

This does not preclude, however, plain old common sense in nurturing good relationships. Must one act like Dickens’ Ebenezer Scrooge, demanding that employees beg for a holiday off to be with family? Even Ebenezer was reminded of the great difference between a miserly, emotionally

constipated supervisor and a good-hearted human being. As the Ghost of Christmas Past deliberately dismisses the simple generosity of Scrooge’s first boss, Fezziwig, Ebenezer (without realizing he should heed his own words) corrects the ghost’s observation: “He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.”

Good employees are a gift. Folks who want to come to work, who perform excellently, who have a great work ethic and take personal responsibility for a job well done are worth their weight in gold. Above all, the basic consideration of treating others as you wish to be treated, as *they* wish to be treated, is not some strange concept foreign to business. It makes for the best relationships at work and at home and everywhere else, and goes a long way when raises are not possible and even when, God forbid, one must tell a treasured employee he or she is losing a job.

Great managers know the talents of their employees—and are grateful for them, because they know how rare some talents are. They recognize the strengths of those they supervise and help them to work around weaknesses as much as possible so strengths can be developed. They also recognize when an employee is not a fit for a job and prevent the drain on others in the group. They see the value of the team as well as the value of the individual. Those who are on the way to becoming great managers figure out that if every single person under their employ is worthless, it’s their own fault for either being awful at hiring or terrible at managing (or both) and they seek out those who can help them become successful.



Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills as superior. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one’s work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees’ talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

Quick Links

[Tabatha’s Salon Takeover](#)

[Larry Winget](#)

[It’s Called Work for a Reason](#)

[Adopt-A-Greyhound](#)

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Thank your good employees for being the assets they are. Remind them of the present they give you every day when they offer you no trouble and, in fact, make your life easier by being good at what they do. This season should not be the only time you acknowledge their value, but it's a great excuse, so acknowledge as lavishly as you can, even if all you can afford are words.

In the end, Nikki was a hopeless case. If I had been her consultant, I would have advised her to help her workers find new jobs immediately and then close down the shop. She clearly didn't like her work, she didn't like her employees, and she told Tabatha more than once she was "done" with the hair business. Being done could have been *her* best gift to her staff—and to her dwindling clientele. ❧

Teddy Bear Says...



'Tis the season for noise! Carols, parties, delivery trucks (something about them makes me bark like mad), shouted greetings, shopping mall frenzy, family pandemonium, and more—there are some burdensome things about the holidays, in spite of how much we enjoy them, and noise may be one of the worst. Teddy Bear believes most humans do not even realize how the constant cacophony of one's daily world can be an unrecognized drain on mental and physical energy.

This is why my Christmas wish for you is a lovely dose of silence. Take everything down to the lowest decibel level possible and sit with it for a while. Resist the temptation to fill a silence with words, to respond when no response is necessary, to talk just for the sake of talking. Find out what a quiet house sounds like by enjoying your morning cup of coffee without the television or radio. You don't have to institute a total ban on noise; just give yourself a few minutes of stillness before you head out into the turbulence of vibrations that set your ear ossicles into sustained frenzy.

All of us are regularly assaulted by noise, and some of it our brains mute in a neuro-physiological miracle that allows us to function in a loud environment. A lot of noise is not considered an assault at all, and may be

Quotable

To be doing every day what you enjoy doing is rare. Rarer still is to be doing what you were meant to do, particularly if you got there by sheer serendipity. Until near 30, I'd fully expected to spend my life as a doctor. My present life was never planned or even imagined. An intern at *The New Republic* once asked me how to become a nationally syndicated columnist. "Well," I replied, "first you go to medical school . . ."

Charles Krauthammer in *The Washington Post*, 12/18/09

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welcome: the glory of an exuberant choir, the delight of children on a playground, the fun of a favorite musician's concert. But even the good stuff has its consequences: we are a society experiencing too early the annoyance of tinnitus and hearing loss. The phantom ringing, buzzing, and hissing that never, ever goes away and for which there is no cure has already afflicted many Baby Boomers. Now, as several generations of humans have cranked up their iPods to blast through earbuds loud enough for bystanders to notice, we can be assured that the hearing aid industry will always be hiring.

Dogs' listening apparatus is so acute that we can leap out of a deep slumber at the far distant sound of those hateful UPS trucks and be ready to attack, and we enjoy the explosion of dog communication as we assail one another with our "arfs" and "woofs." But you've probably noticed that we can tune it out in an instant and curl up for a snooze. We recognize the value of shutting down for a while, and it's all the better done in a quiet place. You may have also noticed that when you need us, we are there to fellowship without words, and you are none the worse for it; in fact, silent companionship has many advantages and can be quite healing.

Noise is one of those things to which few pay serious attention but which often has profound consequences. We simply do not realize how taxed the body can become, how overloaded the mind can feel, from the constant, consistent, never-ending flow of irrelevant auditory information. For a real sound fast, nap with some earplugs. I recommend [these](#), which carry a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) of 26, meaning they block out 26 decibels of noise. Drift off to sleep with only your heartbeat-swoosh in your ears and give your malleus, incus, and stapes a nice rest (those are the bones of the middle ear, in case you hadn't guessed).

Silent night, everyone. 🐾