

THE SET FREE LIFE

Surrender to Survive

Recently, my little dog had yearly dental work, and she lost four teeth in the process. She's had teeth extracted in the past, some before coming to live with us, and she is very nearly toothless in the front. I was assured the front teeth had to be removed to keep the chewing teeth intact, and while I wasn't sure I understood the strategy, I took the vet's word for it, and thought to myself that I'd probably prefer being able to chew over being able to bite if I had to choose between the two.

Sometimes we simply must put things in perspective to see we're not so bad off. Maybe we aren't going to escape the effects of an economic downturn. It's possible we *will* be affected by mismanagement at our companies, or the nefarious dealings of a psycho coworker. We might have to dip into our IRAs to keep afloat while we look for a job, sell (or lose) the house, move in with relatives. The expectation we had last year of where we'd be today hasn't been fulfilled, and now we're faced with doing something we don't really want to do. We have to manage an illness, weather a difficult stretch in the marriage, or help aging parents when we're barely able to keep our own heads above water. If we don't have some sort of perspective for these situations, they can pull us under like a riptide.

Interesting stuff about riptides: when people are ensnared by one, the first instinct is to fight the current, which quickly exhausts victims and that's why they drown—not because, as you might think, the tide pulled them under. That fight for survival wears a person out, and resources are depleted. Energy is sapped. Hope is extinguished. But every survival expert will tell you two things: don't fight the current, and don't try to swim toward the shore.

Aren't those just the most counterintuitive instructions you've ever heard? You're trying to save yourself. Safety is *there*, on the shore! The only way you can get to that shore is to *fight that current!*

The truth about rip currents, though, is they are often quite narrow—rarely greater than a hundred feet wide. Because they *feel* so powerful, our fear gives birth to panic, and panic leads to the attempt to break free by doing all the wrong things. The way out of a riptide is to swim *parallel* to shore even as the tide pulls one farther away. The goal is to sidestep

the current—to swim to its edge and slip out—so even as it exerts its pull away from shore, the trick is to relax and swim sideways. In fact, if you can't swim sideways out of the riptide, the very best thing to do is roll over on your back and let that current drag you away from shore until you're beyond its pull, because the tide doesn't go on forever; it will string out and leave you in calm waters. **In order to survive, you must surrender.**

I have found that in the riptide of life events, I must be The Queen of Perspective. I keep a level head by reminding myself of how much worse my situation could be. I surrender to the event and retain my energy, sometimes even inspire it, by contrasting what I'm going through with what could be. I look at what I might not have considered prior to the event and what I'm learning as a result (“I didn't know I would love eating only vegetables!”). I hold up a huge event against my comparatively little one (“This is not thermonuclear war”). I decide to survive, and frequently become very determined to thrive, so I have to find my happy place.

I can't stay in gloom, despair, and misery for too long before it begins to affect me physically. No surprise there, but everyone's personality is different, and we all know people who seem to *prefer* to stay in the dark place. They'll find *something* about which to complain, no matter how inconsequential. It's as though they've decided agony is their lot and they'll fight for the right to remain in it, or they will twist themselves into a knot manipulating and cajoling others to make their miserable lives better, thus driving people away.

Forget that! I've got to find my own happy place. Some things can't be resolved right now, or next week, or ever, so you have to thank God for the outcome you've got and go with it. My terrier may not now be able to bite other dogs to show she's in charge (good!), but she can still eat her crunchies. Life is good. Teeth are expendable. Joy is not! Put it in perspective. Surrender. Survive. ☺



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. 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

Adopt-A-Greyhound

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Sierra on

The Excellent Life

Hello, world!! Sierra here!!! I want to tell you about EXCLAMATION POINTS because they are SO IMPORTANT. I use them all the time!!!! In fact, I'm using them RIGHT NOW!!!!!!!

The thing is, I use TOO MANY OF THEM. Oh, my goodness!!!! I know it but I can't stop myself!!

But if you want to write a good business letter or a professional, businesslike email, you MUST NOT use more than ONE EXCLAMATION POINT at the end of a sentence. It's not necessary, it looks unprofessional, and people will think you are a wild, crazy, ridiculous little BEDLINGTON TERRIER like ME!!!! And you don't want to ruin your professional reputation because you couldn't control your instincts. I mean, after all—you're not a dog!!! You can control yourself!!

So remember—you don't want to look silly or juvenile, so only use ONE exclamation point to show excitement or fun. Any more than that gives the impression you're a mutt! Whoops!!! I mean a NUT!!!!!!!

And the New Business Name Is . . .

I can't tell you how many times I've listened to people struggle with the name of my business. "What's Set Life Free?" they'll ask. They glance at a nametag and say, "Hello, Sue from Free Life! Uh . . . Set Free Seminars . . . er . . ."

When I began speaking professionally several years ago, I wanted a name that evoked being set free from things that hold us back—a poor self image, a lack of appreciation for our talents, the inability to understand different personalities, the struggles new managers have to look and act like leaders. Having been a workshop and seminar speaker, I envisioned the height of success as holding my own seminars. Anyway, I had to have some kind of name, and I felt like "Sue Thompson Consulting" just wasn't enough.

Since then, I've expanded what I offer and have rethought what I can provide, and I'm constantly inventing and reinventing anyway. The bottom line is that whatever it is I speak about, offer insights into, am consulted regarding, and encourage with coaching, I'm all about seeing that people find their way to being not simply adequate, but *exceptional*.

Thus, my new business name: Exceptionality. Much is conveyed in a name, and I hope this gives rise to a sense of fun and uniqueness. Exceptionality LLC is now official and you will be seeing the change in my August / September newsletter, now to be called "Be Exceptional," and soon on the web.

Quotable

Careers ebb and flow and opportunities change.

Marisa Tomei

Happiness lies in the absorption in some vocation which satisfies the soul.

Dr. William Osler

Contact Sue today to learn how she can meet your business needs

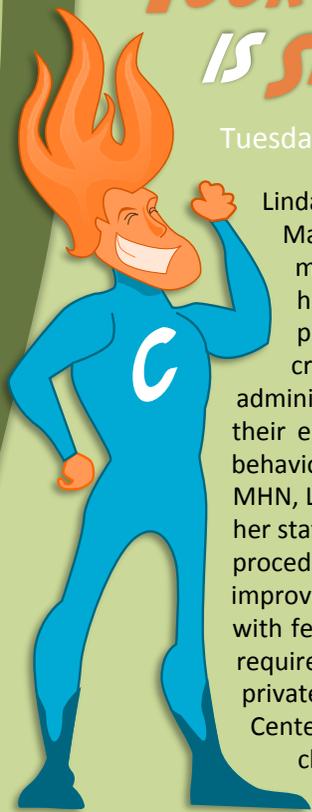
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While you will still be able to get to me via my current website URLs and the emails I've been using for years, from this point on I'll be giving out my new website address: www.BeExceptional.biz, and a new email address will be Sue@BeExceptional.biz. Again, no need to change your address books because I'm still reachable through all previous monikers, but if you'd like to note it, you have it!

YOUR CHARACTER IS SHOWING

Tuesday, August 9, 2011 | 7:00 PM EST



Linda Doak, LPC, is a clinical supervisor with Managed Health Network, where she manages a team of licensed behavioral health clinicians in a call center who perform triage, assessment, referral, crisis intervention and benefit administration for people seeking access to their employee assistance programs or behavior healthcare benefits. In her role at MHN, Linda oversees clinical development of her staff, develops and improves policies and procedures, makes recommendations for improved outcomes, and ensures compliance with federal, state, and accrediting agency requirements. She also has a part-time private practice at Las Colinas Counseling Center where she sees adolescent and adult clients.

Linda must deal with extremely challenging situations at work and in private practice, and it takes more than superior training in psychology to express one's gifts as a therapist or clinical professional. It takes character! Listen as we explore her core character strengths!

LISTEN LIVE

with the chance to ask questions

Go to www.YourCharacterIsShowing.com and click on the microphone to sign up.

Click Etiquette Dog to visit my blog

