

THE SET FREE LIFE

Surviving a Tormenting Workplace: Four More Principles

You can't get to the end of a sanity-destroying project and have any sense of making it through if you discard what you know is right and prudent and wise. You may not be on point with the principles shared in my last newsletter, or with the following, but I can guarantee you this: very few people with whom you work will have considered even one of them.

Die to the Need for Recognition

Don't expect to be recognized or lauded. Remember the reason you show up every day: so you can draw from that direct deposit on payday. Get your recognition from your family or your friends or your volunteer organizations. Stop looking to be special to people who will forget you the moment you turn in your badge and desk keys after offering your resignation. Once someone is hired to replace you, you will become "The Person Who Previously Held This Position."

We all want to be special. Some, however, are so driven by the desire to be recognized and seen as unique and indispensable they twist themselves into pretzels working for a nod or a word of thanks. Don't make the mistake of being led by such a desire. Put it to death. If you don't expect to be recognized, you won't be offended when you aren't and it will be a pleasant surprise if you are.

Assume Responsibility for Your Mistakes

You're going to make mistakes in a hostile environment because you're under terrific pressure and stress, and we don't always make the right or the best decisions in such a hard place. Another way that you avoid being sucked in by your environment is by immediately assuming responsibility for your mistakes and doing whatever it takes to correct them, even to your

own hurt. Your success depends upon the decision to always act with integrity.

By "to your own hurt," I mean there will be times when you will want to bury your mistake and hope it doesn't pop up later. Look, if it doesn't have an impact on the end product, there's no point in standing up and waving a big red flag. But if you've done something wrong or don't have an answer, admit it. Take responsibility for *yourself* and the things over which you have oversight. It's how you did that will be important in the end.

There are times when we will be blamed for someone else's mistake, of course. We must once again consider that need for the submissive attitude of a servant. Do what you can. Take care of what is possible to rectify. Then move on.

Don't Let Anyone Break Your Concentration

Applying one or two or all of the principles I've noted is not easy, but no matter which one you're working on today, you must concentrate. You must practice and practice and practice. When you fall down, get up. Start over. Do not give up just because you have one of those days (or weeks) where you failed at every turn to do as you intended.

You have power over your situation, and that power is in your concentration to act as you've decided to act. It is *your* choice to respond appropriately. See this situation as an opportunity to act instead of react.



Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her seminars 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 listeners at companies and business organizations throughout the country to rate her presentations as "the best seminar of the conference!" 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

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This challenge did not come into existence just to make you crazy. It's a boot camp to make you strong and tough. It is a mirror that will show you where you need to make some corrections. It is an emotional situation that will give you insight into yourself. Stay the course and learn the lessons.

F-O-R-G-I-V-E

"Forgive" is almost as difficult a word as "submission." Neither one seems like it belongs in a business setting. In fact, both are so revolutionary, so antithetical to the corporate world, that they are the hidden ingredients for walking through the fire of a hostile environment without getting fried.

Forgiveness is a deliberate act. It does not require that another ask for forgiveness. It's a one-way determination to release another from our feelings of bitterness and not hold onto an offense. Forgiveness is seeing our enemy in the courtroom but refusing to testify against him or her. Our enemies are not staying awake at night, thinking of how they hurt us. On the other hand, we are frequently unable to sleep, filled with the pain of gall and the desire for retribution.

Forgiveness takes time. Start by being willing to forgive and then *begin* to forgive. You may need to keep forgiving over and over. One day you'll find there is no emotion at all attached to the person or event. We do not have control over what others feel about us, but we do have control over the feelings we extend toward others. To begin to forgive does not require that we feel forgiving. It is a decision that will eventually result in a feeling. Decision first; feeling later.

Remember, please, that to forgive does *not* mean to forget. You can forgive a snake for being a snake; it can't help its nature. But you do not have to jump down into a pit and play with vipers. Forgiveness is a free thing you offer. Trust is something they must earn. Know the difference.

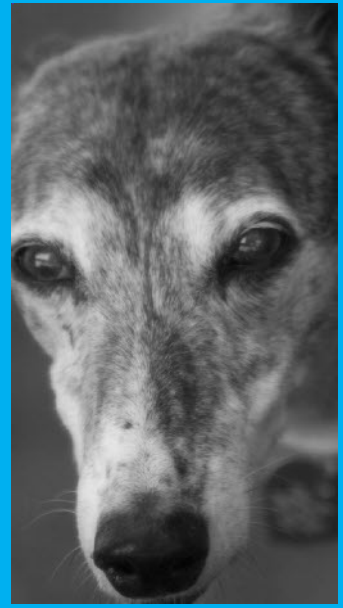


Quotable

The reward of suffering is experience.
Harry S. Truman

Teddy Bear Says...

Not everyone is perfect. Not even the Teddy Bear. I know; it's a terrible shock to some of you to find that I am less than the perfection I clearly exemplify. However, part of ultimate perfection is being willing to admit one's flaws, so in a way, I'm just proving how nearly flawless I am.



Even with all of my knowledge of what is right and proper and how to express grace and style in the most considerate of ways, I sometimes forget myself. I groom myself in front of others or accidentally

cough in the direction of someone else's face. I've been seen eating with less than stellar manners and rudely ignoring a guest or a host. I'm not proud of it. There's no real excuse except I'm only . . . canine.

Here's the point: no matter how much attention we pay to doing things properly, no matter how earnest our intentions to show respect for others, we mess up. We have a tough day and let loose a stream of bad temper that does nothing to enhance our image. We are wrapped up in ourselves and inadvertently fail to acknowledge another's best efforts or kind comments. We unintentionally say or do the wrong thing. Sue was recently caught texting on her Blackberry during a business meeting, a foolish departure from something on which she hammers. (Even the etiquette "expert" drops the ball!) Sometimes, truth be told, we allow our irritation or dislike of others to lead us—yes, let's be real—in a truly intentional act of poor behavior because we just don't care what that other person thinks.

I would like to remind my readers that excusing another's poor conduct is usually a sign of very good manners, and forgiveness of offensive actions is a great attribute. Sometimes we just blow it. The very best thing to do is immediately (if possible) acknowledge or apologize for the failed attention to excellence; the next best thing is to do so after the fact somehow, in some way: a written note, a phone call, a brief personal face-to-face. Sometimes it may be best to let it go; one's conscience should guide.

Whether or not we care what another person thinks of us is not what I wish to underscore; what matters is how we affect others, how we make them feel. It's a wise person who seeks to be at peace even with enemies, and an even wiser dog who can put everyone at ease with her gentle and delightful behavior. As I usually do. Being mostly perfect is often a burden, but I bear it with very good manners. 🐾