

THE SET FREE LIFE

Surviving a Tormenting Workplace: Three Principles for Keeping Your Sanity

You can't make it through a tormenting work experience without employing some strategies. It's going to take developing some new muscles—essentials that provide strength to make it through battles that threaten to overwhelm you.

Here are three important principles with which to start your survival kit:

Know Your Destination

It might be the financial bonus you signed for. It might be the experience you know you must have under your belt to move on to a job you really want. Whatever it is, know your destination. If necessary, make one up! Create a point in the future that will allow you to focus on the present while recognizing that you will not be in this place forever. You must fix your mind so that in the hardest moments, you can continue to put one foot in front of the other. If detoured by events beyond your control, you'll know the road you were on and can make your way back to it and keep walking. Know your destination and keep that light before you.

Stop Talking

Do not give your thoughts on every possible aspect of your situation to those who can do nothing for you. Keep your mouth shut! Saying the wrong thing to the wrong person can get you into some of the worst trouble of your career, and you can't take back those words. Get a handle on your need to have someone pat you on the back and make you feel better. I'm not suggesting you shouldn't have friends at work, but in the middle of a hostile environment you must have some strategies, and one of them is to be self-contained. Relationships can change in a day. The person you thought you could trust might be sitting in the executive suite right now, trashing you to the president. In a tormenting work situation, you must keep your agony

to yourself. Put on a face of calm and resist the temptation to whine.

Don't Become Your Environment

In order to come out of this experience with some sense of purpose, you must not engage with the defeating behaviors of nastiness, hatefulness, rudeness, and disrespect. Decide right now that no matter how rotten the behavior around you, you will treat everyone with civility and respect. Responding to unfair treatment with an attitude of submission gives you power.

Yes, you read that right: *submission*. It's become a dirty word in our society, but view submission as an attitude. It means you approach every circumstance with the demeanor of a servant. A servant just does the job. Servants expects mistreatment and can roll with that punch, get back up, and keep working, because that's what they were hired to do. Servants don't expect to be treated like the master of the house; that's not their role. They respond the same to those who are tyrannical or cruel as to those who are kind and empathetic. They are consistent in all situations because there really is no other choice than to simply apply themselves to the work.

Submission recognizes and accepts hierarchies: right or wrong, the org chart is what it is. Keep in mind, though, that submission is not the same as obedience. There may be times when we must stand up to authority because what is being demanded is morally



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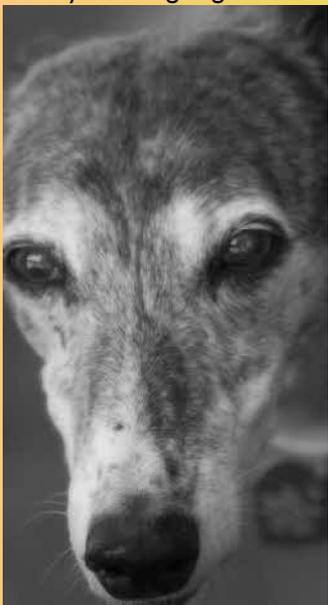
wrong or will have an irreversible impact. Say what must be said and be willing to accept the consequences, but remember that submission is the way a thing is done. It acts professionally and with the best interests of the project or the company in mind.

You may rankle at the thought of allowing yourself to be treated as a servant, but you've got to have a strategy for survival. Consider this: in order not to become your environment, you have to be radically, insanely different than those around you. Prevent yourself from being sucked into the madness you encounter. Don't engage in battles that will waste your energy, destroy your concentration, and yield very little results. Put on some bullet-proof armor and refuse to become emotionally entangled in the surrounding battles. Throw everyone else off by *being different!*

Your goal is to maintain a perspective of strength in a climate that is antagonizing, frustrating, lonely, even abusive. In such an environment the true test of character is made, and it's the hardest work we will ever do. You can survive a tormenting work environment! ♡

Teddy Bear Says...

The Teddy Bear loves words. After all, dogs are forced to learn your language in order to live with you as beloved pets, and I can't help but notice how words are used. I'm convinced, for instance, that current generations have only two superlatives with which to describe an event, their emotions, or an experience: *awesome* and *amazing*. It's too bad, because the overuse of these two words has stripped them of their descriptive power.



"Awesome" used to mean something so overwhelming it filled one with awe. It was

feeling the presence of God, sensing the power of miracle. It was a word conveying something sacred and almost frightening.

"Amazing" was brighter, more filled with delight. To be amazed was eye-popping incredulity, magical near-impossibility, heroic rescue and force-of-nature problem resolution. It was complete astonishment, unparalleled serendipity. Now it simply means "really cool," or even just "good." "That was an amazing hamburger," humans will say. "Really awesome."

Quotable

'Tis better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt.

Attributed to Abraham Lincoln

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Of course, words change over time and may eventually take on whole new meanings. Words and phrases become trendy, just like anything else. "Basic" is frequently used when "essential" or "foundational" are meant. Perhaps following in the steps of "kind of" or "like," people began using "sort of" when there's no need for it at all; I suppose they just feel it sounds thoughtful or intellectual. A radio interviewee will say, "It's a whole, sort of, new experience." (*Is it a new experience or not?*) "If you think about the sort of strong ramifications of the policy . . ." (*Are they strong, or maybe not?*)

It's a little sad to hear the dumbing down of two lovely words like "awesome" and "amazing." It's a statement about a world in which everything must be described with the height of emotional possibility instead of being satisfied with words that note ordinariness or acceptability. Humans don't feel, apparently, that "What a tasty hamburger!" is good enough. One must be made to believe that our taste buds were hit by a sensation of such enormous significance, we will never, ever forget it. I once had an amazing pig ear treat, but really can't remember much else about my meals. They're usually pretty awesome anyway! 🐷

LITTLE THINGS CAN COUNT

How many times have you (particularly women) purchased clothes you loved on the hanger but once you got them home and wore them a couple of times, you just felt uncomfortable, knowing they didn't look quite right? Even if you routinely have clothes altered—and really, you should have a good business relationship with someone who can make your clothes fit properly—how often have you been dissatisfied with the final look, discouraged that so little seems to look good on you?

I met a couple of women at a meeting a few months ago who gave me a whole new perspective on what it means to find the right fit and have clothing altered for my body. Janet Wood and Kathy McFadden created a system called Fashion Fit Formula, involving a set of measurements related not to *body type*, which we are always told is best, but to individual *linear structure*. Translation: our skeletal architecture. The innovative, mathematical documentation provides specific guidance for a proper fit. This is a truly unique product and one that is a bit complex for me to explain here, so I urge you to take a look at the website. I carry my personal Fashion Fit measurements so I can show my alteration genius what I'm going for when I bring clothes in for her handiwork.



Should the system intrigue you enough that you decide to purchase one of the packages, you can select my name as a referrer. It's an eye-opening experience to see how a subtle difference can make a big impact. Little things really can count! ♡