

NEWS YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

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INVESTIGATING PROBLEMS IN THE WORKPLACE

One of my favorite things to do is investigating issues in the workplace. Supervisors know what to do with employees that don't show up for work, are always late or can't do their job. Those employees are not the problem I am asked to investigate. No, it is those employees that technically do their job but they cause so much unrest and unease, they are toxic in the workplace. For convenience here, I will call them "Toxic Employees."

Here is where the problem comes in. The Toxic Employee shows up for work on time and does an acceptable job.

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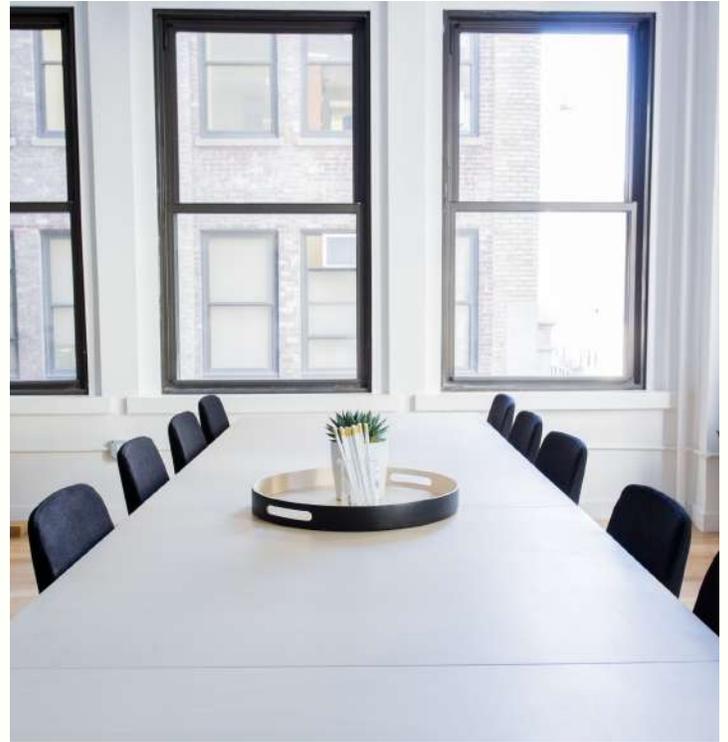
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What then, you ask, is the problem?
The problem is their attitude. A simple question I ask the supervisor is this: Are your employees happy when this person is on vacation or sick? If the answer is “Yes”. You have a problem. You have a Toxic Employee in the workplace.

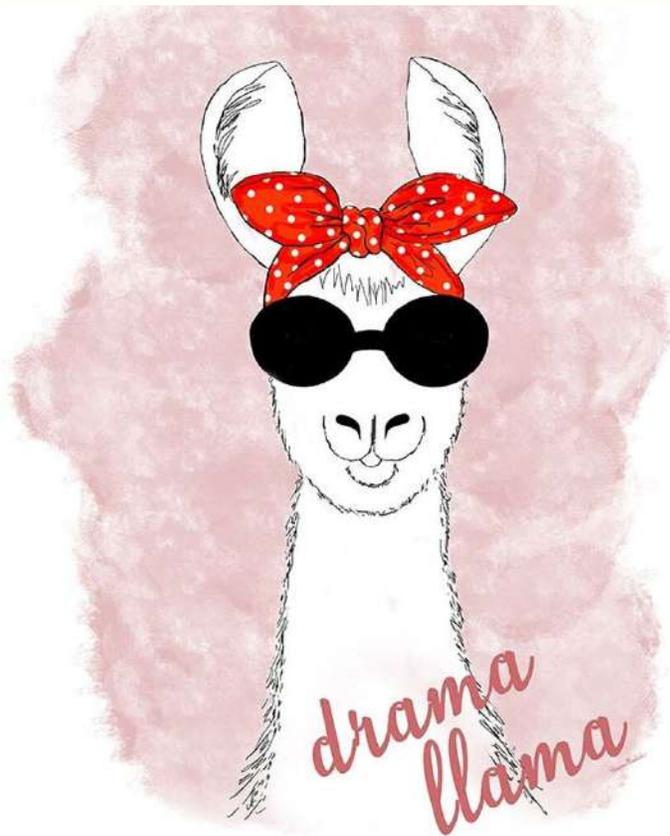
I break the Toxic Employee into three different types, (1) Bullies, (2) Drama Llamas and (3) Shit Stirrers.



Bullies like to throw their weight around, make others feel small and generally are a pain in the ass. Unfortunately I don't think you can change a Bully. Once a Bully is grown, and in the workplace, their Bully personality has stuck. Bullies need to be somewhere else. We don't want Bullies in the schools and we don't want Bullies in the workplace. Once when testifying about my recommendation to fire a Bully, I said Bullies don't change and three of the six jurors shook their heads in agreement. Ask around, and I bet you will find that employees have had a negative experience with a Bully in the workplace.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME



Artist: Ramona Murdock

Drama Llamas are the employees that collapse at the mere suggestion of an issue with their work. They wear their feelings on their sleeve and love to run to HR with their problems. They make “Mountains out of Molehills.” I have seen even experienced HR pretend they are talking on the phone when a Drama Llama comes in to complain about some slight or perceived wrongdoing. Drama Llamas are draining. Their neediness are a constant drain on their fellow workers’ happiness and even worse to their productivity.

Shit Stirrers are particularly dangerous in the workplace, especially if they join forces with a Drama Llama. Shit Stirrers are usually good at their jobs but the problem is they have too much time on their hands. Therefore, they look for problems in the workplace they can stir up, and make bigger to create issues, hence their name, Shit Stirrers. Shit Stirrers will latch onto a Drama Llama and become their champion. Shit Stirrers will become the Joan of Arc of the workplace. They could be James of Arc for that matter. Shit Stirrers make it their job to feel important by leading the charge for others they perceive are being treated improperly. Shit Stirrers amplify the Drama Llama into the forefront and between the two of them, they can make HR and supervisors miserable.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

Many supervisors don't know how to handle these types and this is where I come in. I diagnosis the problem, see if it is fixable and make a recommendation. And most importantly, I give the supervisors the boost they need to know they are not going crazy. They aren't going crazy; they just have a Bully, Shit Stirrer or Drama Llama in their midst.

It is very important to remember that by letting one of these types run rampant in the workplace, you send a message to your other workers they are not as important and their well-being doesn't matter.

Negative personality types are just as detrimental as workers that are chronically late or have other bad work habits. Managers let Bullies, Drama Llamas, and Shit Stirrers continue their negative draining ways, because they think they are not a performance problem and can't be disciplined. I disagree. Attitude is performance, just like in life. You can be a productive person but if your attitude stinks, you are sending negativity into the universe and no one needs that in life or at the workplace.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

INAPPROPRIATE THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

This is the blog where I can be as inappropriate as I like since I am admitting upfront that I am out-of-line. I know you will excuse me and it feels good to get this off my chest.

You mean well but please don't tell me to "Be Safe". How could any human being alive on the planet not know there is a coronavirus out there and we should be doing certain things to stay safe. Unless you have parachuted in from outer space, you know the drill. So why do people feel compelled to tell me to "Be Safe". Do they think I don't know what I am supposed to do? Do they think by constantly telling me this refrain, it will make me comply better than if I wasn't constantly reminded?



Photo by G-R Mottez

This isn't herd immunity. It is herd mottos and platitudes. It's the herd refrain of "Be Safe" or "We Are All In This Together". The "We Are All In This Together" platitude makes me grit my teeth. Duh!! We are not together, we are isolated. Stop patronizing me and BS-ing me with these trite sayings. I realize people are just repeating the herd phrases and their intentions are honorable and I am being an irritable pain in the butt to even mention this. But it does feel good to get it off my chest. Thank you from the bottom of my (Be Safe-All In It Together) heart for letting me complain.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

I AM BREATHING BUT IT WASN'T RIGHT

Ever since the coronavirus entered our lives, breathing shot to the forefront of our minds. Do I have it if my breathing seems wrong or different? No Carla, you don't have it, the shortness in your breath is anxiety. Even so, this has caused me to think about my breathing in general. I know I don't breathe right having been told this in the past which I chose to ignore.



What do I mean by breathing wrong? When going to rehab, (not for my mind which I could use, but for my leg after a total knee replacement and a fall), the physical therapist told me I don't breathe right and it was affecting my back and causing me pain. She told me I was a shallow breather and it caused my ribs to not move and consequently back pain. But I didn't want to hear it so I shut it out of my mind.

Next moving on in life, the yoga teacher told me that I needed to slow down and just breathe. I was told to take deep breaths and try to send the breath down to the parts of my body that hurt. And once again, I didn't want to hear it and once again slammed the thought out of my mind.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

When coronavirus hit and breathing was something being discussed, I decided it was time to understand exactly how we should breathe and what it can do for us if we breathe right.

According to scientific studies, breathing properly is as important as what we eat, the exercise we do and the genes we have inherited. I learned that breathing properly can allow us to live longer and it certainly can calm us.

I guess this makes sense because the breath is a big part of meditating and doing yoga. I found that if I can just stop and take five long deep breaths, I would feel instantly calmer. It is like a mini massage which we can all use.

Most of us are shallow breathers and breathe through our mouths. Mouth breathing is a big no no. Mouth breathing irritates the lungs and causes you to get even less oxygen than you would with nose breathing, even if it is shallow. According to the science, nose breathing gives you 18% more oxygen than breathing through your mouth. And there are bonus points because nose breathing reduces snoring and corrects some mild cases of sleep apnea.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

Ancient Tao texts called mouth breathing “Ni Ch’i” meaning adverse breath.

To motivate you to improve your breathing, consider that if you do so, you will increase the amount of oxygen your body gets and increase lung capacity. Larger lungs equals longer lives. The reason is bigger lungs allow us to get more air in with fewer breaths and this saves the body from working as hard. I know my lung capacity is pitiful so my vow is to practice improved breathing.

The first step is to practice longer breaths. The experts say you should inhale gently through your nose to a count of five and then exhales again through your nose at the same rate or a little more slowly, if possible.

My physical therapist recommends this diaphragmatic breathing exercise.

Lie down on your back. You can have your legs straight or bent or on a pillow, whichever is most comfortable for you.

Let your chest open naturally, shoulder blades in contact with the floor, and place one hand on your abdomen just below your rib cage. Place the other hand on your chest.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME



Inhale slowly. Focus on your abdomen coming up and pressing against your hand. The other hand on your chest should stay still.

Exhales smoothly, tightening your abdominal muscles. Imagine you're trying to make a candle flame flicker but not go out. Feel the pressure on the hand over your abdomen decrease.

It is recommended to do this exercise 5-10 minutes until you get good at it and can do it sitting up.

An interesting YouTube on a 10 minute morning practice of breathing is by Kelly Starrett, a top physical therapist and best-selling author. The cite is <https://thereadystate.com/10-minute-mobility-routine>.

So when you eat that brownie or fail to exercise, you can redeem your health by taking five deep breaths. Your body will thank you; your nerves will be calmer and your lungs bigger!!



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

THOUGHTS ON THE ME TOO MOVEMENT FROM A BABY BOOMER

I have been thinking about this for a while. As a female attorney in the 80s, I experienced gender discrimination. So, because of this, I was excited to see the Me Too movement begin. But now I am questioning some of the ramifications of Me Too, and I am not talking about bringing forward sexual harassment and abuse which is a good thing. No, I am talking about a side issue, which is the good ole boys club and male bashing.



I have argued for years women should, rather than complain about a good ole boys club, instead promote a good ole girls club. The problem, as I have seen it, is women are very hard on not only themselves, but also their fellow females. If a woman made it above the glass ceiling, there was a risk that instead of being supportive to other females, there would be a queen bee effect. By this I mean the queen bee--i.e. only female-- likes being the only female and over other females.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

This fortunately is changing. Women today are much more supportive of each other. Let's support our fellow females and lighten up on the male bashing. Don't get me wrong. Some males deserve bashing but many don't. Maybe instead we should forget bashing the differences and recognize the beauty of the differences.

When I was in law school, one of my professors, Professor Frank Newton, pulled me aside and told me I was going to have to be better than my male counterpoints. He told me and I admit scared me when he said, "You can't be as good as the guys. You have to be better to survive." Shit, I thought, I have to be better to "survive"? This was scary but Professor Newton was trying to help me and back in the 1980s, it was true. If I was going to survive in a male legal world, I needed to be better. I decided that my "better", could just be "better" at being different.

Women and Men have different skills. Rather than compare with each other, we have to accentuate our skill differences. We all know the one about multitasking. Women are experts at this and men –not so much. I have learned my boyfriend Tom really doesn't like me talking when he is trying to back out of a busy parking lot. I stubbornly fought this until I had a brain flash—he can't multitask by listening to you and also backing out the car. So once I understood this, I found it easier to stop talking, i.e. shut up, if he is trying to get out of a busy parking lot.



Another example of men vs. women is with our intuitive skills. Fellow females this is a powerful tool and never forget it. One example of this involved my office several years ago. I remarked to my male law partner one day about how the secretaries were not getting along. The tension in the air was so bad you could literally slice it with a knife. I could feel it even though the secretaries had not said a word about it. When I asked my partner Bill if he had noticed, he looked at me confused and said no. This dumbfounded me. I couldn't believe he couldn't feel the tension but no he couldn't. In some ways I guess it was an advantage since he didn't get bogged down with the negative emotions floating in the air.

I decided to give him a test. I took a picture off the wall in his office and replaced it with another one that was larger. Then I waited to see how long it took for him to notice the difference.

Two weeks later, Bill came into my office and asked me if I had changed the pictures in his office. I congratulated Bill on his observation. Then Bill admitted he hadn't noticed with his eyes. Rather when bending over to pick up something he had dropped, he hit his head on the picture since it now was different on the wall. It was only when Bill hit his head on the picture that he noticed the difference. So for observation skill, Bill got a D minus.

Another difference between men and women is how we approach a problem. When I was a litigator, I much preferred to have a male opponent rather than a female one.



Why? Because male litigators were more predictable and women litigators were not. I remember fondly the comment from a male opponent, “I have no idea what Carla is up to.” I also heard a similar comment from my law partners which was, “I have no idea what the Hell Carla is thinking.” Once again, a skill that is different can be an advantage.

I think we are approaching a time when it really is ok to be different. Let’s stop focusing on how males have kept females down in the past, or why there aren’t more females in positions of power. Instead lets focus on supporting our fellow females and sharpening our special skills.

*Empowered
Women
Empower
Women*

As women, let’s asked ourselves, “Are we being too critical of ourselves or other women?” “Are we comparing ourselves to other women?” These are thought habits that have built up over generations and generations. It is something in our culture that has entered our female subconscious mind over time. We can become aware and stop these negative thoughts.

So fellow women-and I don’t mind being called a girl because it makes me think I am young-so fellow women, females, girls no more self-criticism and comparisons to other women. Instead we are going to sharpen our special different skills. We can learn from our male companions and they can learn from us. We can be better by being different!!

