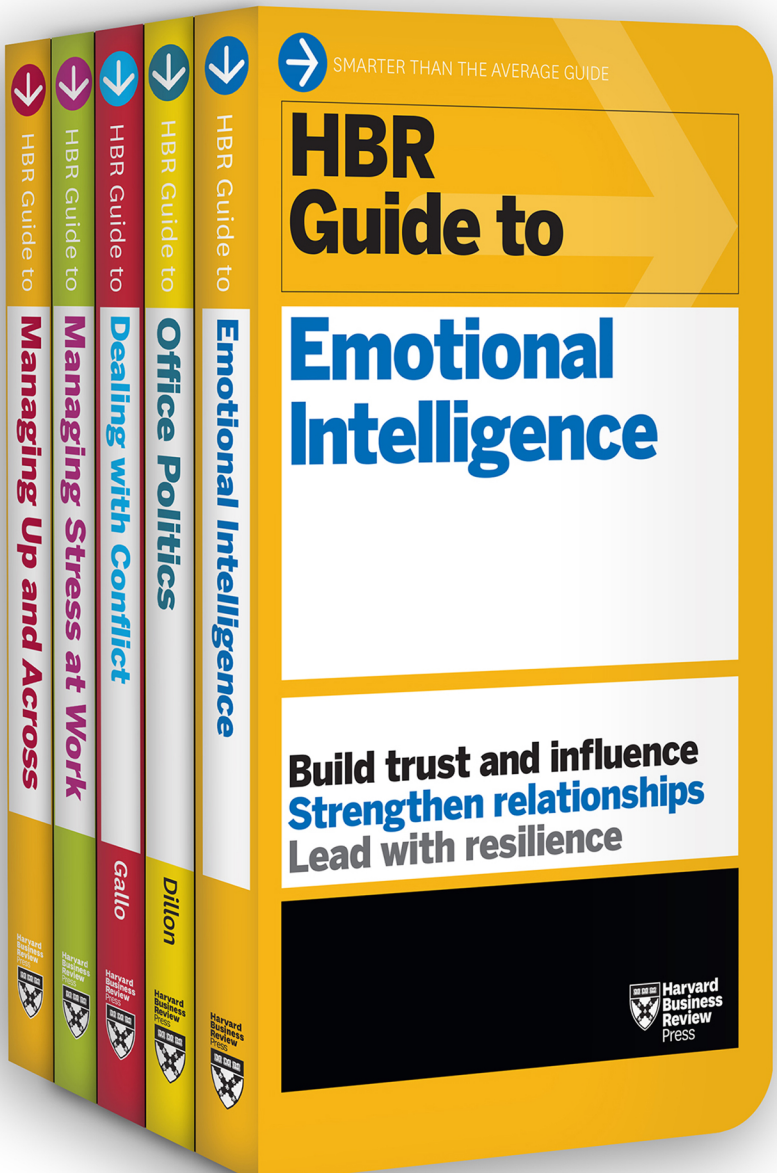

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What You'll Learn

It's been two decades since Daniel Goleman's research showed that emotional intelligence is twice as important as other skills in determining outstanding leadership. By managing your emotions and relating well to others, he explained, you can achieve higher levels of influence as well as personal well-being.

This kind of emotional intelligence is not just an innate trait: It can be learned. Becoming more finely attuned to your own emotions allows you to determine how to use those feelings more productively to make stronger decisions, overcome negative thoughts, control yourself in volatile situations, or understand others when they act in a way that surprises or angers you. Getting feedback from trusted colleagues and friends can keep you honest and aware of your areas of weakness, especially in the social sphere. And whether you're writing a difficult email, looking to keep your cool in a bitter negotiation, or managing an upset direct report, an array of frameworks and tactics can help you approach the situation in a way that takes the human element into account.

This guide will help you navigate these approaches. You'll get better at:

- Identifying and managing your own emotions
- Persuading and influencing others
- Dealing with difficult colleagues
- Responding to stress productively
- Defusing tense conversations
- Using your feelings as data to help you make smarter decisions
- Avoiding emotional pitfalls in a negotiation
- Reacting to tough situations with resilience
- Helping others on your team develop their emotional intelligence
- Developing a strong emotional culture

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SECTION ONE

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

CHAPTER 1

Leading by Feel

Like it or not, leaders need to manage the mood of their organizations. The most gifted leaders accomplish that by using a mysterious blend of psychological abilities known as *emotional intelligence*. They're self-aware and empathetic. They can read and regulate their own emotions while intuitively grasping how others feel and gauging their organization's emotional state.

But where does emotional intelligence come from? And how do leaders learn to use it? The management literature (and even common sense) suggests that both nature and nurture feed emotional intelligence. Part genetic predisposition, part life experience, and part old-fashioned training, emotional intelligence emerges in varying degrees from one leader to the next,

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Excerpted from *Harvard Business Review*, January 2004 (product #R0401B)

and managers apply it with varying skill. Wisely and compassionately deployed, emotional intelligence spurs leaders, their people, and their organizations to superior performance; naively or maliciously applied, it can paralyze leaders or allow them to manipulate followers for personal gain.

We invited 18 leaders and scholars (including business executives, leadership researchers, psychologists, a neurologist, a cult expert, and a symphony conductor) to explore the nature and management of emotional intelligence—its sources, uses, and abuses. Their responses differed dramatically, but there were some common themes: the importance of consciously and conscientiously honing one's skills, the double-edged nature of self-awareness, and the danger of letting any one emotional intelligence skill dominate. Here are some of their perspectives.

Be Realistic

John D. Mayer *is a professor of psychology at the University of New Hampshire. He and Yale psychology professor Peter Salovey are credited with first defining the concept of emotional intelligence in the early 1990s.*

This is a time of growing realism about emotional intelligence—especially concerning what it is and what it isn't. The books and articles that have helped popularize the concept have defined it as a loose collection of personality traits, such as self-awareness, optimism, and tolerance. These popular definitions have been accompanied by exaggerated claims about the importance

of emotional intelligence. But diverse personality traits, however admirable, don't necessarily add up to a single definition of emotional intelligence. In fact, such traits are difficult to collectively evaluate in a way that reveals their relationship to success in business and in life.

Even when they're viewed in isolation, the characteristics commonly associated with emotional intelligence and success may be more complicated than they seem. For example, the scientific jury is out on how important self-awareness is to successful leadership. In fact, too much self-awareness can reduce self-esteem, which is often a crucial component of great leadership.

From a scientific standpoint, emotional intelligence is the ability to accurately perceive your own and others' emotions; to understand the signals that emotions send about relationships; and to manage your own and others' emotions. It doesn't necessarily include the qualities (like optimism, initiative, and self-confidence) that some popular definitions ascribe to it.

Researchers have used performance tests to measure people's accuracy at identifying and understanding emotions; for example, asking them to identify the emotions conveyed by a face or which among several situations is most likely to bring about happiness. People who get high scores on these tests are indeed different from others. In the business world, they appear better able to deal with customers' complaints or to mediate disputes, and they may excel at making strong and positive personal connections with subordinates and customers over the long term. Of course, emotional intelligence isn't the only

way to attain success as a leader: A brilliant strategist who can maximize profits may be able to hire and keep talented employees even if he or she doesn't have strong personal connections with them.

Is there value in scales that, based on popular conceptions, measure qualities like optimism and self-confidence but label them "emotional intelligence"? Certainly, these personality traits are important in business, so measuring and (sometimes) enhancing them can be useful. But recent research makes it clear that these characteristics are distinct from emotional intelligence as it is scientifically defined. A person high in emotional intelligence may be realistic rather than optimistic and insecure rather than confident. Conversely, a person may be highly self-confident and optimistic but lack emotional intelligence. The danger lies in assuming that because a person is optimistic or confident, they are also emotionally intelligent, when, in fact, the presence of those traits will tell you nothing of the sort.

Never Stop Learning

Daniel Goleman *is the cochair of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations based at Rutgers University's Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology in Piscataway, New Jersey.*

You can be a successful leader without much emotional intelligence if you're extremely lucky and you've got everything else going for you: booming markets, bumbling competitors, and clueless higher-ups. If you're incredibly smart, you can cover for an absence of emotional intelligence until things get tough for the business.

But at that point, you won't have built up the social capital needed to pull the best out of people under tremendous pressure. The art of sustained leadership is getting others to produce superior work, and high IQ alone is insufficient to that task.

The good news is that emotional intelligence can be learned and improved at any age. In fact, data shows that, on average, people's emotional intelligence tends to increase as they age. But the specific leadership competencies that are based on emotional intelligence don't necessarily come through life experience. For example, one of the most common complaints I hear about leaders, particularly newly promoted ones, is that they lack empathy. The problem is that they were promoted because they were outstanding individual performers—and being a solo achiever doesn't teach you the skills necessary to understand other people's concerns.

Leaders who are motivated to improve their emotional intelligence can do so if they're given the right *information, guidance,* and *support*. The information they need is a candid assessment of their strengths and limitations from people who know them well and whose opinions they trust. The guidance they need is a specific developmental plan that uses naturally occurring workplace encounters as the laboratory for learning. The support they need is someone to talk to as they practice how to handle different situations, what to do when they've blown it, and how to learn from those setbacks. If leaders cultivate these resources and practice continually, they can develop specific emotional intelligence skills—skills that will last for years.

5 COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In 1998, in what has become one of HBR's most enduring articles, "What Makes a Leader?" Daniel Goleman introduced a framework of five components of emotional intelligence that allow individuals to recognize, connect with, and learn from their own and other people's mental states, as well as their hallmarks. While there are many frameworks offering varying sets of EI competencies (and other models that conceive of emotional intelligence not as a set of competencies but rather as the ability to abstract and problem solve in the emotional domain), Goleman's approach, outlined in exhibit 1, can be a helpful way to start building an understanding of emotional intelligence:

EXHIBIT 1

EI Component	Definition	Hallmarks	Example
Self-awareness	Knowing one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals—and their impacts on others	• Self-confidence • Realistic self-assessment • Self-deprecating sense of humor • Thirst for constructive criticism	A manager knows tight deadlines bring out the worst in him. So he plans his time to get work done well in advance.
Self-regulation	Controlling or redirecting disruptive emotions and impulses	• Trustworthiness • Integrity • Comfort with ambiguity and change	When a team botches a presentation, its leader resists the urge to scream. Instead, she considers possible reasons for the failure, explains the consequences to her team, and explores solutions with them.

EI Component	Definition	Hallmarks	Example
Motivation	Being driven to achieve for the sake of achievement	• A passion for the work itself and for new challenges • Unflagging energy to improve • Optimism in the face of failure	A portfolio manager at an investment company sees his fund tumble for three consecutive quarters. Major clients defect. Instead of blaming external circumstances, she decides to learn from the experience—and engineers a turnaround.
Empathy	Considering others' feelings, especially when making decisions	• Expertise in attracting and retaining talent • Ability to develop others • Sensitivity to cross-cultural differences	An American consultant and her team pitch a project to a potential client in Japan. Her team interprets the client's silence as disapproval and prepares to leave. The consultant reads the client's body language and senses interest. She continues the meeting, and her team gets the job.
Social skill	Managing relationships to move in desired directions	• Effectiveness in leading change • Persuasiveness • Extensive networking • Expertise in building and leading teams	A manager wants his company to adopt a better internet strategy. He finds kindred spirits and assembles a de facto team to create a prototype website. He persuades allies in other divisions to fund the company's participation in a relevant convention. His company forms an internet division—and puts him in charge of it.

Adapted from "What Makes a Leader" by Daniel Goleman, originally published in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2006.

Get Motivated

Richard Boyatzis *is a professor and the chair of the department of organizational behavior at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management in Cleveland.*

People can develop their emotional intelligence if they really want to. But many managers jump to the conclusion that their complement of emotional intelligence is predetermined. They think, "I could never be good at this, so why bother?" The central issue isn't a lack of *ability* to change; it's the lack of *motivation* to change.

Leadership development is not all that different from other areas in which people are trying to change their behaviors. Just look at the treatments for alcoholism, drug addiction, and weight loss: They all require the desire to change. More subtly, they all require a positive, rather than a negative, motivation. You have to *want* to change. If you think you'll lose your job because you're not adequately tuned in to your employees, you might become determinedly empathetic or compassionate for a time. But change driven by fear or avoidance probably isn't going to last. Change driven by hopes and aspirations, change that's pursued because it's desired, will be more enduring.

There's no such thing as having too much emotional intelligence. But there is a danger in being preoccupied with, or overusing, one aspect of it. For example, if you overemphasize the emotional intelligence competencies of initiative or achievement, you'll always be changing things at your company. Nobody would know what you

were going to do next, which would be quite destabilizing for the organization. If you overuse empathy, you might never fire anybody. If you overuse teamwork, you might never build diversity or listen to a lone voice. Balance is essential.

Train the Gifted

Elkhonon Goldberg *is a clinical professor of neurology at New York University School of Medicine and the director of the Institute of Neuropsychology and Cognitive Performance in New York.*

In the past, neuropsychologists were mostly concerned with cognitive impairment. Today, they are increasingly interested in the biological underpinnings of cognitive differences in people without impairments—including differences in people's emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence can be learned, to a degree. It's like mathematical or musical ability. Can you become a musician if you lack natural aptitude? Yes, you can, if you take lessons and practice enough. But will you ever be a Mozart? Probably not. In the same way, emotional intelligence develops through a combination of biological endowment and training. And people who don't have that endowment probably won't become deeply emotionally intelligent just through training. Trying to drum emotional intelligence into someone with no aptitude for it is an exercise in futility. I believe the best way to get emotionally intelligent leaders is to select for people who already show the basic qualities you want. Think about it: That's how athletic coaches operate. They don't just work with anyone who wants to play a sport; they

train the naturally gifted. Business managers should do the same.

How do you identify the naturally gifted? I'd say you have to look for those with a genuine, instinctive interest in other people's experiences and mental worlds. It's an absolute prerequisite for developing emotional intelligence. If a manager lacks this interest, maybe your training resources are better directed elsewhere.

Seek Frank Feedback

Andrea Jung *is the chair and CEO of Avon Products, which is based in New York.*

Emotional intelligence is in our DNA here at Avon because relationships are critical at every stage of our business. It starts with the relationships our 4.5 million independent sales reps have with their customers and goes right up through senior management to my office. So the emphasis on emotional intelligence is much greater here than it was at other companies in which I've worked. We incorporate emotional intelligence education into our development training for senior managers, and we factor in emotional intelligence competencies when we evaluate employees' performance.

Of all a leader's competencies, emotional and otherwise, self-awareness is the most important. Without it, you can't identify the impact you have on others. Self-awareness is very important for me as CEO. At my level, few people are willing to tell me the things that are hardest to hear. We have a CEO advisory counsel—ten people chosen each year from Avon offices throughout the world—and they tell me the good, the bad, and the ugly about the company. Anything can be said. It helps keep

me connected to what people really think and how my actions affect them. I also rely on my children for honest appraisals. You can get a huge dose of reality by seeing yourself through your children's eyes, noticing the ways they react to and reflect what you say and do. My kids are part of my 360-degree feedback. They're the most honest of all.

I grew up in a very traditional Chinese family. My parents were concerned that the way I'd been raised—submissive, caring, and averse to conflict—would hinder my ability to succeed in the *Fortune* 500 environment. They were afraid I couldn't make the tough decisions. But I've learned how to be empathetic and still make hard decisions that are right for the company. These are not incompatible abilities. When Avon has had to close plants, for example, I've tried to act with compassion for the people involved. And I've gotten letters from some of the associates who were affected, expressing sadness but also saying thanks for the fair treatment. Leaders' use of emotional intelligence when making tough decisions is important to their success—and to the success of their organizations.

Engage Your Demons

David Gergen *directs the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He served as an adviser to presidents Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Clinton.*

American history suggests not only that emotional intelligence is an indispensable ingredient of political leadership but also that it can be enhanced through

sustained effort. George Washington had to work hard to control his fiery temper before he became a role model for the republic, and Abraham Lincoln had to overcome deep melancholia to display the brave and warm countenance that made him a magnet for others. Franklin Delano Roosevelt provides an even more graphic example: In his early adult years, FDR seemed carefree and condescending. Then, at 39, he was stricken with polio. By most accounts, he transformed himself over the next seven years of struggle into a leader of empathy, patience, and keen self-awareness.

Richard Nixon thought he might transform himself through his own years in the wilderness, and he did make progress. But he could never fully control his demons, and they eventually brought him down. Bill Clinton, too, struggled for self-mastery and made progress, but he could not fully close the cracks in his character, and he paid a stiff price. Not all people succeed, then, in achieving self-awareness and self-control. What we have been told since the time of the Greeks is that every leader must try to control his own passions before he can hope to command the passions of others.

Best-selling author Rabbi Harold Kushner argues persuasively that the elements of selfishness and aggression that are in most of us—and our struggles to overcome them—are exactly what make for better leadership. In *Living a Life That Matters*, Kushner writes of the personal torments of leaders from Jacob, who wrestled all night with an angel, to Martin Luther King Jr., who tried to cleanse himself of weakness even as he cleansed the nation's soul. "Good people do bad things," Kushner concludes, "If they weren't mightily tempted by

their *yetzer ha'ra* [will to do evil], they might not be capable of the mightily good things they do."

Find Your Voice

William George *is the former chairman and CEO of Medtronic, a medical technology company in Minneapolis.*

Authentic leadership begins with self-awareness, or knowing yourself deeply. Self-awareness is not a trait you are born with but a capacity you develop throughout your lifetime. It's your understanding of your strengths and weaknesses, your purpose in life, your values and motivations, and how and why you respond to situations in a particular way. It requires a great deal of introspection and the ability to internalize feedback from others.

No one is born a leader; we have to consciously develop into the leader we want to become. It takes many years of hard work and the ability to learn from extreme difficulties and disappointments. But in their scramble to get ahead, many would-be leaders attempt to skip this crucial developmental stage. Some of these people do get to the top of companies through sheer determination and aggressiveness. However, when they finally reach the leader's chair, they can be very destructive because they haven't focused on the hard work of personal development.

To mask their inadequacies, these leaders tend to close themselves off, cultivating an image or persona rather than opening up to others. They often adopt the styles of other leaders they have observed.

Leaders who are driven to achieve by shortcomings in their character, for example, or a desire for self-

aggrandizement, may take inordinate risks on behalf of the organization. They may even come to believe they are so important that they place their interests above those of the organization.

Self-awareness and other emotional intelligence skills come naturally to some, less so to others—but these skills can be learned. One of the techniques I have found most useful in gaining deeper self-awareness is meditation. In 1975, my wife dragged me, kicking and screaming, to a weekend course in Transcendental Meditation. I have meditated 20 minutes, twice a day, ever since. Meditation makes me calmer, more focused, and better able to discern what's really important. Leaders, by the very nature of their positions, are under extreme pressure to keep up with the many voices clamoring for their attention. Indeed, many leaders lose their way. It is only through a deep self-awareness that you can find your inner voice and listen to it.

Know the Score

Michael Tilson Thomas *is the music director of the San Francisco Symphony.*

A conductor's authority rests on two things: the orchestra's confidence in the conductor's insightful knowledge of the whole score; and the orchestra's faith in the conductor's good heart, which seeks to inspire everyone to make music that is excellent, generous, and sincere.

Old-school conductors liked to hold the lead in their hands at all times. I do not. Sometimes I lead. Other times I'll say, "Violas, I'm giving you the lead. Listen to one another; and find your way with this phrase." I'm not

trying to drill people, military style, to play music exactly together. I'm trying to encourage them to play as one, which is a different thing. I'm guiding the performance, but I'm aware that they're executing it. It's their sinews, their heartstrings. I'm there to help them do it in a way that is convincing and natural for them but also a part of the larger design.

My approach is to be in tune with the people with whom I'm working. If I'm conducting an ensemble for the first time, I will relate what I want them to do to the great things they've already done. If I'm conducting my own orchestra, I can see in the musicians' bodies and faces how they're feeling that day, and it becomes very clear who may need encouragement and who may need cautioning.

The objectivity and perspective I have as the only person who is just listening is a powerful thing. I try to use this perspective to help the ensemble reach its goals.

Keep It Honest

Carol Bartz *is the chairman, president, and CEO of Autodesk, a design software and digital content company in San Rafael, California.*

A friend needed to take a six-month assignment in a different part of the country. She had an ancient, ill, balding but beloved dog that she could not take with her. Her choices boiled down to boarding the poor animal, at enormous expense, or putting it out of its obvious misery. Friends said, "Board the dog," though behind my friend's back, they ridiculed that option. She asked me what I thought, and I told her, kindly but clearly, that I thought

she should have the dog put to sleep rather than spend her money keeping it in an environment where it would be miserable and perhaps die anyway. My friend was furious with me for saying this. She boarded the dog and went away on her assignment. When she returned, the dog was at death's door and had to be put to sleep. Not long after that, my friend came around to say thanks. "You were the only person who told me the truth," she said. She came to appreciate that I had cared enough to tell her what I thought was best, even if what I said hurt at the time.

That event validated a hunch that has stood me in good stead as I've led my company. Empathy and compassion have to be balanced with honesty. I have pulled people into my office and told them to deal with certain issues for the sake of themselves and their teams. If they are willing to learn, they will say, "Gee, no one ever told me." If they are unwilling, they're not right for this organization. And I must let them go for the sake of the greater good.

Go for the Gemba

Hirotaka Takeuchi *is the dean of Hitotsubashi University's Graduate School of International Corporate Strategy in Tokyo.*

Self-awareness, self-control, empathy, humility, and other such emotional intelligence traits are particularly important in Asia. They are part of our Confucian emphasis on *wah*, or social harmony. When books on emotional intelligence were first translated into Japanese, people said, "We already know that. We're actually trying to get beyond that." We've been so focused on wah that

we've built up a supersensitive structure of social niceties, where everyone seeks consensus. In the Japanese hierarchy, everyone knows his or her place, so no one is ever humiliated. This social supersensitivity—itself a form of emotional intelligence—can lead people to shy away from conflict. But conflict is often the only way to get to the *gemba*—the front line, where the action really is, where the truth lies.

Thus, effective management often depends not on coolly and expertly resolving conflict—or simply avoiding it—but on embracing it at the gemba. Japan's most effective leaders do both. The best example is Nissan's Carlos Ghosn. He not only had the social skills to listen to people and win them over to his ideas, but he also dared to lift the lid on the corporate hierarchy and encourage people at all levels of the organization to offer suggestions to operational, organizational, and even interpersonal problems—even if that created conflict. People were no longer suppressed, so solutions to the company's problems bubbled up.

Balance the Load

Linda Stone *is the former vice president of corporate and industry initiatives at Microsoft in Redmond, Washington.*

Emotional intelligence is powerful—which is precisely why it can be dangerous. For example, empathy is an extraordinary relationship-building tool, but it must be used skillfully or it can do serious damage to the person doing the empathizing. In my case, overdoing empathy took a physical toll. In May 2000, Steve Ballmer charged me with rebuilding Microsoft's industry relationships,

a position that I sometimes referred to as "chief listening officer." The job was part ombudsperson, part new initiatives developer, part pattern recognizer, and part rapid-response person. In the first few months of the job—when criticism of the company was at an all-time high—it became clear that this position was a lightning rod. I threw myself into listening and repairing wherever I could.

Within a few months, I was exhausted from the effort. I gained a significant amount of weight, which, tests finally revealed, was probably caused by a hormone imbalance partially brought on by stress and lack of sleep. In absorbing everyone's complaints, perhaps to the extreme, I had compromised my health. This was a wake-up call: I needed to reframe the job.

I focused on connecting the people who needed to work together to resolve problems rather than taking on each repair myself. I persuaded key people inside the company to listen and work directly with important people outside the company, even in cases where the internal folks were skeptical at first about the need for this direct connection. In a sense, I tempered my empathy and ratcheted up relationship building. Ultimately, with a wiser and more balanced use of empathy, I became more effective and less stressed in my role.

Question Authority

Ronald Heifetz *is a cofounder of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a partner at Cambridge Leadership Associates, a consultancy in Cambridge.*

Emotional intelligence is necessary for leadership but not sufficient. Many people have some degree of emotional intelligence and can indeed empathize with and rouse followers; a few of them can even generate great charismatic authority. But I would argue that if they are using emotional intelligence solely to gain formal or informal authority, that's not leadership at all. They are using their emotional intelligence to grasp what people want, only to pander to those desires in order to gain authority and influence. Easy answers sell.

Leadership couples emotional intelligence with the courage to raise the tough questions, challenge people's assumptions about strategy and operations—and risk losing their goodwill. It demands a commitment to serving others; skill at diagnostic, strategic, and tactical reasoning; the guts to get beneath the surface of tough realities; and the heart to take heat and grief.

For example, David Duke did an extraordinary job of convincing Ku Klux Klan members to get out of their backyards and into hotel conference rooms. He brought his considerable emotional intelligence to bear, his capacity to empathize with his followers, to pluck their heartstrings in a powerful way that mobilized them. But he avoided asking his people the tough questions: Does our program actually solve our problem? How will creating a social structure of white supremacy give us the self-esteem we lack? How will it solve the problems of poverty, alcoholism, and family violence that corrode our sense of self-worth?

Like Duke, many people with high emotional intelligence and charismatic authority aren't interested in asking the deeper questions, because they get so much

emotional gain from the adoring crowd. For them, that's the end in itself. They're satisfying their own hungers and vulnerabilities: their need to be liked; their need for power and control; or their need to be needed, to feel important, which renders them vulnerable to grandiosity. But that's not primal leadership. It's primal hunger for authority.

Maintaining one's primacy or position is not in and of itself leadership, however inspiring it may seem to be. Gaining primal authority is relatively easy.

CHAPTER 2

Do You Lead with Emotional Intelligence?

by Annie McKee

Great leaders move us—they inspire, motivate, and energize us. How? They do it through emotional intelligence. Dan Goleman woke us all up when he published his groundbreaking book on the topic (in 1995). Since then we've learned a lot about EI competencies, such as self-awareness and empathy, and about what people can do to develop them. To gain a deeper understanding of your own emotional intelligence, respond to the statements in this questionnaire as honestly as possible, checking one of the columns from "Always" to "Never."

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on June 5, 2015, as "Quiz Yourself: Do You Lead with Emotional Intelligence?"

To calculate your score, as you finish each section count the checkmarks in each column and record the number in the "Total per column" line. Multiply your total score for each column by the number in the row below it, and record it in the row below that. Add this row together to get your total score for how you perceive yourself along each of the dimensions of EI.

Reflecting on your strengths and where you can improve is important, but don't stop there. Other people's perspectives matter too. After reviewing your scores, ask one or two trusted friends to evaluate you using the same statements, to learn what others see in you.

Annie McKee is a senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of the PennCLO Executive Doctoral Program. She is the author of *Primal Leadership* (with Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis), as well as *Resonant Leadership* and *Becoming a Resonant Leader*. Her new book, *How to Be Happy at Work*, is forthcoming from Harvard Business Review Press in September 2017.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

		ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	FREQUENTLY	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS							
1	I can describe my emotions in the moment I experience them.						
2	I can describe my feelings in detail, beyond just "happy," "sad," "angry," and so on.						
3	I understand the reasons for my feelings.						
4	I understand how stress affects my mood and behavior.						
5	I understand my leadership strengths and weaknesses.						
	Total per column						
	Points per answer	x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
	Multiply the two rows above						
	TOTAL SELF-AWARENESS SCORE *(sum of the row above)*						
POSITIVE OUTLOOK							
6	I'm optimistic in the face of challenging circumstances.						
7	I focus on opportunities rather than obstacles.						
8	I see people as good and well-intentioned.						
9	I look forward to the future.						
10	I feel hopeful.						
	Total per column						
	Points per answer	x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
	Multiply the two rows above						
	TOTAL POSITIVE OUTLOOK SCORE *(sum of the row above)*						

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?							
		ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	FREQUENTLY	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
EMOTIONAL SELF-CONTROL							
11	I manage stress well.						
12	I'm calm in the face of pressure or emotional turmoil.						
13	I control my impulses.						
14	I use strong emotions, such as anger, fear, and joy, appropriately and for the good of others.						
15	I'm patient.						
	Total per column						
	Points per answer	x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
	Multiply the two rows above						
	TOTAL EMOTIONAL SELF-CONTROL SCORE *(sum of the row above)*						
ADAPTABILITY							
16	I'm flexible when situations change unexpectedly.						
17	I'm adept at managing multiple, conflicting demands.						
18	I can easily adjust goals when circumstances change.						
19	I can shift my priorities quickly.						
20	I adapt easily when a situation is uncertain or ever-changing.						
	Total per column						
	Points per answer	x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
	Multiply the two rows above						
	TOTAL ADAPTABILITY SCORE *(sum of the row above)*						

EMPATHY							
21	I strive to understand people's underlying feelings.						
22	My curiosity about others drives me to listen attentively to them.						
23	I try to understand why people behave the way they do.						
24	I readily understand others' viewpoints even when they are different from my own.						
25	I understand how other people's experiences affect their feelings, thoughts, and behavior.						
	Total per column						
	Points per answer	x 5	x 4	x 3	x 2	x 1	x 0
	Multiply the two rows above						
	TOTAL EMPATHY SCORE *(sum of the row above)*						

SECTION TWO

Self-Awareness: Understand Your Emotions, Know Your Behaviors

CHAPTER 3

You Can't Manage Emotions Without Knowing What They Really Are

by Art Markman

At this point, everybody knows emotional intelligence matters in the workplace. Yet there are two aspects of emotions that make it hard for people to exercise their emotional intelligence. First, most people are still not completely clear about what emotions actually are. Second, even when we understand emotions conceptually, it can still be hard to deal with our own emotional states.

To tackle the first problem: While in everyday speech, *emotion* and *feeling* are often used interchangeably,

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psychologists distinguish between them. Emotions are interpretations of feelings.

The feelings you have (what psychologists call *affect*) emerge from your motivational system. You generally feel good when you're succeeding at your goals and bad when you're not. The more deeply your motivational system is engaged with a situation, the stronger your feelings.

The motivational system, however, is not that well connected to the brain regions that help you to tell stories about the world. In order to make sense of what you're feeling, you use information about what's going on around you to help you translate those feelings into emotions—emotions help to guide your actions by giving you explicit feedback on how well you are currently achieving the goals the motivational system has engaged.

Often, that interpretation is easy. If you are crossing the street and suddenly have to leap out of the way of an oncoming car, it is clear that the strong negative feeling you are having is fear from nearly getting hit by the car. If a colleague compliments you on a job well done, it is obvious that the positive feeling you are having is pride.

But things are not always so clear. You might have a bad interaction with a family member before getting to work. As the day wears on, you may interpret your negative feelings as frustration with the project you're working on rather than lingering negative affect from the events of the morning.

Many people try to power through their negative feelings rather than attempting to understand them. But this is a lost opportunity. Emotions provide valuable in-

formation about the state of your motivational system. Ignoring them is like driving around lost, not only refusing to ask for directions but refusing to consult the map or the GPS—or even to look through the windshield. You will still be moving forward, but who knows where you will end up? Conversely, paying too much attention to your feelings is also bad. That's like staring at your road atlas without ever turning on the car: You can't get anywhere that way.

When you have negative feelings, slow down and pay some attention to *what* you are feeling and *why* you are feeling the way you are.

When you find yourself stressed, anxious, or angry, take five or 10 minutes for yourself during the day. Sit alone and breathe deeply. The deep breaths help to take some of the energy or arousal out of the feelings you are having. That can help you to think more clearly.

Then start to think about some of the events of your day. Pay attention to how those thoughts influence what you are feeling. Are there particular events that increase or decrease the intensity of those feelings?

You may not completely understand the source of your feelings the first time you do this. Over time, you will become more adept at paying attention to when and where you start to feel bad.

Of course, once you have figured out what's bothering you, it's time to plan a course of action. If you keep thinking about things that bother you, you run the risk of solving nothing while getting yourself more upset. Instead, use your knowledge about the source of the bad feeling to figure out how to deal with it.

Finally, if you're really upset about something, hold off on actually executing your plan until you have given yourself a chance to calm down. Responses that seemed like a good idea in the moment may seem less ideal to a cooler head.

Being willing to understand your feelings will have two benefits in the long term. First, it will help you to discover some of the aspects of your life that trigger negative feelings. That is useful, because you don't want to misinterpret your negative feelings and attribute them to something else. For example, you would like to be able to recognize when events in your personal life are spilling over into work and are causing you to feel badly about the work you do. Second, by understanding the sources of your own emotions, you will become more expert in understanding the people around you as well. We often ignore our own feelings—and then also ignore those of our colleagues.

Once you can better understand what emotions are and where your own emotions come from, you'll have a much better ability to practice emotional intelligence.

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CHAPTER 4

A Vocabulary for Your Emotions

by Susan David

Dealing effectively with emotions is a key leadership skill. And naming our emotions—what psychologists call *labeling*—is an important first step in dealing with them effectively. But it's harder than it sounds: Many of us struggle to identify what exactly we are feeling, and oftentimes the most obvious label isn't actually the most accurate.

There are a variety of reasons why this is so difficult: We've been trained to believe that strong emotions should be suppressed. We have certain (sometimes unspoken) societal and organizational rules against

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expressing them. Or we've never learned a language to accurately describe our emotions. Consider these two examples:

> *Neena is in a meeting with Jared, and the whole time he has been saying things that make her want to explode. In addition to interrupting her at every turn, he's reminded everyone* again *about that one project she worked on that failed. She's so angry.*

> *Mikhail gets home after a long day and sighs as he hangs up his coat. His wife asks if anything's wrong. "I'm just stressed," he says, pulling out his laptop to finish a report.*

Anger and stress are two of the emotions we see most in the workplace—or at least, those are the terms we use for them most frequently. Yet they are often masks for deeper feelings that we could and should describe in more nuanced and precise ways, so that we develop greater levels of *emotional agility*, a critical capability that enables us to interact more successfully with ourselves and the world.

Yes, Neena may be mad, but what if she is also sad—sad that her project failed, and maybe also anxious that that failure is going to haunt her and her career? With Jared interrupting her so frequently, that anxiety feels increasingly justified. Why didn't the project work? And what's going to become of her job now? All of these emotions feed into her anger, but they are also separate feelings that she should identify and address.

And what if what's behind Mikhail's stress is the fact that he's just not sure he's in the right career? Long days used to be fun—why aren't they any more? He's surely stressed, but what's going on under that?

These questions open up a world of potential inquiry and answers for Neena and Mikhail. Like them, we need a more nuanced vocabulary for emotions, not just for the sake of being more precise, but because incorrectly diagnosing our emotions makes us respond incorrectly. If we think we need to attend to anger, we'll take a different approach than if we're handling disappointment or anxiety—or we might not address them at all. It's been shown that when people don't acknowledge and address their emotions, they display a lowered sense of well-being and more physical symptoms of stress, like headaches.[1] There is a high cost to avoiding our feelings.[2] On the flip side, having the right vocabulary allows us to see the real issue at hand—to take a messy experience, understand it more clearly, and build a roadmap to address the problem.[3]

Here are three ways to get a more accurate and precise sense of your emotions:

Broaden Your Emotional Vocabulary

Words matter. If you're experiencing a strong emotion, take a moment to consider what to call it. But don't stop there: Once you've identified it, try to come up with two more words that describe how you are feeling. You might be surprised at the breadth of your emotions—or that you've unearthed a deeper emotion buried beneath the more obvious one.

EXHIBIT 2

List of emotion terms

Angry	Sad	Anxious	Hurt	Embarrassed	Happy
Grumpy	Disappointed	Afraid	Jealous	Isolated	Thankful
Frustrated	Mournful	Stressed	Betrayed	Self-conscious	Trusting
Annoyed	Regretful	Vulnerable	Isolated	Lonely	Comfortable
Defensive	Depressed	Confused	Shocked	Inferior	Content
Spiteful	Paralyzed	Bewildered	Deprived	Guilty	Excited
Impatient	Pessimistic	Skeptical	Victimized	Ashamed	Relaxed
Disgusted	Tearful	Worried	Aggrieved	Repugnant	Relieved
Offended	Dismayed	Cautious	Tormented	Pathetic	Elated
Irritated	Disillusioned	Nervous	Abandoned	Confused	Confident

Exhibit 2 shows a vocabulary list of emotion terms; you can find much more by searching Google for any one of these.

It's equally important to do this with "positive" emotions as well as "negative" ones. Being able to say that you are *excited* about a new job (not just "I'm nervous") or *trusting* of a colleague (not just "He's nice"), for example, will help you set your intentions for the role or the relationship in a way that is more likely to lead to success down the road.

Consider the Intensity of the Emotion

We're apt to leap to basic descriptors like "angry" or "stressed" even when our feelings are far less extreme. I had a client, Ed (not his real name), who was struggling in his marriage; he frequently described his wife as "angry" and often got angry in return. But as the vocabulary chart suggests, every emotion comes in a va-

riety of flavors. When we talked about other words for his wife's emotions, Ed saw that there were times that she was perhaps just annoyed or impatient. This insight completely changed their relationship, because he could suddenly see that she wasn't just angry all the time—and so could actually respond to her specific emotion and concern without getting angry himself. Similarly, it matters in your own self-assessment whether you are angry or just grumpy, mournful or just dismayed, elated or just pleased.

As you label your emotions, also rate them on a scale of 1–10. How deeply are you feeling the emotion? How urgent is it, or how strong? Does that make you choose a different set of words?

Write It Out

James Pennebaker has done 40 years of research into the links between writing and emotional processing. His experiments revealed that people who write about emotionally charged episodes experience a marked increase in their physical and mental well-being. Moreover, in a study of recently laid-off workers, he found that those who delved into their feelings of humiliation, anger, anxiety, and relationship difficulties were three times more likely to have been reemployed than those in control groups.

These experiments also revealed that over time those who wrote about their feelings began to develop insights into what those feelings meant (or didn't mean!), using phrases such as "I have learned . . ."; "It struck me that . . ."; "The reason that . . ."; "I now realize . . ."; and "I understand . . ." The process of writing allowed them to

gain a new perspective on their emotions and to understand them and their implications more clearly.

Here's an exercise you can use to reflect through writing. You could do this every day, but it's particularly important when you're going through a tough time or a big transition, or if you're feeling emotional turmoil.

- Set a timer for 20 minutes.
- Using either a notebook or computer, write about your emotional experiences from the past week, month, or year.
- Don't worry about making it perfect or readable; go where your mind takes you.
- At the end, you don't have to save the document; the point is that those thoughts are now out of you and on the page.

You can also use these three approaches—broadening your vocabulary, noting the intensity of an emotion, and writing it out—when trying to better understand *another person's* emotions. As we saw with the example of Ed and his wife, we are just as likely to mislabel someone else's emotions as our own, with similarly complicating consequences. By understanding what they are feeling more precisely, you will be better equipped to respond in a constructive way.

Once you understand *what* you are feeling, then you can better address and learn from those more accurately described emotions. If Neena addresses the sadness and regret she feels in the wake of her failed project—as well

as the anxiety about what it means for her career—that is more productive than trying to figure out how to deal with her anger at Jared. And if Mikhail can recognize his own career anxiety, he can start to craft a plan to build his future more deliberately—rather than simply miring himself in more of the same work when he gets home each night.

Susan David is a founder of the Harvard/McLean Institute of Coaching and is on faculty at Harvard University. She is author of *Emotional Agility* (Avery, 2016), based on the concept named by HBR as a Management Idea of the Year. As a speaker and adviser, David has worked with the senior leadership of hundreds of major organizations, including the United Nations, Ernst & Young, and the World Economic Forum. For more information, go to www.susandavid.com or follow her on Twitter @SusanDavid_PhD.

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CHAPTER 5

Are You Sure You Show Respect?

by Christine Porath

For the last 20 years, I've studied the costs of incivility, as well as the benefits of civility. Across the board, I've found that civility pays. It enhances your influence and performance—and is positively associated with being perceived as a leader.[1]

Being respectful doesn't just benefit you, though; it benefits everyone around you. In a study of nearly 20,000 employees around the world (conducted with HBR), I found that when it comes to garnering commitment and engagement from employees, there's one thing that leaders need to demonstrate: respect. No other leadership behavior had a bigger effect on employees

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across the outcomes we measured. Being treated with respect was more important to employees than recognition and appreciation, communicating an inspiring vision, providing useful feedback—or even opportunities for learning, growth, and development.

However, even when leaders know that showing respect is critical, many struggle to demonstrate it. If you're one of those leaders, consider the following steps:

Ask for focused feedback on your best behaviors

This technique, originated by researcher Laura Roberts and colleagues, will help you see your most respectful self.[2] Collect feedback via email from about 10 people (coworkers, friends, family). Ask each for positive examples of your best behavior. When and how have they seen you treat people well? After compiling the feedback, try to organize the data by summarizing and categorizing it into themes. For example, create a table with columns for commonality, examples (of the behavior), and your thoughts. You might also use Wordle.net to identify themes (you'll also get a colorful picture that can serve as a reminder of you at your best, most civil self). Then look for patterns: When, where, how, with whom are you at your best? Use your insights to reinforce what you're doing well. Be mindful of additional opportunities to be your best civil self. Leverage your interpersonal strengths.

Discover your shortcomings

Gather candid feedback from your colleagues and friends not only on what you're doing that conveys respect, but

also on how you can improve. Specifically, what are your shortcomings? Identify a couple of trusted colleagues who have the best intentions for you and your organization. These are folks who you believe will provide direct and honest feedback. Ask for their views about how you treat other people. What do you do well? What could you do better? Listen carefully.

Consider the actions of Lieutenant Christopher Manning, a naval intelligence officer at the Pentagon, who has systematized ways to get continuous feedback from his direct reports. He expanded the scope of anonymous feedback surveys to include not only how he could improve the organization and himself as a leader, but also his team members' personal happiness (e.g., including how supported people felt by him), and work-life balance. He also instituted an anonymous comment box and encouraged an open-door policy. He even provides incentives for the most insightful critiques, such as the chance to attend a course or conference of interest, extra time off, and public recognition. And he meets one-on-one with his direct reports frequently. The regular feedback from these sources has helped him hone his skills. The bonus: He's found that those who report to him are more engaged and respect him more.

If you don't feel comfortable soliciting the feedback of your entire team, you can also ask a trusted direct report to gather feedback within the organization about whether you (the leader) consistently demonstrate civility, and what situations may trigger uncivil behavior.

Work with a coach

Coaches can uncover potential weaknesses through surveying and interviewing those with whom you work; they can also shadow you at meetings and events to pick up on subtleties including nonverbal behavior. A skilled coach may unearth some of the underlying assumptions, experiences, and personal qualities that make one prone to uncivil behavior.

Ask, specifically, how you can improve

Once you have clarity on which behaviors you want to improve, gather information from others about *how* best to go about this. This "feedforward" method, originated by author Marshall Goldsmith, is a terrific way to gather specific ideas for improving your behavior. The process consists of five steps:

1. Describe your goal clearly and simply to anyone you know.
2. Ask for two suggestions. Encourage creative ideas.
3. Listen carefully. Write the suggestions down.
4. Respond with "thank you." Nothing more. No excuses or defensiveness.
5. Repeat by asking additional people.

Enlist your team in keeping you accountable

Choose one change that could improve your behavior and then experiment, asking your team to help you

by letting you know when they see improvement. For example, after a meeting, ask your team if they saw an improvement in the behavior that you're working on. What was the impact?

Here's an example: A woman I know of—let's call her Karen—enlisted her team to help her change a specific behavior. The team had grown increasingly frustrated by her inability to listen and empower them. While she was highly intelligent, she was constantly interrupting people in meetings and taking over initial ideas before they could even be presented. Karen worked with a coach to develop a technique to avoid this pattern—in this case, tapping her toe instead of interrupting someone. (Other coaches have developed similar techniques, such as counting to 10.) She informed her team that she was working on the behavior, and after a couple of days of meetings, she checked in with them on her progress. This helped establish a norm for more open dialogue—and a shared sense that the team members could count on each other to support their own development.

Make time for reflection

Keep a journal to provide insight into when/where/why you are your best and when you are uncivil. Identify situations that cause you to lose your temper. A leader I worked with named Monica noticed that she was far more curt in the late afternoon. She began her days before 5:00 a.m. By the time late afternoon hit, she was tired and was less emotionally attuned. She was brusque in conversations and less civil in email. Before she started journaling and reflecting on her day, Monica

was unaware of the effect of time of day—and her energy management—on her demeanor. Now she is much more mindful of her behavior. For challenging situations such as conflict, people who trigger her, and communication that requires tact, she waits until the following morning to respond.

Consider tracking your own energy through the day via an energy audit tool, such as "Energy Audit—Awareness and Action," which is available from the University of Michigan.[3] Reflection helps you identify strategies to maintain composure and be your best, most civil self. After adopting some of the improvement strategies, do you see a decrease in incivility, or an increase in civility? Track yourself and review progress on a regular basis (e.g., weekly or monthly).

The path toward building greater self-awareness and treating people more respectfully at work doesn't have to be walked alone. While you're working to improve your own behavior, encourage your team members to do the same. Have an open discussion with your team about what you and your teammates do or say that conveys respect. How or when are you and your teammates less than civil to each other? What could you do or say better? Discuss what the team will gain by being more respectful of each other. As the entire team develops norms, hold one another accountable for them. Consider yourselves coaches that are helping to improve both individual and team performance.

The key to mastering civility begins with improving your self-awareness. Armed with this information, you can begin tweaking your behavior to enhance your influence and effectiveness. Small acts can have big returns. Your civility will cascade throughout your organization, with benefits to you—and your organization.

Christine Porath is an associate professor of management at Georgetown University, the author of *Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace* (Grand Central Publishing, forthcoming), and a coauthor of *The Cost of Bad Behavior* (Portfolio, 2009).

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SECTION THREE

Manage Your Emotions

CHAPTER 6

Make Your Emotions Work for You

by Susan David

We often hear tips and tricks for helping us to "control" our emotions, but that's the wrong idea. Strong emotions aren't bad; they don't need to be pushed down or controlled; they are, in fact, data. Our emotions evolved as a signaling system, a way to help us communicate with each other and to better understand ourselves. What we need to do is learn to develop *emotional agility*, the capacity to mine even the most difficult emotions for data that can help us make better decisions.

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What's the Function of the Emotion?

To make the most of that data, ask yourself what the *function* of your emotion is. What is it telling you? What is it trying to signal?

Consider the example of Mikhail, who found himself in a perpetual cycle of stress because of the never-ending onslaught of tasks at work. As he more precisely defined his emotions, he realized what he was feeling wasn't just stress: he felt a more general dissatisfaction with his work, disappointment in some of his career choices, and anxiety about what the future held for him. Once Mikhail recognized and accepted these emotions, he was able to see what they were signaling to him: He had started to question whether he was on the right career path.

This revelation meant that instead of tackling a productivity problem by becoming more disciplined about prioritizing his tasks or saying no to extra work, Mikhail was able to do something much more appropriate and constructive. He began working with a career coach. By examining what his emotions were telling him, rather than pushing them away or focusing on the wrong problem, he learned something new about himself and was eventually able to find a new career path where he was just as busy—but felt much less stressed.

Our emotions can teach us valuable lessons. Let them shine a light on what you want to change, how you want to act in the future, or what is valuable to you.

Is Your Reaction Aligned with Your Values?

Our emotions can also help us understand our deepest values. They can often signal what is more important to us: You feel love for your family. You feel ambition at work and appreciate achievement and self-worth. You feel fulfilled when you've been able to help a direct report achieve their goals. You feel peace and satisfaction on a mountain summit. It's far better to focus on these deeper values rather than your immediate emotions, which can spur poor decisions.

Let's say that you need to give some difficult feedback to one of your direct reports. You're anxious about the conversation and you've been putting it off (which just makes you more anxious). In examining your emotions, you realize that one of the values behind your procrastination is fairness. She's a strong employee, and you just don't want to be unfair to her. So, you ask yourself: How does having or not having the conversation either bring you toward or move you away from your value of fairness? Looking at the situation in this light, you can see that giving her the feedback and helping her to succeed is actually *more* fair to her—and to your whole team—than caving to your anxieties. You've been able to unhook yourself from the thrall of your immediate emotions and make a better choice that is true to the values that underlie them.

This kind of thinking can help you avoid situations in which you do something that makes you feel good in

the short term but doesn't align with your values in the long term. Avoiding a conversation is a typical example, but there are many others: brashly telling someone off for getting on your nerves when you value compassion; sticking with a comfortable job that doesn't align with your dream of starting a business when you value growth; criticizing yourself for the smallest things when you really value self-affirmation.

Managing emotions isn't just doing away with them; it's putting strategies in place that let you use them effectively rather than letting them govern your behaviors and actions. Your emotions are your natural guidance system—and they are more effective when you don't try to fight them.

Susan David is a founder of the Harvard/McLean Institute of Coaching and is on faculty at Harvard University. She is author of *Emotional Agility* (Avery, 2016), based on the concept named by HBR as a Management Idea of the Year. As a speaker and adviser, David has worked with the senior leadership of hundreds of major organizations, including the United Nations, Ernst & Young, and the World Economic Forum. For more information, go to www.susandavid.com or follow her on Twitter @SusanDavid_PhD.

CHAPTER 7

Defuse a Challenging Interaction

Conflicts stir up many emotions, especially negative thoughts and feelings. To successfully manage these disagreements in the moment, you need to address your own emotions as well as those of the other person.

Reframe Negative Thoughts

During difficult interactions, you may begin to question your perceptions about yourself. For example, suppose a direct report says, "I didn't attend the meeting because I didn't think you valued my ideas." In response, you

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Adapted from "Address Emotions" in the Harvard ManageMentor topic "Difficult Interactions" (Harvard Business Publishing, 2016, electronic)

wonder to yourself, "Maybe I'm not a competent manager after all."

For many people, the sense that their self-image is being challenged creates intense emotions. These feelings can become overwhelming, making it virtually impossible to converse productively about any subject. To experience—and then let go of—difficult feelings:

- **Focus on the other person's intentions and on the facts.** If you discover that your employee had legitimate reasons for not showing up at a weekly meeting, your annoyance may fade away.
- **Examine your contributions to the problem.** If you realize that you've accidentally advised an employee to focus on an unnecessary task, your frustration may dissipate.
- **Question your assumptions.** If you find your belief that a colleague doesn't value product quality is mistaken, you may feel less anger over her tendency to take shortcuts.

Your goal in reframing negative thoughts is to be able to express your complete range of emotions without judging or blaming the other person.

Neutralize Unproductive Behaviors

Although you can work to manage your own reactions, you can't control those of the other person in the conflict. Try the techniques in exhibit 3 for dealing with unproductive behaviors:

EXHIBIT 3

Tackling unproductive behaviors

If the other person . . .	Try to . . .
Is aggressive and disrespectful	• Command respect by remaining calm. • Interrupt verbal attacks by repeating the person's name. • Communicate your bottom line: "When you're ready to speak to me with respect, I will take all the time you want to discuss this."
Doesn't listen to your side	• Go into the conversation prepared to support your own perceptions and ideas. • Redirect the person to your idea or information with phrases such as "I was just wondering . . . " "Bear with me a minute," or "What do you suppose . . . ?" • Acknowledge that the person possesses valuable knowledge, too.
Has an explosive outburst	• Take a break and then continue the conversation. • Get the person's attention by waving your arms and calling their name loudly enough to be heard. • Express genuine concern for the person: "Joe, nobody should have to feel this way! I want to help."
Is uncommunicative	• Schedule plenty of time for the person to respond to your ideas and questions. • Ask open-ended questions: "What are you thinking?" "How do you want to proceed?" "Where should we go from here?" • Gaze expectantly at the person for a longer-than-usual period of time after making a comment or asking a question.
Assumes that the situation can't get better	• Give the person time to consider your plan and get back to you. • Bring up and address the negative aspects of an idea before the other person does.

CHAPTER 8

Stay Grounded in Stressful Moments

by Leah Weiss

Mindfulness should be as much a physical practice as it is a mental one. Given its name, you might think mindfulness is something you do only with your mind. In fact, lots of research, including my own, has shown that paying attention to our bodies is often an easy way into mindfulness and helps us reduce stress while it's happening.

This may seem counterintuitive because when our mind is overwhelmed, our body is often the last thing we're thinking about. If we notice our bodies at all in moments of stress, most likely it is as they interrupt our

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normal activities: carpal tunnel syndrome, back pain, breast pumping, dental appointments, sore feet, sick days, or simply the routine hunger that forces us to stop what we're doing multiple times a day and eat. Yet if we focus our attention on our bodies, they can be our anchor in what's happening right now, even if the sensations are unpleasant.

This is how anchoring works: We bring our attention into our bodies, noticing—rather than avoiding—the tension, circulation, pain, pleasure, or just neutral physical experience of, say, our right shoulder or the arch of our left foot. This practice helps us snap back to reality. In fact, our bodies are the quickest, surest way back to the present moment when our minds are lost in rehashing the past or rehearsing the future.

We cause ourselves a lot of unnecessary suffering when our minds aren't paying attention. The amygdala, located in the brain's medial temporal lobe, is the part of the brain that detects and processes fear. When our amygdala is activated by a situation that is interpreted as a potential threat, even if we are just reading an unpleasant email, it initiates physiological changes such as increased muscle tension and accelerated breathing. This association becomes so strong that we take the body's reaction as evidence of danger, just as Pavlov's dogs took the sound of the bell as evidence of dinner. As a result, a vicious cycle can develop wherein the increased muscle tension and rapid breathing caused by an activated amygdala further activates the amygdala. Thankfully, we can use anchoring to break out of it.

One of my students who was working on a startup business used to panic before meeting with potential venture capitalists. His mind would spin with fears of the worst outcomes: his pitch rejected, his business idea exposed as worthless. Once he learned to tune in to his body, to use a brief minute to anchor by taking a few breaths and feeling his feet on the ground, he calmed down and became poised to have much better conversations. Here are some simple, effective anchoring practices you can use:

- **Take a single breath.** It takes just one intentional breath to change our perspective. A single breath gives you a break from the mind's chatter and a chance for your body to regulate after amping up in response to a perceived threat. Most of the time, when you're in distress, you're in the middle of telling yourself a story and you fully believe it. A breath can take you out of the story, making you less gullible. You can follow the breath into your body, where you gain just enough distance to judge whether your head is with you (in line with your current intentions and greater purpose) or against you, and then consciously choose which way you want to go.

- **Pay attention to emotions.** Another reason to anchor in your body is that it's where you feel your emotions, which are important to acknowledge even if they may seem like a liability, especially at work. I've studied the downsides of

emotional suppression and I can assure you—it's not beneficial.[1]

It's paradoxical, but nonjudgmentally engaging with negative emotions *negatively* correlates with negative emotions and mood disorder. In other words, if you acknowledge and recognize unpleasant emotions, they have less power to cause you distress. In one study, participants wrote every day for four days about either a traumatic experience or a neutral event.[2] Those who wrote about trauma made fewer health center visits in the following six months than those who wrote about a neutral event. When you pay attention to your body, you can catch emotional information upstream, before it hijacks your whole system—once it does, it's too late to use it to your advantage.

- **Remember that your colleagues have bodies too.** Annoyed with your boss? Think you can't last another day with an impossible colleague? If you let it, your body can connect you to other people—even difficult ones—since the body is a major part of what we have in common. This sounds obvious, but the implications are profound. Our bodies and the pleasure and pain that come with them—their attendant aches and illnesses, their needs and indignities, the impossibility of choosing the one we want, the fear of losing it someday, and the ways we fight our bodies or pretend they don't exist—are shared experiences. When you ignore your body (or try to), you miss out on a

fundamental part of what we have in common. The empathy gained from this awareness helps you to have productive professional relationships, rather than suffering from ongoing frustration and pain.

- **Magnify little pleasures.** Don't underestimate the joy of taking that first sip of afternoon coffee. It's human nature to notice pain more than pleasure, but with reminders and practice you can experience joy throughout the day in the simple, reliable pleasures of having a body. It might be from sitting when you've been standing for too long, or standing up and stretching when you've been sitting; holding a new pen with a particularly cushy, ergonomic grip; laughing hard when something's funny; eating when you're hungry; the relative quiet of the office after a morning with screaming kids; slipping out of uncomfortable shoes under your desk. Every day, no matter how lousy, affords countless opportunities like these to feel good. Recently, I had a meeting at the VA hospital in Palo Alto and came across two veterans as I was walking. They were sitting in front of the building, both in wheelchairs. One man leaned over to his companion and said, "Well, it's great that we can move our hands." The other responded, "Yes, you are right. That is great!" Their perspective provides a powerful reminder that most of us can, if we choose, find within our daily routine a small joy worthy of being celebrated.

Stress is an inevitable aspect of our lives at work, but you don't need elaborate practices or escape mechanisms to engage with it. You simply need to have the wherewithal to ground yourself in a physical sensation, to anchor and come back to reality. You need only a brief moment to tap your feet on the ground and be reminded that you have a reliable and ever-present instrument to mitigate your stress. And, it just so happens, you were born with it.

Leah Weiss is a teacher, writer, and researcher at Stanford Graduate School of Business, the Director of Education at HopeLab, and the author of the forthcoming book *Heart at Work*.

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CHAPTER 9

Recovering from an Emotional Outburst

by Susan David

It happens—we all get emotional at work. You might scream, or cry, or pound the table and stamp your feet. This is not ideal office behavior, of course, and there are ramifications to these outbursts, but they don't have to be career-killers either. If you take a close look at what happened, why you acted the way you did, and take steps to remedy the situation, you can turn an outburst into an opportunity.

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on May 8, 2015, as "Recovering from an Emotional Outburst at Work" (product #H022A3)

If you tend to suppress your emotions, you're likely to just ignore your tantrum and move on. If you are prone to ruminating over your mistakes, you'll overthink your outburst and beat yourself up about it.

Neither of these strategies is productive; they don't help you solve the problem *or* promote your own well-being. Instead, treat your outburst for what it is: data. A key emotional intelligence skill is being able to manage your emotion, but you can't manage what you can't recognize and understand. So first, be open to emotions. What was I feeling here? Emotions are signals, beacons that show you that you care about something.

To *recognize* your emotions, you have to be able to differentiate between feelings—sadness, anger, frustration (see chapter 4 in this guide). In many work environments, people suffer from what psychologists call *alexithymia*—a dispositional difficulty in accurately labeling and expressing what they're feeling. These people tend to be vague about their emotions. So a manager will say to herself, for example, "Gee, I yelled because I was really stressed out." But that gives her no information about what was really going on.

Once you've recognized the emotion—fear, disappointment, anger—your next step is to *understand* what, exactly, caused it: "Why is it that I reacted in this particular way?" "What was happening in this situation that I found upsetting?" "What values of mine may have been transgressed or challenged?" For example, maybe you lost it and screamed at a colleague when you found out that your project was cut. If you dig deeper, you may find that it wasn't exactly about the project but rather how

the decision was made—that you didn't feel it was made fairly.

The research on emotions shows that there are general triggers that you should be aware of.[1] When your outburst is anger—yelling, stomping your feet—it's typically because you're frustrated or feel thwarted. You've been stopped from doing something that's important to you. When you feel sadness or cry, it's usually because of a loss. Acting out on anxiety is prompted by a sense of threat. It's helpful to think about these universal triggers, and then ask, "What is it specifically that was important to me in this situation?"

Once you've recognized how you feel, and why you feel it, you can focus on what to do to make things better—to *manage* the situation. It goes without saying that you should apologize if you yelled or lost your cool, but that's not enough. Your goal isn't just to repair the relationship, but to strengthen it.

After you've calmed down and you return to your team the following day or week, instead of saying, "Gee, I'm so sorry about what I did; now let's move on," address what really happened for you. You might say something like, "I got really mad and I'm not proud of my behavior. I've been thinking long and hard about what it was that I found so upsetting and I've realized that my sense of fairness was challenged because of how the defunding decisions were made."

There's research that shows that when you appropriately disclose your emotions in this way, people are more likely to treat you with compassion and forgiveness than if you had just offered an apology.[2] From there you start

a shared conversation about what's important to each of you and how you can work better together.

No one wants to earn a reputation as a crier or a screamer at work. Instead of running and hiding or wallowing in self-pity when you've lost it, bring a good dose of compassion and curiosity to the situation. To be kind and compassionate toward yourself—especially in the moments you are least proud of—is not the same as letting yourself off the hook. In fact, studies show that people who are self-compassionate are much more likely to hold themselves to high standards and work to make things right.[3] And treating yourself that way is more likely to inspire others to do the same.

Susan David is a founder of the Harvard/McLean Institute of Coaching and is on faculty at Harvard University. She is author of *Emotional Agility* (Avery, 2016), based on the concept named by HBR as a Management Idea of the Year. As a speaker and adviser, David has worked with the senior leadership of hundreds of major organizations, including the United Nations, Ernst & Young, and the World Economic Forum. For more information, go to www.susandavid.com or follow her on Twitter @SusanDavid_PhD.

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SECTION FOUR

Everyday Emotional Intelligence

CHAPTER 10

Writing Resonant Emails

by Andrew Brodsky

Imagine sending a detailed question to your boss and getting a one-word response: "No." Is she angry? Offended by your email? Or just very busy? When I conduct research with organizations on the topic of communication, one of the most common themes raised by both employees and managers is the challenge of trying to communicate emotional or sensitive issues over email. Email, of course, lacks most normal cues for relaying emotion, such as tone of voice and facial expressions.

But in many cases, using email is simply unavoidable. So how can you balance the need to communicate with

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Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on April 23, 2013, as "The Do's and Don'ts of Work Email" (product #H020WK)

avoiding the potential pitfalls of using emotion in email? Here are three concrete, research-based recommendations:

Understand what drives how emails are interpreted

It is clear that people often misinterpret emotion in email, but what drives the direction of the misinterpretation? For one, people infuse their emotional expectations into how they read messages, regardless of the sender's actual intent.[1] Consider the email, "*Good job on the current draft, but I think we can continue to improve it.*" Coming from a peer, this email will seem very collaborative; coming from a supervisor, it may seem critical.

In addition to relative position (emails from people high in power tend to be perceived as more negative), there are other contextual factors to consider: the length of a relationship (emails from people we know well tend to be perceived as less negative), the emotional history of the relationship, and the individual's personality (negative people tend to perceive messages as more negative).

The first step in avoiding miscommunication is to try to stand in the recipient's shoes, and imagine how they are likely to interpret your message. Doing so can help you to prevent misunderstandings before they ever occur.

Mimic behaviors

What is the best way to convey emotions via email? Emoticons? Word choice? Exclamation points? There is no single correct answer; the proper cues will vary based

on the context. For instance, you likely wouldn't want to send a smiley face emoticon to a client organization that is known for having a very formal culture. Alternatively, you wouldn't want to send an overly formal email to a very close colleague.

One strategy that has been found to be very effective across settings is to engage in behavioral mimicry—using emoticons, word-choice, and slang/jargon in a similar manner to the person with whom you are communicating. In a set of studies of American, Dutch, and Thai negotiators, using behavioral mimicry in the early stages of text-based chat negotiations increased individual outcomes by 30%. This process of mimicry increases trust because people tend to feel an affinity toward those who act similarly to them.[2]

State your emotions

While mimicking behaviors can be effective, it is still a rather subtle strategy that leaves the potential for emotional ambiguity. The simplest solution to avoid any confusion is to just explicitly state the emotion that you want to relay in your email.

One excellent example of how this works comes from a media organization I recently worked with. I asked employees for an email that they felt was written very poorly, and one employee provided me with the following message from a manager:

> *The intro of the commercial needs to be redone. I'm sure that's the client's doing and you will handle it :). Warm Regards, [Manager's Name].*

To me as an outsider (and I'm guessing to the manager as well), this email seemed well crafted to avoid offending the employee. However, the employee felt differently and explained: "She knows perfectly well that I made the terrible intro, and she was saying, 'Well, I'm sure the client made that segment and that you will tackle it,' and then she put a little smiley face at the end. So overall, a condescendingly nasty tone."

If the manager had avoided subtlety and stated her meaning directly, there might have been less room for interpretation. For example, what if she had written:

> *I am very happy with your work so far. I think the intro could be improved, though; would you mind giving it another shot?*

The employee would have had far less ambiguity to fill in with her own emotional expectations.

Yet people rarely state their intended emotions, even when the stakes are high. Research from NYU has shown that many people are overconfident in their ability to accurately relay emotions when it comes to email.[3] It may seem obvious to the message sender that a coworker who never takes sick days will realize a comment about them leaving early is humorous rather than serious. However, that coworker might be particularly concerned about being seen as lazy and will feel hurt or offended.

Given the constantly evolving nature of organizational communication, there is still a lot to learn about effective email use. However, there are some clear areas where we can improve. In reality, we all have the same

flaw: We tend to be overly focused on ourselves and our own goals, while failing to amply account for other people's perspectives. Using these methods for bridging your and your email recipient's perspectives, by both increasing message clarity and building trust, will help you to ensure effective communication.

Andrew Brodsky is a PhD candidate in organizational behavior at Harvard Business School.

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CHAPTER 11

Running Powerful Meetings

by Annie McKee

Yes, we all hate meetings. Yes, they are usually a waste of time. And yes, they're here to stay. So it's your responsibility as a leader to make them better. This doesn't mean just making them shorter, more efficient, and more organized. People need to enjoy them and—dare I say it—have fun.

So how do we fix meetings so they are more enjoyable and produce more positive feelings? Sure, invite the right people, create better agendas, and be better prepared. Those are baseline fixes. But if you really want to improve how people work together at meetings, you'll need to rely on—and maybe develop—a couple of key

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emotional intelligence competencies: empathy and emotional self-management.

Why empathy? Empathy is a competency that allows you to read people. Who is supporting whom? Who is pissed off, and who is coasting? Where is the resistance? This isn't as easy as it seems. Sometimes, the smartest resisters often look like supporters, but they're not supportive at all. They're smart, sneaky idea killers.

Carefully reading people will also help you understand the major and often hidden conflicts in the group. Hint: These conflicts probably have nothing to do with the topics discussed or decisions being made at the meeting. They are far more likely to be linked to very human dynamics like who is allowed to influence whom (headquarters versus the field, expats versus local nationals) and power dynamics between genders and among people of various races.

Empathy lets you see and manage these power dynamics. Many of us would like to think that these sorts of concerns—and office politics in general—are beneath us, unimportant, or just for those Machiavellian folks we all dislike. Realistically, though, power is hugely important in groups because it is the real currency in most organizations. And it plays out in meetings. Learning to read how the flow of power is moving and shifting can help you lead the meeting—and everything else.

Keep in mind that employing empathy will help you understand how people are responding to *you*. As a leader you may be the most powerful person at the meeting. Some people, the dependent types, will defer at every turn. That feels good, for a minute. Carry on that

way, and you're likely to create a dependent group—or one that is polarized between those who will do anything you want and those who will not.

This is where emotional self-management comes in, for a couple of reasons. First, take a look at the dependent folks in your meetings. Again, it can feel really good to have people admire you and agree with your every word. In fact, this can be a huge relief in our conflict-ridden organizations. But again, if you don't manage your response, you will make group dynamics worse. You will also look like a fool. Others are reading the group, too, and they will rightly read that you like it when people go along with you. They will see that you are falling prey to your own ego or to those who want to please or manipulate you.

Second, strong emotions set the tone for the entire group. We take our cue from one another about how to feel about what's going on around us. Are we in danger? Is there cause for celebration? Should we be fed up and cynical or hopeful and committed? Here's why this matters in meetings: If you, as a leader, effectively project out your more positive emotions, such as hope and enthusiasm, others will "mirror" these feelings and the general tone of the group will be marked by optimism and a sense of "we're in this together, and we can do it."[1] And there is a strong neurological link between feelings and cognition. We think more clearly and more creatively when our feelings are largely positive and when we are appropriately challenged, as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi wrote in his classic *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*.

The other side of the coin is obvious. Your negative emotions are also contagious, and they are almost always destructive if unchecked and unmanaged. Express anger, contempt, or disrespect, and you will definitely push people into fight mode—individually and collectively. Express disdain, and you'll alienate people far beyond the end of the meeting. And it doesn't matter who you feel this way about. All it takes is for people to see it, and they will catch it—and worry that next time your target will be them.

This is not to say that all positive emotions are good all the time or that you should never express negative emotions. The point is that the leader's emotions are highly infectious. Know this and manage your feelings accordingly to create the kind of environment where people can work together to make decisions and get things done.

It may go without saying, but you can't do any of this with your phone on. As Daniel Goleman shares in his book *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence*, we are not nearly as good at multitasking as we think we are. Actually we stink at it. So turn it off and pay attention to the people you are with today.

In the end, it's your job to make sure people leave your meeting feeling pretty good about what's happened, their contributions, and you as the leader. Empathy allows you to read what's going on, and self-management helps you move the group to a mood that supports getting things done—and happiness.

Annie McKee is a senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of the PennCLO Executive Doctoral Program. She is the author of *Primal Leadership* (with Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis), as well as *Resonant Leadership* and *Becoming a Resonant Leader*. Her new book, *How to Be Happy at Work*, is forthcoming from Harvard Business Review Press in September 2017.

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CHAPTER 12

Giving Difficult Feedback

by Monique Valcour

Over the years, I've asked hundreds of executive students what skills they believe are essential for leaders. "The ability to give tough feedback" comes up frequently. But what exactly is "tough feedback"? The phrase connotes bad news, like when you have to tell a team member that they've screwed up on something important. "Tough" also signifies the way we think we need to be when giving negative feedback: firm, resolute, and unyielding.

But "tough" also points to the discomfort some of us experience when giving negative feedback, and to the challenge of doing so in a way that motivates change

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Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on August 11, 2015, as "How to Give Tough Feedback That Helps People Grow" (product #H029QB)

instead of making the other person feel defensive. Managers fall into a number of common traps when offering feedback. We might be angry at an employee and use the conversation to blow off steam rather than to coach. Or we may delay giving needed feedback because we anticipate that the employee will become argumentative and refuse to accept responsibility. We might try surrounding negative feedback with positive feedback, like disguising a bitter-tasting pill in a spoonful of honey. But this approach is misguided, because we don't want the negative feedback to slip by unnoticed in the honey. Instead, it's essential to create conditions in which the receiver can take in feedback, reflect on it, and learn from it.

To get a feel for what this looks like in practice, I juxtapose two feedback conversations that occurred following a workplace conflict. MJ Paulitz, a physical therapist in the Pacific Northwest, was treating a hospital patient one day when a fellow staff member paged her. Following procedure, she excused herself and stepped out of the treatment room to respond to the page. The colleague who sent it didn't answer her phone when MJ called, nor had she left a message describing the situation that warranted the page. This happened two more times during the same treatment session. The third time she left her patient to respond to the page, MJ lost her cool and left an angry voicemail message for her colleague. Upset upon hearing the message, the staff member reported it to their supervisor as abusive.

MJ's first feedback session took place in her supervisor's office. She recalls, "When I went into his office, he

had already decided that I was the person at fault, he had all the information he needed, and he wasn't interested in hearing my side of the story. He did not address the three times she pulled me out of patient care. He did not acknowledge that that might have been the fuse that set me off." Her supervisor referred MJ to the human resources department for corrective action. She left seething with a sense of injustice.

MJ describes the subsequent feedback conversation with human resources as transformative. "The woman in HR could see that I had a lot of just-under-the-surface feelings, and she acknowledged them. The way she did it was genius: She eased into it. She didn't make me go first. Instead, she said, 'I can only imagine what you're feeling right now. Here you are in my office, in corrective action. If it were me, I might be feeling angry, frustrated, embarrassed . . . Are any of these true for you?' That made a huge difference."

With trust established, MJ was ready to take responsibility for her behavior and commit to changing it. Next the HR person said, "Now let's talk about how you reacted to those feelings in the moment." She created a space that opened up a genuine dialogue.

The subsequent conversation created powerful learning that has stuck with MJ to this day:

> *Oftentimes, when we're feeling a strong emotion, we go down what the HR person called a "cowpath," because it's well worn, very narrow, and always leads to the same place. Let's say you're angry. What do you do?*

You blow up. It's okay that you feel those things; it's just not okay to blow up. She asked me to think about what I could do to get on a different path.

The feedback from the HR person helped me learn to find the space between what I'm feeling and the next thing that slides out of my mouth. She gave me the opportunity to grow internally. What made it work was establishing a safe space, trust, and rapport, and then getting down to "you need to change"—rather than starting with "you need to change," which is what my supervisor did. I did need to change; that was the whole point of the corrective action. But she couldn't start there, because I would have become defensive, shut down and not taken responsibility. I still to this day think that my coworker should have been reprimanded. But I also own my part in it. I see that I went down that cowpath, and I know that I won't do it a second time.

The difference in the two feedback sessions illustrated above boils down to coaching, which deepens self-awareness and catalyzes growth, versus reprimanding, which sparks self-protection and avoidance of responsibility. To summarize, powerful, high-impact feedback conversations share the following elements:

1. An intention to help the employee grow, rather than to show him he was wrong. The feedback should increase, not drain, the employee's motivation and resources for change. When preparing for a feedback conversation as a manager, reflect

on what you hope to achieve and on what impact you'd like to have on the employee, perhaps by doing a short meditation just before the meeting.

2. Openness on the part of the feedback giver, which is essential to creating a high-quality connection that facilitates change. If you start off feeling uncomfortable and self-protective, your employee will match that energy, and you'll each leave the conversation frustrated with the other person.

3. Inviting the employee into the problem-solving process. You can ask questions such as: What ideas do you have? What are you taking away from this conversation? What steps will you take, by when, and how will I know?

Giving developmental feedback that sparks growth is a critical challenge to master, because it can make the difference between an employee who contributes powerfully and positively to the organization and one who feels diminished by the organization and contributes far less. A single conversation can switch an employee on—or shut her down. A true developmental leader sees the raw material for brilliance in every employee and creates the conditions to let it shine, even when the challenge is tough.

Monique Valcour is a management academic, coach, and consultant.

CHAPTER 13

Making Smart Decisions

A summary of the full-length HBR article "Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions" by **Andrew Campbell**, **Jo Whitehead**, *and* **Sydney Finkelstein**, *highlighting key ideas and company examples, and a checklist for putting the idea into action.*

IDEA IN BRIEF

- Leaders make decisions largely through unconscious processes that neuroscientists call pattern recognition and emotional tagging. These processes usually make for quick, effective decisions, but they can be distorted by bias.

Adapted from *Harvard Business Review*, February 2009 (product #R0902D)

- Managers need to find systematic ways to recognize the sources of bias—what the authors call "red flag conditions"—and then design safeguards that introduce more analysis, greater debate, or stronger governance. The authors identify three of these red flag conditions as the presence of:
  - Inappropriate self-interest, which, according to research, can bias even well-intentioned professionals such as doctors and auditors.
  - Distorting attachments to people, places, and things—for example, an executive's reluctance to sell a business unit they've worked in.
  - Misleading memories, which may seem relevant and comparable to the current situation but lead our thinking down the wrong path by obscuring important differentiating factors.
- By using the approach described in this article, companies will avoid many flawed decisions that are caused by the way our brains operate.

IDEA IN PRACTICE

Leaders make quick decisions by recognizing patterns in the situations they encounter, and then responding to the emotional associations attached to those patterns. Most of the time, the process works well, but it can result in serious mistakes when those emotional associations are biased.

Example: When Wang Laboratories launched its own personal computer, founder An Wang chose to create a proprietary operating system even though the IBM PC was clearly becoming the standard. This blunder was influenced by his belief that IBM had cheated him early in his career, which made him reluctant to consider using a system linked to an IBM product.

To guard against distorted decision making and strengthen the decision process, get the help of an independent person to identify which decision makers are likely to be affected by self-interest, emotional attachments, or misleading memories.

Example: The about-to-be-promoted head of the cosmetics business at one Indian company was considering whether to appoint her number-two as her successor. She recognized that her judgment might be distorted by her attachment to her colleague and by her vested interest in keeping her workload down during the transition. The executive asked a headhunter to evaluate her colleague and to determine whether better candidates could be found externally.

If the risk of distorted decision making is high, build safeguards into the decision process. Expose decision makers to additional experience and analysis, design in more debate and opportunities for challenge, add more oversight, and monitor whether the decision is generating the expected results.

Example: In helping the CEO make an important strategic decision, the chairman of one global

IDENTIFYING RED FLAGS

Red flags are useful only if they can be spotted before a decision is made. How can you recognize them in complex situations? We have developed the following seven-step process:

1. ***Lay out the range of options.*** It's never possible to list them all. But it's normally helpful to note the extremes. These provide boundaries for the decision.

2. ***List the main decision makers.*** Who is going to be influential in making the judgment calls and the final choice? There may be only one or two people involved. But there could also be 10 or more.

3. ***Choose one decision maker to focus on.*** It's usually best to start with the most influential person. Then identify red flag conditions that might distort that individual's thinking. Discuss with the individual if needed.

4. ***Check for inappropriate self-interest or distorting attachments.*** Is any option likely to be particularly attractive or unattractive to the decision maker because of personal interests or attachments to people, places, or things? Do any of these interests or attachments conflict with the objectives of the decision?

5. ***Check for misleading memories.*** What are the uncertainties in this decision? For each area of uncertainty, consider whether the decision maker might draw on potentially misleading memories. Think about past experiences that could mislead, especially ones with strong emotional associations. Think also about previous judgments that could now be unsound, given the current situation.

6. ***Repeat the analysis with the next-most-influential person.*** In a complex case, it may be necessary to consider many more people, and the process may bring to light a long list of possible red flags.

7. ***Review the list of red flags you have identified for bias.*** Determine whether the balance of red flags is likely to bias the decision in favor of or against some options. If so, put one or more safeguards in place. Biases can cancel each other out, so it is necessary to assess the balance taking account of the likely influence of each person involved in the decision.

chemical company encouraged the chief executive to seek advice from investment bankers, set up a project team to analyze options, and create a steering committee that included the chairman and the CFO to review the CEO's proposal.

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CHAPTER 14

An Emotional Strategy for Negotiations

by Alison Wood Brooks

It is, without questions, my favorite day of the semester—the day when I teach my MBA students a negotiation exercise called "Honoring the Contract."

I assign students to partners, and each reads a different account of a (fictitious) troubled relationship between a supplier (a manufacturer of computer components) and a client (a search engine startup). They learn that the two parties signed a detailed contract eight months earlier, but now they're at odds over several of

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the terms (sales volume, pricing, product reliability, and energy efficiency specs). Each student assumes the role of either client or supplier and receives confidential information about company finances and politics. Then each pair is tasked with renegotiating—a process that could lead to an amended deal, termination of the contract, or expensive litigation.

What makes this simulation interesting, however, lies not in the details of the case but in the top-secret instructions given to one side of each pairing before the exercise begins: "Please start the negotiation with a display of anger. You must display anger for a minimum of 10 minutes at the beginning." The instructions go on to give specific tips for showing anger: Interrupt the other party. Call them "unfair" or "unreasonable." Blame them personally for the disagreement. Raise your voice.

Before the negotiations begin, I spread the pairs all over the building so that the students can't see how others are behaving. Then, as the pairs negotiate, I walk around and observe. Although some students struggle, many are spectacularly good at feigning anger. They wag a finger in their partner's face. They pace around. I've never seen the exercise result in a physical confrontation—but it has come close. Some of the negotiators who did not get the secret instructions react by trying to defuse the other person's anger. But some react angrily themselves—and it's amazing how quickly the emotional responses escalate. When I bring everyone back into the classroom after 30 minutes, there are always students still yelling at each other or shaking their heads in disbelief.

During the debriefing, we survey the pairs to see how angry they felt and how they fared in resolving the problem. Often, the more anger the parties showed, the more likely it was that the negotiation ended poorly—for example, in litigation or an impasse (no deal). Once I've clued the entire class in on the setup, discussion invariably makes its way to this key insight: Bringing anger to a negotiation is like throwing a bomb into the process, and it's apt to have a profound effect on the outcome.

Until 20 years ago, few researchers paid much attention to the role of emotions in negotiating—how feelings can influence the way people overcome conflict, reach agreement, and create value when dealing with another party. Instead, negotiation scholars focused primarily on strategy and tactics—particularly the ways in which parties can identify and consider alternatives, use leverage, and execute the choreography of offers and counteroffers. Scientific understanding of negotiation also tended to home in on the transactional nature of working out a deal: how to get the most money or profit from the process. Even when experts started looking at psychological influences on negotiations, they focused on diffuse and nonspecific moods—such as whether negotiators felt generally positive or negative, and how that affected their behavior.

Over the past decade, however, researchers have begun examining how specific emotions—anger, sadness, disappointment, anxiety, envy, excitement, and regret—can affect the behavior of negotiators. They've studied the differences between what happens when people simply feel these emotions and what happens when they

also express them to the other party through words or actions. In negotiations that are less transactional and involve parties in long-term relationships, understanding the role of emotions is even more important than it is in transactional deal making.

This new branch of research is proving extremely useful. We all have the ability to regulate how we experience emotions, and specific strategies can help us improve tremendously in that regard. We also have some control over the extent to which we express our feelings—and again, there are specific ways to cloak (or emphasize) an expression of emotion when doing so may be advantageous. For instance, research shows that feeling or looking anxious results in suboptimal negotiation outcomes. So individuals who are prone to anxiety when brokering a deal can take certain steps both to limit their nervousness and to make it less obvious to their negotiation opponent. The same is true for other emotions.

In the pages that follow, I discuss—and share coping strategies for—many of the emotions people typically feel over the course of a negotiation. Anxiety is most likely to crop up before the process begins or during its early stages. We're prone to experience anger or excitement in the heat of the discussions. And we're most likely to feel disappointment, sadness, or regret in the aftermath.

Avoiding Anxiety

Anxiety is a state of distress in reaction to threatening stimuli—in particular, novel situations that have the potential for undesirable outcomes. In contrast to anger, which motivates people to escalate conflict (the "fight"

part of the fight-or-flight response), anxiety trips the "flight" switch and makes people want to exit the scene.

Because patience and persistence are often desirable when negotiating, the urge to exit quickly is counterproductive. But the negative effects of feeling anxious while negotiating may go further. In my recent research, I wondered if anxious negotiators also develop low aspirations and expectations, which could lead them to make timid first offers—a behavior that directly predicts poor negotiating outcomes.

In work with Maurice Schweitzer in 2011, I explored how anxiety influences negotiations. First we surveyed 185 professionals about the emotions they expected to feel before negotiating with a stranger, negotiating to buy a car, and negotiating to increase their salary. When dealing with a stranger or asking for a higher salary, anxiety was the dominant emotional expectation; when negotiating for the car, anxiety was second only to excitement.

To understand how anxiety can affect negotiators, we then asked a separate group of 136 participants to negotiate a cell phone contract that required agreeing on a purchase price, a warranty period, and the length of the contract. We induced anxiety in half the participants by having them listen to continuous three-minute clips of the menacing theme music from the film *Psycho*, while the other half listened to pleasant music by Handel. (Researchers call this *incidental* emotional manipulation, and it's quite powerful. Listening to the *Psycho* music is genuinely uncomfortable: People's palms get sweaty, and some listeners become jumpy.)

In this experiment and three others, we found that anxiety had a significant effect on how people negotiated. People experiencing anxiety made weaker first offers, responded more quickly to each move the counterpart made, and were more likely to exit negotiations early (even though their instructions clearly warned that exiting early would reduce the value they received from the negotiation). Anxious negotiators made deals that were 12% less financially attractive than those made by negotiators in the neutral group. We did discover one caveat, however: People who gave themselves high ratings in a survey on negotiating aptitude were less affected by anxiety than others.

Those experiments examined what happens when people feel anxious. But what happens when they express that anxiety, making it clear to their counterparts that they're nervous (and perhaps vulnerable)? In 2012, with Francesca Gino and Maurice Schweitzer, I conducted eight experiments to explore how anxious people behaved in situations in which they could seek advice from others. We found that relative to people who did not feel anxious, they were less confident, more likely to consult others when making decisions, and less able to discriminate between good and bad advice. In the most relevant of these experiments, we found that anxious participants did not discount advice from someone with a stated conflict of interest, whereas subjects feeling neutral emotions looked upon that advice skeptically. Although this research didn't directly address how the subjects would negotiate, it suggests that people who express anxiety are more likely to be taken advantage of in a negotiation, especially if the other party senses their distress.

Excellent negotiators often make their counterparts feel anxious on purpose. For example, on the TV show *Shark Tank*, six wealthy investors ("sharks") negotiate with entrepreneurs hoping for funding. The entrepreneurs must pitch their ideas in front of a huge television audience and face questions from the investors that are often aggressive and unnerving. As this is going on, stress-inducing music fills the TV studio. This setup does more than create drama and entertainment for viewers; it also intentionally puts pressure on the entrepreneurs. The sharks are professional negotiators who want to knock the entrepreneurs off balance so that it will be easier to take ownership of their good ideas at the lowest price possible. (When multiple sharks want to invest, they often drop comments that are intended to make opposing investors anxious too.) If you watch the show closely, you'll probably notice a pattern: The entrepreneurs who seem least rattled by the environmental stressors tend to negotiate the most carefully and deliberately—and often strike the best deals.

The takeaway from both research and practice is clear: Try your utmost to avoid feeling anxious while negotiating. How can you manage that? Train, practice, rehearse, and keep sharpening your negotiating skills. Anxiety is often a response to novel stimuli, so the more familiar the stimuli, the more comfortable and the less anxious you will feel. (That's why clinicians who treat anxiety disorders often rely on exposure therapy: People who are nervous about flying on airplanes, for instance, are progressively exposed to the experience, first getting used to the sights and sounds, then sitting in airliner seats, and ultimately taking flights.) Indeed, although many people enroll in

negotiation classes to learn strategies and increase skills, one of the primary benefits is the comfort that comes from repeatedly practicing deal making in simulations and exercises. Negotiation eventually feels more routine, so it's not such an anxiety-inducing experience.

Another useful strategy for reducing anxiety is to bring in an outside expert to handle the bargaining. Third-party negotiators will be less anxious because their skills are better honed, the process is routine for them, and they have a lower personal stake in the outcome. Outsourcing your negotiation may sound like a cop-out, but it's a frequent practice in many industries. Home buyers and sellers use real estate brokers partly for their negotiating experience; athletes, authors, actors, and even some business executives rely on agents to hammer out contracts. Although there are costs to this approach, they are often more than offset by the more favorable terms that can be achieved. And although anxious negotiators may have the most to gain from involving a third party (because anxiety can be a particularly difficult emotion to regulate in an uncomfortable setting), this strategy can also be useful when other negative emotions surface.

Managing Anger

Like anxiety, anger is a negative emotion, but instead of being self-focused, it's usually directed toward someone else. In most circumstances, we try to keep our tempers in check. When it comes to negotiating, however, many people believe that anger can be a productive emotion—one that will help them win a larger share of the pie.

This view stems from a tendency to view negotiations in competitive terms rather than collaborative ones. Researchers call this the *fixed-pie bias*: People, particularly those with limited experience making deals, assume that a negotiation is a zero-sum game in which their own interests conflict directly with a counterpart's. (More experienced negotiators, in contrast, look for ways to expand the pie through collaboration, rather than nakedly trying to snatch a bigger slice.) Anger, the thinking goes, makes one seem stronger, more powerful, and better able to succeed in this grab for value.

In fact, there's a body of research—much of it by Keith Allred, a former faculty member at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government—that documents the consequences of feeling angry while negotiating. This research shows that anger often harms the process by escalating conflict, biasing perceptions, and making impasses more likely. It also reduces joint gains, decreases cooperation, intensifies competitive behavior, and increases the rate at which offers are rejected. Angry negotiators are less accurate than neutral negotiators both in recalling their own interests and in judging other parties' interests. And angry negotiators may seek to harm or retaliate against their counterparts, even though a more cooperative approach might increase the value that both sides can claim from the negotiation.

Despite these findings, many people continue to see advantages to feeling or appearing angry. Some even attempt to turn up the volume on their anger, because they think it will make them more effective in a negotiation. In my own research, I have found that given a choice

between feeling angry and feeling happy while negotiating, more than half the participants want to be in an angry state and view it as significantly advantageous.

There *are* cases when feeling angry can lead to better outcomes. Research by Gerben van Kleef at the University of Amsterdam demonstrates that in a one-time, transactional negotiation with few opportunities to collaborate to create value, an angry negotiator can wind up with a better deal. There may even be situations in which a negotiator decides to feign anger, because the counterpart, in an attempt to defuse that anger, is likely to give ground on terms. This might work well if you are haggling with a stranger to buy a car, for example.

But negotiators who play this card must be aware of the costs. Showing anger in a negotiation damages the long-term relationship between the parties. It reduces liking and trust. Research by Rachel Campagna at the University of New Hampshire shows that false representations of anger may generate small tactical benefits but also lead to considerable and persistent blowback. That is, faking anger can create authentic feelings of anger, which in turn diminish trust for both parties. Along the same lines, research by Jeremy Yip and Martin Schweinsberg demonstrates that people who encounter an angry negotiator are more likely to walk away, preferring to let the process end in a stalemate.

In many contexts, then, feeling or expressing anger as a negotiating tactic can backfire. So in most cases, tamping down any anger you feel—and limiting the anger you express—is a smarter strategy. This may be hard to do, but there are tactics that can help.

PREPARING YOUR EMOTIONAL STRATEGY

Preparation is key to success in negotiations. It's vital to give advance thought to the objective factors involved (Who are the parties? What are the issues? What is my best outside option if we don't reach a deal?), but it is perhaps even more important to prepare your emotional strategy. Use the following questions and tips to plan ahead for each stage of the negotiation.

	Ask yourself:	Remember:
The buildup	• How do I feel? • Should I express my emotions? • How might the people across the table feel? • Are they likely to hide or express their emotions? • Should I recruit a third party to negotiate on my behalf?	• It's normal to feel anxious and excited. • Try to avoid expressing anxiety. • Expressing forward-looking excitement may help build rapport. • In emotionally charged situations (such as a divorce), consider having a third party (such as a lawyer) negotiate on your behalf.
The main event	• What things could happen that would make me feel angry? • What things might I do that would trigger my counterparts to feel angry? • What might they do or ask that would make me feel anxious?	• Be careful about expressing anger; it may extract concessions but harm the long-term relationship. • Avoid angering your counterparts; they are likely to walk away. • Preparing answers to tough questions is critical for staying calm in the moment.
The finale	• What are the possible outcomes of the negotiation? What do I hope to achieve? What do I expect to achieve? • How would those outcomes make me feel? • Should I express those feelings? To whom? • How are my counterparts likely to feel about the possible outcomes?	• To reduce disappointment, outline clear aspirations and expectations and adjust them throughout the negotiation. • When you feel pleased about an outcome, it may be wise to keep it to yourself. • The best negotiators create value for everyone, claiming the lion's share for themselves but making their counterparts feel that they, too, won.

Building rapport before, during, and after a negotiation can reduce the odds that the other party will become angry. If you seek to frame the negotiation cooperatively—to make it clear that you're seeking a win-win solution instead of trying to get the lion's share of a fixed pie—you may limit the other party's perception that an angry grab for value will work well. If the other party does become angry, apologize. Seek to soothe. Even if you feel that his anger is unwarranted, recognize that you're almost certainly better positioned tactically if you can reduce the hostility.

Perhaps the most effective way to deal with anger in negotiations is to recognize that many negotiations don't unfold all at once but take place over multiple meetings. So if tensions are flaring, ask for a break, cool off, and regroup. This isn't easy when you're angry, because your fight-or-flight response urges you to escalate, not pull back. Resist that urge and give the anger time to dissipate. In heated negotiations, hitting the pause button can be the smartest play.

Finally, you might consider reframing anger as sadness. Though reframing one negative emotion as another sounds illogical, shared feelings of sadness can lead to cooperative concession making, whereas oppositional anger often leads to an impasse.

Handling Disappointment and Regret

It can be tempting to see negotiations in binary terms—you either win or lose. Of course, that is generally too simplistic: Most complex negotiations will end with each

side having achieved some of its goals and not others—a mix of wins and losses. Still, as a negotiation winds down, it's natural to look at the nascent agreement and feel, on balance, more positive or negative about it.

Disappointment can be a powerful force when it's expressed to the other party near the end of the negotiation. There's a relationship between anger and disappointment—both typically arise when an individual feels wronged—and it's useful to understand how one can be used more constructively than the other. (Think back to how you reacted as a child if your parents said "I'm very disappointed in you" instead of "I'm very angry with you.") Although expressing anger may create defensiveness or increase the odds of a standoff, expressing disappointment can serve a more tactical purpose by encouraging the other party to look critically at her own actions and consider whether she wants to change her position to reduce the negative feelings she's caused you.

Research shows that one cause of disappointment in a negotiation is the speed of the process. When a negotiation unfolds or concludes too quickly, participants tend to feel dissatisfied. They wonder if they could or should have done more or pushed harder. Negotiation teachers see this in class exercises: Often the first students to finish up are the most disappointed by the outcome. The obvious way to lessen the likelihood of disappointment is to proceed slowly and deliberately.

Regret is slightly different from disappointment. While the latter tends to involve sadness about an outcome, someone feeling regret is looking a little more upstream, at the course of actions that led to this unhappy

outcome, and thinking about the missteps or mistakes that created the disappointment.

Studies show that people are most likely to regret actions they didn't take—the missed opportunities and errors of omission, rather than errors of commission. That can be a powerful insight for negotiators, whose primary actions should be asking questions, listening, proposing solutions, and brainstorming new alternatives if the parties can't agree. Ironically, people often don't ask questions while negotiating: They may forget to raise important matters or feel reluctant to probe too deeply, deeming it invasive or rude. Those fears are often misplaced. In fact, people who ask a lot of questions tend to be better liked, and they learn more things.

In negotiations, information is king and learning should be a central goal. One way to reduce the potential for regret is to ask questions without hesitation. Aim to come away from the negotiation with the sense that every avenue was explored.

Skilled negotiators use another technique to minimize the odds of regret: the *post-settlement settlement*. This strategy recognizes that tension often dissipates when there's a deal on the table that makes everyone happy, and sometimes the best negotiating happens after that tension is released. So instead of shaking hands and ending the deal making, one party might say, "We're good. We have terms we can all live with. But now that we know we've reached an agreement, let's spend a few more minutes chatting to see if we can find anything that sweetens it for both sides." Done ineptly, this might seem as if one party is trying to renege or renegotiate. However, when handled deftly, a post-settlement settle-

ment can open a pathway for both sides to become even more satisfied with the outcome and stave off regrets.

Tempering Happiness and Excitement

There isn't much research on how happiness and excitement affect negotiations, but intuition and experience suggest that expressing these emotions can have significant consequences. The National Football League prohibits and penalizes "excessive celebrations" after a touchdown or big play because such conduct can generate ill will. For the same reason, the "winner" in a deal should not gloat as the negotiations wrap up. Nonetheless, this happens all the time. In workshops, I routinely see students unabashedly boast and brag (sometimes to the entire class) about how they really stuck it to their opponents in a negotiation exercise. Not only do these students risk looking like jerks, but in a real-world setting, they might suffer more dire consequences: the other party might invoke a right of rescission, seek to renegotiate, or take punitive action the next time the parties need to strike a deal.

Although it's unpleasant to feel disappointed after a negotiation, it can be even worse to make your counterparts feel that way. And in certain situations, showing happiness or excitement triggers disappointment in others. The best negotiators achieve great deals for themselves but leave their opponents believing that they, too, did fabulously, even if the truth is different. In deals that involve a significant degree of future collaboration—say, when two companies agree to merge, or when an actor signs a contract with a producer to star in an upcoming

movie—it can be appropriate to show excitement, but it's important to focus on the opportunities ahead rather than the favorable terms one party just gained.

Another danger of excitement is that it may increase your commitment to strategies or courses of action that you'd be better off abandoning. In my negotiation class, we do an exercise in which students must decide whether or not to send a race car driver into an important race with a faulty engine. Despite the risks, most students opt to go ahead with the race because they are excited and want to maximize their winnings. The exercise has parallels to a real-life example: the launch of the *Challenger* space shuttle. Though the engineers who designed the *Challenger*'s faulty O-ring had qualms about it, NASA managers were overly excited and determined to proceed with the launch. Their decision ultimately led to the craft's explosion and the loss of its seven crew members.

There are two lessons for negotiators here. First, be considerate: Do not let your excitement make your counterparts feel that they lost. Second, be skeptical: Do not let your excitement lead to overconfidence or an escalation of commitment with insufficient data.

Negotiating requires some of the same skills that playing poker does—a strategic focus, the imagination to see alternatives, and a knack for assessing odds, reading people, understanding others' positions, and bluffing when necessary. However, whereas the parties in a negotiation must strive for agreement, poker players make decisions

unilaterally. Poker also lacks win-win outcomes or pie-sharing strategies: Any given hand is generally a zero-sum game, with one player's gains coming directly from the other players' pots.

MANAGING YOUR COUNTERPART'S EMOTIONS

Negotiating is an interpersonal process. There will always be at least one other party (and often many more) involved. In the adjoining article, I discuss how to manage your own emotions during a negotiation. But what about the other people at the table? Can you manage their emotions as well? I suggest two strategies for doing so:

1. ***Be observant.*** Perceiving how other people are feeling is a critical component of emotional intelligence, and it's particularly key in negotiations (as Adam Galinsky and his colleagues have found). So tune in to your counterpart's body language, tone of voice, and choice of words. When her verbal and nonverbal cues don't match up, ask questions. For example, "You are telling me you like this outcome, but you seem uneasy. Is something making you uncomfortable?" Or "You say you're angry, but you seem somewhat pleased. Are you truly upset about something? Or are you trying to intimidate me?"

(*continued*)

MANAGING YOUR COUNTERPART'S EMOTIONS

(*continued*)

Asking specific questions based on your perceptions of the other party's emotional expressions will make it easier for you to understand her perspective (a task people are shockingly bad at, according to research by Nicholas Epley). It will also make it difficult for a counterpart to lie to you; evidence suggests that people prefer to tell lies of omission about facts rather than lies of commission about feelings.

2. ***Don't be afraid to exert direct influence on your counterpart's emotions.*** This may sound manipulative or even unscrupulous, but you can use this influence for good. For example, if your counterpart seems anxious or angry, injecting humor or empathetic reassurance can dramatically change the tone of the interaction. By the same token, if your counterpart seems overconfident or pushy, expressing well-placed anger can inspire a healthy dose of fear.

In recent research with Elizabeth Baily Wolf, I have found that it's possible to go even further in managing others' emotions: You display an emotion, your counterpart sees it, and then you shape his interpretation of it. For example, imagine that you start crying at work. (Crying is a difficult-to-control and often embarrassing behavior.) Saying "I'm in tears because I'm passionate" rather than "I'm sorry I'm so emotional" can completely change the way others react and the way they view your self-control and competence.

Nonetheless, negotiators can learn a crucial lesson from the card table: the value of controlling the emotions we feel and especially those we reveal. In other words, good negotiators need to develop a poker face—not one that remains expressionless, always hiding true feelings, but one that displays the right emotions at the right times.

And although all human beings experience emotions, the frequency and intensity with which we do so differs from person to person. To be a better deal maker, conduct a thorough assessment of which emotions you are particularly prone to feel before, during, and after negotiations, and use techniques to minimize (or maximize) the experience and suppress (or emphasize) the expression of emotions as needed.

In one of my favorite scenes from the TV show *30 Rock*, hard-driving CEO Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin), who fancies himself an expert negotiator, explains to a colleague why he struck a poor deal: "I lost because of emotion, which I always thought was a weakness, but now I have learned can also be a weapon." Borrowing Jack's insightful metaphor, I urge you to wield your emotions thoughtfully. Think carefully about when to draw these weapons, when to shoot, and when to keep them safely tucked away in a hidden holster. Try to avoid feeling anxious, be careful about expressing anger, ask questions to circumvent disappointment and regret, and remember that happiness and excitement can have adverse consequences.

Just as you prepare your tactical and strategic moves before a negotiation, you should invest effort in preparing your emotional approach. It will be time well spent.

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CHAPTER 15

Working Across Cultures

by Andy Molinsky

One of the greatest assets we have as natives of a culture is our ability to quickly "read" another person's emotions. Over time, we learn how to understand whether our colleagues are truly interested in a project or just giving it lip service by noticing the expression on their faces. We can tell when someone really likes something we've proposed by the way they react. And we can often detect motivation as well—whether someone is truly willing to put in the extra time and effort to make something happen—just by seeing the fire in their eyes or the passion in their voice.

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The problem, of course, comes when we cross cultures and venture into a completely different world of emotional expression. Emotions vary tremendously across cultures—both in terms of their expression and their meaning. Without a detailed understanding of these emotional landscapes, crossing cultures can become a communication minefield.

Take, for example, the expression of enthusiasm. In the United States, it's culturally acceptable, even admirable, to show enthusiasm in a business setting, assuming it's appropriate for the situation. When arguing for a point in a meeting, for example, it is quite appropriate to express your opinions passionately; it can help to convince those around you. Or when speaking with a potential employer at a networking event, it is often encouraged to express your interest quite enthusiastically; the employer may interpret how invested you are in a job based on your expressed eagerness.

In many other cultures, however, enthusiasm means something quite different. In Japan, for example, there are strict boundaries about when and where people are allowed to display emotion.[1] During the regular workday, Japanese individuals are not typically emotionally expressive. Even if they feel excited about their work, they will rarely show it explicitly. This often changes outside of the workplace setting, though, where Japanese people can show a great deal of emotion—for example, when drinking, having dinner with work colleagues, or singing karaoke. In China, self-control and modesty are the coin of the realm, not one's ability to outwardly express emo-

tion.[2] In fact, expressing too much outward enthusiasm, especially in front of a boss, could be seen as showing off, which is not typically condoned in Chinese culture.

Given these differences and the importance of getting it right when communicating across cultures, what are thoughtful managers to do?

A first tip is to treat emotions like another language. If you're traveling or moving to France, you're bound to learn French, or at least some key phrases. Treat emotions in the same way. Try your best to learn the language of emotions in whatever culture you're working in. Observe whether people tend to express emotions readily or keep them to themselves, and if, as in the Japan example above, there are differences in when and where people freely express emotion. Diagnose any gaps between how you'd express emotions in your culture and how people you'll be interacting with express emotion in theirs.

In addition to learning the language of emotions, make sure you also learn how to respond constructively when you do encounter emotions different from your own. For example, if you're expecting a smile from your boss after suggesting a new idea but instead get a blank stare, don't necessarily assume she hates you or your idea. Instead, gather more information to fully understand her point of view. You might ask a follow-up question to get a better sense of her opinion: Ask if your proposal was clear or if she felt your idea addressed the concerns she had. Keep in mind that cultural norms differ in terms of how appropriate it might be to ask questions like these to your boss, but the general idea is to

do what you can to collect data to help you decipher emotional expressions, rather than relying solely on your initial, knee-jerk reaction or presumption.

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NOTES

1. Fumiyo Araki and Richard L. Wiseman, Emotional Expressions in the United States and Japan," *International Communication Studies* 6, no. 2 (1996).
2. Ibid.

SECTION FIVE

Dealing with Difficult People

CHAPTER 16

Make Your Enemies Your Allies

by Brian Uzzi and Shannon Dunlap

John Clendenin was fresh out of business school in 1984 when he took on his first managerial position, in Xerox's parts and supply division. He was an obvious outsider: young, African American, and a former Marine, whose pink shirts and brown suits stood out amid the traditional gray and black attire of his new colleagues. "I was strikingly different," he recalls. And yet his new role required him to lead a team including employees who had been with Xerox for decades.

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One of his direct reports was Tom Gunning, a 20-year company veteran who believed Clendenin's job should have gone to him, not to a younger, nontechnical newcomer. Gunning also had a cadre of pals on the team. As a result, Clendenin's first days were filled with strained smiles and behind-the-back murmurs. Though he wasn't looking for adversaries, "I knew these guys were discontented about me coming in," Clendenin remembers.

He was right to be wary. Anyone who has faced a rival at work—a colleague threatened by your skills, a superior unwilling to acknowledge your good ideas, or a subordinate who undermines you—knows such dynamics can prove catastrophic for your career, and for your group or organization. When those with formal or informal power are fighting you, you may find it impossible to accomplish—or get credit for—any meaningful work.

And even if you have the upper hand, an antagonistic relationship inevitably casts a cloud over you and your team, sapping energy, stymieing progress, and distracting group members from their goals.

Because rivalries can be so destructive, it's not enough to simply ignore, sidestep, or attempt to contain them. Instead, effective leaders turn rivals into collaborators—strengthening their positions, their networks, and their careers in the process. Think of these relationships not as chronic illnesses you have to endure but as wounds that must be treated in order for you to lead a healthy work life.

Here we share a method, called the 3Rs (using *redirection, reciprocity,* and *rationality*), for efficiently and effectively turning your adversaries into your allies. If you

execute each step correctly, you will develop new "connective tissue" within your organization, boosting your ability to broker knowledge and drive fresh thinking. The method is drawn from our own inductive case studies—including interviews with business leaders such as John Clendenin, who agreed to let us tell his story in this article—and from empirical research conducted by Brian and others investigating the physiology of the brain, the sociology of relationships, and the psychology of influence.

Emotions and Trust

Many well-intentioned efforts to reverse rivalries fail in large part because of the complex way trust operates in these relationships. Research shows that trust is based on both reason and emotion. If the emotional orientation toward a person is negative—typically because of a perceived threat—then reason will be twisted to align with those negative feelings. This is why feuds can stalemate trust: New facts and arguments, no matter how credible and logical, may be seen as ploys to dupe the other side. This effect is not just psychological; it is physiological. When we experience negative emotions, blood recedes from the thinking part of the brain, the cerebral cortex, and rushes to its oldest and most involuntary part, the "reptilian" stem, crippling the intake of new information.

Most executives who decide they want to reverse a rivalry will, quite understandably, turn to reason, presenting incentives for trustworthy collaboration. But in these situations, the "emotional brain" must be managed before adversaries can understand evidence and be persuaded.

When John Clendenin looked at Tom Gunning at Xerox, he immediately saw grounds for a strong partnership beyond a perfunctory subordinate-superior relationship. Gunning had 20 years' worth of organizational and technical knowledge, and contacts around the company, but he lacked the leadership skills and vision that Clendenin possessed. Conversely, Clendenin understood management but needed Gunning's expertise and connections to successfully navigate his new company. Unfortunately, Gunning's emotions were getting in the way. Clendenin needed to employ the 3Rs.

Redirection

Step 1 is to redirect your rival's negative emotions so that they are channeled away from you. Clendenin decided to have a one-on-one meeting with Gunning, but not in his office, because that would only remind Gunning of the promotion he'd lost. Instead, he found out where Gunning liked to eat and took him there for lunch. "I was letting him know that I understood his worth," Clendenin says of this contextual redirection.

He followed this with a plain statement of redirection, telling Gunning that a third entity beyond the control of both men was the root cause of their situation. "I didn't put you in this position," Clendenin said. "Xerox put us both in this position."

Many executives scoff when they first hear this story, believing Clendenin's actions to be too transparent. But redirection doesn't have to be hidden. With stage magic, for example, audience members understand that redirection is happening, but that doesn't lessen their accep-

tance or spoil the payoff of the technique. Other personal interactions work similarly. For instance, we accept flattery even if we recognize it as such.

Another common redirection tactic is to introduce a discussion of things you and your rival have in common, or casually portray a source of tension—a particular initiative, employee, or event—in a more favorable light. It sounds obvious. But redirection will shift negative emotions away from you and lay the groundwork for Step 2: reciprocity.

Reciprocity

The essential principle here is to *give before you ask*. Undoing a negative tie begins with giving up something of value rather than asking for a "fair trade." If you give and then ask for something right away in return, you don't establish a relationship; you carry out a transaction.

When done correctly, reciprocity is like priming the pump. In the old days, pumps required lots of exertion to produce any water. You had to repeatedly work a lever to eliminate a vacuum in the line before water could flow. But if you poured a small bucket of water into the line first, the vacuum was quickly eliminated, enabling the water to flow with less effort. Reciprocity with a rival works in much the same way.

Reflect carefully on *what* you should give. Ideally, choose something that requires little effort from the other party to reciprocate. Clendenin moved from redirection to reciprocity at the lunch by promising to support Gunning's leadership development and future advancement at Xerox. But, recognizing that mere promises of future

returns wouldn't be enough to spark collaboration, he also offered Gunning something concrete: the chance to attend executive-level meetings. This was of immediate value, not a distant, murky benefit. Gunning could gain visibility, credibility, and connections.

The arrangement also ensured reciprocity. Gunning's presence at the meetings furnished Clendenin with on-hand technical expertise and organizational knowledge while giving him "reputation points" with Gunning's contacts. Thus, Clendenin's offer created the purest form of reciprocity; if Gunning attended the meetings, Clendenin would never have to explicitly request a quid pro quo.

Reciprocity involves considering ways that you can immediately fulfill a rival's need or reduce a pain point. Live up to your end of the bargain first, but figure out a way to ensure a return from your rival without the person's feeling that pressure. Another example comes from Brian's colleague Adam Galinsky, who advises leaders in contentious restructurings and business closings to generate goodwill among outgoing employees by offering professional references or placements at other companies as long as the employees continue to meet or exceed expectations until their office closes. The employees see immediate value, and although they don't consciously pay back the organization, the firm nonetheless benefits by maintaining continuity in its workforce until the scheduled closure.

Similarly, a colleague who helps an adversary complete a project or a subordinate who stays overtime to finish a task for a difficult boss not only help themselves but can reap rewards when other teammates or superi-

ors benefit from that effort, too. Here the judicious giving before asking sets a foundation for reciprocity with third parties, whose buy-in can positively assist in reshaping the adversarial relationship. (See the sidebar "Rivalries Don't Exist in a Vacuum.")

Rationality

Step 3, rationality, establishes the expectations of the fledgling relationship you've built using the previous steps so that your efforts don't come off as dishonest or as ineffective pandering. What would have happened if Clendenin had left the lunch without explaining how he wanted to work with Gunning going forward? Gunning might have begun to second-guess his new boss's intentions and resumed his adversarial stance. If a rival is worried about the other shoe dropping, his emotional unease can undermine the trust you've built.

To employ rationality, Clendenin told Gunning that he needed him, or someone like him, to reach his goals at Xerox. This made it clear that he saw Gunning as a valuable, but not indispensable, partner. Another, softer approach might have involved Clendenin's giving Gunning "the right of first refusal" to collaborate with him, making the offer seem special while judiciously indicating that there were others who could step in. Just to be clear, Clendenin was not asking Gunning for a specific favor in exchange for the one he'd granted in Step 2. He was simply saying that he wanted him to become an ally.

Clendenin also reinforced the connection between the three steps by making his offer time-limited, which raised the perception of the value of the deal without

changing its content. He told Gunning he needed an answer before they left the restaurant. "I needed to nip this in the bud," Clendenin recalls. "He knew I didn't care if we sat in that restaurant until midnight if we had to."

When rationality follows redirection and reciprocity, it should push your adversary into considering the situ-

RIVALRIES DON'T EXIST IN A VACUUM

Even when a leader executes the 3Rs flawlessly to end a rivalry, his work isn't necessarily done. That's because the relationship is often about more than just the two individuals. We all know people who seek to play to their advantage antagonism between others; some third parties might even view a blossoming partnership with trepidation or envy, triggering new negative emotions and rivalries.

You can head off this problem, as John Clendenin did, by framing your work as beneficial not just to you and your adversary but to the whole organization, which makes the reversal of rivalry in everyone's interest. When Clendenin brought Tom Gunning into those executive-level meetings, he made it clear that Gunning was going to be a "poster child" for a new age at Xerox, in which talented, long-term employees could find new paths to leadership in a time of corporate transition. Even if the conflictmongers didn't care about Clendenin's and Gunning's success, it would be far more difficult for them to sabotage an effort that was obviously good for the company.

ation from a reasoned standpoint, fully comprehending the expectations and benefits, and recognizing that he is looking at a valued opportunity that could be lost. Most people are highly motivated to avoid a loss, which complements their desire to gain something. Rationality is like offering medicine after a spoonful of sugar: It ensures that you're getting the benefit of the shifted negative emotions, and any growing positive ones, which would otherwise diffuse over time. And it avoids the ambiguity that clouds expectations and feedback when flattery and favors come one day, and demands the next.

Of course, Clendenin and Gunning did not walk out of the restaurant as full-blown collaborators. But both accepted that they should give each other the benefit of the doubt. Over the following weeks, this new mindset allowed them to work as allies, a process that deepened trust and resource-sharing in a self-reinforcing cycle. In this way, a potentially debilitating rivalry was transformed into a healthy working relationship and, in time, a strong partnership. Several years later, when Clendenin moved to another Xerox unit, he nominated Gunning as his replacement—and Gunning excelled in the position. The foundation for that remarkable shift had been established during the span of a single lunch.

Adapting the 3Rs

A key advantage of the 3Rs is that the method can work to reverse all kinds of rivalries, including those with a peer or a superior. Later in Clendenin's tenure at Xerox, he noticed an inefficiency in the company's inventory systems. At the time, Xerox was made up of semiautonomous international units that stockpiled excess inventory

to avoid shortages. Clendenin proposed that the units instead share their inventories through an intrafirm network that would improve resource use and lower carrying costs for the company as a whole. Although the idea was objectively good for Xerox, it threatened the power of some unit vice presidents, so when Clendenin floated his idea, they shot it down.

WHAT IF THE 3RS FAIL?

The 3Rs are effective, but they aren't a guarantee of defusing resistance. What should you do if the strategy isn't working?

Strive for collaboration indirectly. For example, work well with a third party whom your rival trusts. A common ally can highlight to him the benefits of working with you.

Remember that timing matters. People in power need a reason to interact. This was certainly the case with John Clendenin's inventory-management pitch to the Xerox VPs: At first rebuffed, he was able to refloat his idea when the CEO called for a new strategy.

Recognize when to look elsewhere. Sometimes the effort needed to reverse a rivalry is so great, and the returns so low, for you and your company that you're better off deploying the same resources in another relationship.

A short time later, however, following an unexpected announcement by the CEO that the company needed better asset management, Clendenin found a way to reintroduce his proposal to the VPs. Because he knew they viewed him as an unwelcome challenger—or rival—he used the 3Rs.

His first move was to redirect their negative emotions away from him by planning a lunch for them at the regional office and serving them himself. This showed deference. He also presented himself not as an individual pushing a proposal but as someone who could expedite organizational change, shifting the reference point of his rivals' tension. "With all of those egos and personalities, I never said, 'This is my idea,'" Clendenin recalls. "I always said 'we.'"

Applying the reciprocity principle of "give before you ask," he requested nothing from them at the meeting. Instead, he facilitated a discussion about the CEO-led initiative. Inventory management was, unsurprisingly, a problem cited by many of the VPs, and Clendenin's facilitation brought that to light. He then took on the luster of the person who had illuminated a generic problem, rather than someone who wanted to lessen the VPs' autonomy.

That allowed him to present the rationality of his original idea. All of a sudden, it looked like an opportunity—rather than a threat—to the formerly antagonistic group. Clendenin indicated that he would be willing to coordinate a new system more cheaply than anyone else in the market could offer, while also noting that he might not have time to do so in the future, which raised

the perceived value of his offer. The VPs agreed to execute the plan in stages and put Clendenin in charge. The initiative grew in small but steady steps, eventually saving Xerox millions. Equally important, Clendenin's embrace by his rivals positioned him as a broker in the company and burnished his reputation as an institution builder.

John Clendenin understood that rivalries help no one; indeed, success often depends on not just neutralizing your foes but turning them into collaborators. By using the 3Rs to build trust, Clendenin made sure everyone in his network thrived—including himself, Gunning, their team, the VPs, and Xerox—forming the basis for long-term ties and shared success. Years later, Clendenin started his own international logistics company. His partner in this new endeavor was his old rival, Tom Gunning, and the lead investors were none other than the unit VPs from Xerox who had once shot down his ideas.

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CHAPTER 17

How to Deal with a Passive-Aggressive Colleague

by Amy Gallo

Your colleague says one thing in a meeting but then does another. He passes you in the hallway without saying hello and talks over you in meetings. But when you ask to speak with him about it, he insists that everything's fine and the problem is all in your head. Argh! It's so frustrating to work with someone who is acting passive-

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aggressively. Do you address the behavior directly? Or try to ignore it? How can you get to the core issue when your colleague pretends that nothing's going on?

What the Experts Say

It's not uncommon for colleagues to occasionally make passive-aggressive remarks to one another over particularly sensitive issues or when they feel they can't be direct. "We're all guilty of doing it once in a while," says Amy Su, coauthor of *Own the Room: Discover Your Signature Voice to Master Your Leadership Presence*. But persistent passive-aggressive behavior is a different ball game. "These are people who will often do anything to get what they need, including lie," says Annie McKee, founder of the Teleos Leadership Institute and coauthor of *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*. In these cases, you have to take special precautions that help you and, hopefully, your counterpart both get your jobs done. Here are some tips:

Don't Get Caught Up

When your coworker pretends nothing is going on or accuses you of overreacting, it's hard not to get angry and defensive. But, McKee says, "This is not one of those situations to fight fire with fire." Do your best to remain calm. "The person may want you to get mad so they can then blame you, which is a release of their own anxiety," Su explains. "Responding in an emotional way will likely leave you looking—and feeling—like the fool. This is your opportunity to be the bigger person."

Consider What's Motivating the Behavior

People who routinely act in a passive-aggressive way aren't necessarily complete jerks. It could be that they don't know how to communicate or are afraid of conflict. McKee says that passive-aggressive behavior is often a way for people to "get their emotional point across without having true, healthy conflict." There's also a self-centeredness to it. "They make the flawed assumption that others should know what they're feeling and that their needs and preferences are more important than others'," says Su. Understand this, but don't try to diagnose all your colleague's problems. "You just have to see it for what it is," Su adds, "an unproductive expression of emotions that they can't share constructively."

Own Your Part

Chances are that you're not blameless in the situation. Ask yourself if something you're doing is contributing to the dynamic or causing the person to be passive-aggressive. "Own your half," says Su. Also, consider whether you've dished out the same behavior. "It can happen to even the best of us, whether we're procrastinating or wanting to avoid something. We might leak emotions in a way that's hurtful to others," says Su.

Focus on the Content, Not the Delivery

It might be the last thing you want to do, but try to see the situation from your colleague's perspective. What is

the underlying opinion or perspective she's attempting to convey with her snarky comment? "Analyze the position the person is trying to share with you," says McKee. Does she think that the way you're running the project isn't working? Or does she disagree about your team goals? "Not everyone likes or knows how to publicly discuss or express what they think," says Su. If you can focus on the underlying business concern or question rather than the way she's expressing herself, you can move on to addressing the actual problem.

Acknowledge the Underlying Issue

Once you're calm and able to engage in a productive conversation, go back to the person. Say something like: "You made a good point in that exchange we had the other day. Here's what I heard you saying." This will help them talk about the substance of their concerns. "By joining *with* them, you have a better chance of turning the energy around," McKee explains. Do this in a matter-of-fact way, without discussing how the sentiment was expressed. "Don't listen or give any credence to the toxic part," advises Su. "Sometimes it's that they just want their opinion heard."

Watch Your Language

Whatever you say, don't accuse the person of being passive-aggressive. "That can hurt your cause," says McKee. Su agrees: "It's such a loaded word. It would put someone who's already on the defensive into a more angry position. Don't label or judge them." Instead, McKee suggests recounting how some of your previous inter-

actions have played out and explaining the impact it's having on you and possibly others. If feasible, show that the behavior is working against something your counterpart cares about, like achieving the team's goals.

Find Safety in Numbers

You don't have to deal with this situation alone. "It's OK to reality-check with others and have allies in place to say you're not crazy," says Su. But be sure to frame your discussions as an attempt to constructively improve the relationship, so it doesn't come across as gossiping or bad-mouthing your colleague. Su suggests you ask something like: "I was wondering how Susan's comment landed with you. How did you interpret that?"

Set Guidelines for Everyone

You might also enlist the help of others in coming up with a long-term solution. "As a team, you can build healthy norms," McKee says. Together, you can agree to be more up-front about frustrations and model the honest and direct interactions you want to happen. You can also keep one another accountable. If your problematic colleague tends to ignore agreements, you might take notes in meetings about who's supposed to do what by when, so there are clear action items. The worst offenders are likely to give in to the positive peer pressure and public accountability.

Get Help in Extreme Situations

When a colleague persistently tries to undermine you or prevent you from doing your job, and outside observers

confirm your take on the situation, you might have to go further. "If you share the same manager, you may be able to ask for help," says McKee. You might tell your boss: "A lot of us have noticed a particular behavior, and I want to talk about how it's impacting my ability to do my work." But she warns, "Step into those waters carefully. Your manager may be hoodwinked by the person and may not see the same behaviors, or be conflict-averse himself and not want to see it."

Protect Yourself

"If there's an interdependence in your work, make sure you're meeting your commitments and deadlines," Su says. "Copy others on important emails. Don't let that person speak for you or represent you in meetings. After a meeting, document agreements and next steps." McKee also suggests keeping records: "Track specific behaviors so that you have examples if needed. It's hard to argue with the facts." She also recommends you try to avoid working with the person and "keep contact to a minimum. If you have to work together, do it in a group setting" where your colleague is likely to be on better behavior. You might not be able to break their passive-aggressive habits, but you can control your reaction to any incidents.

Principles to Remember

Do:

- Understand why people typically act this way—their needs probably aren't being met

- Focus on the message your colleague is trying to convey, even if their delivery is misguided
- Take a step back and ask yourself if you're contributing to the issue in some way

Don't:

- Lose your cool—address the underlying business issue in a calm, matter-of-fact way
- Accuse the person of acting passive-aggressively—that will only make them madder
- Assume you can change your colleague's behavior

Case Study #1: Make Your Coworker Publicly Accountable

One of Neda Khosla's coworkers (names and details have been changed) in the student guidance office of the public high school where she worked was making things difficult for her. "He would agree to a plan in a meeting but then sabotage it by not following through," she explains. Her colleague, Gareth, defended himself by saying things like "That's not how I remember it" or "I didn't think we had finalized the plan." She tried to talk about these "misunderstandings" with him, but he always shrugged her off: "He'd say he was busy or didn't have time to talk," she recounted.

When Neda told Jim, her and Gareth's boss, that a certain project hadn't gotten done because of this strange dynamic, Jim said that he had noticed the pattern too. Together, they devised a plan to make Gareth

more accountable. "He and I agreed that he would publicly ask for a volunteer to take notes on each meeting, [documenting] who would be responsible for accomplishing each task and by when," Neda recalls. She was the first volunteer.

And the approach worked. After Neda sent around the task list, Gareth couldn't make excuses. He was accountable to everyone who attended the meetings. And Neda didn't mind the additional work: "The extra effort I put in was less than the time I was spending fuming about my coworker and running around to pick up the pieces of the things he didn't complete. It actually helped everyone in our department be more productive and was something we should have done a long time ago."

Case Study #2: Get Help Sooner Rather Than Later

James Armstrong, a digital marketing consultant for Roman Blinds Direct, used to manage an eight-person team at a digital marketing agency. He had gotten the promotion three months after one of his direct reports, Violet, joined the agency, and she clearly wasn't thrilled to suddenly have him as a new boss. But "she was a top performer and extremely competent," James recalls, and since they'd worked "fairly harmoniously together as colleagues," he was happy to have her in the group.

Unfortunately, Violet became very difficult to manage. She didn't communicate with him unless absolutely necessary; she didn't actively engage in training sessions that he offered; and she "poked holes" in his initiatives. "She took every opportunity to make it clear that she didn't value my input," he explains.

Surprised and dismayed by her attitude, he decided to address it as he would with any other team member: "directly and clearly." He started by asking her in their one-on-one meetings whether something was wrong. She said there wasn't, but the behavior persisted, so he tried taking her out to coffee and asking whether he had unknowingly offended her or if she wanted to be managed in a different way. She acknowledged that there was a "personality clash," but she ended the conversation there and continued to treat him dismissively at the office. He heard from other staff members that she had even called him "lazy and useless."

"The last thing I wanted was to pass the issue further up the chain and potentially harm Violet's career," he says. After all, she was a valuable team member and he wanted to protect her. But, he reflects, "I should have immediately approached my manager." When he eventually did, she pointed out that his failure to effectively manage a key team member amounted to poor performance on his part.

Within a year, both James and Violet voluntarily left the agency, but neither was happy with the circumstances. He says that if he could do it over again, he would have talked to his manager sooner, kept better records on Violet's "toxic attitude," and when there weren't drastic improvements, fired her "without hesitation."

Amy Gallo is a contributing editor at *Harvard Business Review* and the author of the *HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict*. She writes and speaks about workplace dynamics. Follow her on Twitter @amyegallo.

CHAPTER 18

What to Do If You're a Toxic Handler

by Sandra L. Robinson and Kira Schabram

Divani (not her real name) is a senior analyst at a large telecommunications firm. She proudly describes herself as her department's "resident cheer-upper." As she says, "I have always been the person that people turn to for support . . . I listen really well and I like to listen, I like to help." But the year before I spoke to her, Divani's organization was going through a major change initiative: "I already had so much on my plate, and so many colleagues were leaning on me—turning to me to process,

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Adapted from "When You're the Person Your Colleagues Always Vent To" posted on hbr.org on January 11, 2016 (product #H03A8W)

commiserate, ask for advice. It was hard to get through my own deadlines and also be there for my coworkers. I was drowning in stress and nearing burnout." She told us about feeling down on Sunday nights, feeling increasingly angry and cynical, and having trouble sleeping because she couldn't "shut my mind off." She took up smoking again after having given it up for four years and let her exercise routine falter.

Divani is what former Sauder School of Business professor Peter Frost and one of us (Sandra) have termed a *toxic handler*, someone who voluntarily shoulders the sadness, frustration, bitterness, and anger that are endemic to organizational life just as joy and success are. Toxic handlers can be found at all levels of the organization, particularly in roles that span disparate groups. And they are by no means confined to management roles. Their work is difficult and critical even if it often goes uncelebrated; it keeps organizations positive and productive even as the individuals within them necessarily clash and tussle. By carrying others' confidences, suggesting solutions to interpersonal issues, working behind the scenes to prevent pain, and reframing difficult messages in constructive ways, toxic handlers absorb the negativity in day-to-day professional life and allow employees to focus on constructive work.

This isn't easy work. And as Sandra's and Peter Frost's research of over 70 toxic handlers (or those who managed them) revealed, individuals in these roles frequently experience untenably high levels of stress and strain, which affect their physical health and career paths and often mean they have a diminished capacity to help oth-

ers in the long run—a side effect that is most troubling for handlers.

But if handlers can recognize that they're playing a role that is both highly valuable *and* burdensome, they can see their own emotional competence in a new light and recognize the signs of serious strain while there's still something they can do about it.

How do you know if *you're* a toxic handler? Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Are you working in an organizational characterized by lots of change, dysfunction, or politics?
- Are you working in a role that spans different groups or different levels?
- Do you spend a lot of time listening to and offering advice to colleagues at work?
- Do people come to you to unload their worries, emotions, secrets, or workplace problems?
- Do you have a hard time saying "no" to colleagues, especially when they need you?
- Do you spend time behind the scenes, managing politics and influencing decisions so others are protected?
- Do you tend to mediate communication between a toxic individual and others?
- Are you that person who feels compelled to stand up for the people at work that need your help?

- Do you think of yourself as a counselor, mediator, or peacemaker?

If you've answered "yes" to four or more of these questions, then you may be a toxic handler. Before you panic at that label, recognize that there are both positives and negatives to fulfilling this role. On the positive side, being a toxic handler means you have valuable emotional strengths: You're probably a good listener; you're empathetic; you're good at suggesting solutions instead of piling on problems. The people around you value the support you provide. It's important, too, to understand that this role is strategically critical to organizations: You likely defuse tough situations and reduce dysfunction.

Now for the bad news. Chances are that you're taking on more work than is covered in your formal job description (and in fact, as an unsung hero, you may not be getting any kind of formal credit from the organization for these efforts and how much you bring to them). Listening, mediating, and working behind the scenes to protect others takes important time away from your other responsibilities. More importantly, it also takes tremendous emotional energy to listen, comfort, and counsel. As you are not a trained therapist, you may also be inadvertently taking on others' pain and slowly paying a price for it. Sandra's research shows that toxic handlers tend to take on others' emotions but have no way to offload them. Quite likely, as a person who is constantly helping others, you may be unlikely to be seeking support for yourself. And lastly, this role may be part of your identity,

something that brings you fulfillment and in which you take satisfaction—and so it is difficult to step away from.

Consider Sheung-Li (not his real name). His manager was a star with a great track record, but he created a lot of turmoil. He wouldn't take the time to get to know anyone on Sheung-Li's team personally and totally disregarded more junior members. He was also obsessed with lofty performance goals that seemed to come out of nowhere. "My main role became protecting my team, reassuring them, keeping them focused on our objectives and away from the tensions this guy continually created," Sheung-Li described. "I spent an inordinate amount of time massaging the message, trying to convince my boss to reconsider his decisions so as to avoid the obvious fallout they would bring, playing mediator when our team was not delivering. I felt like I was treading water all the time. And I'm not even sure I was protecting my team from the pain he was causing. I was losing sleep over what was happening to my team, I had lost weight, and I was starting to get sick with one bug after another. I don't know if that was the cause but I know this was a really tough time in my life. It was hard to concentrate on anything else."

So if Sheung-Li's and Divani's stories sound familiar, how can you continue to help to your colleagues (and your organization!) while also protecting yourself? How can you keep playing your valuable role in a *sustainable* way?

Start by assessing whether the role is indeed taking a toll. Some toxic handlers are able to naturally take on more than others; you need to know what's right for you at any given time. Look for evidence of strain and burnout: physical symptoms like insomnia, jaw pain and TMJ, heart palpitations, more sickness than usual. Do you have a shorter fuse than you used to, or an inability to concentrate? Sometimes these symptoms can sneak up on you, so it may help to check in with others to see if they've noticed a change. If you're not experiencing stress as a result, there's nothing you need to change other than being aware and keeping an eye out. Being a toxic handler only needs to be "fixed" if it's actually hurting you. Here's how:

Reduce symptoms of stress

Turn to tried-and-true methods for stress relief: meditation, exercise, enough sleep, and healthful eating. Because toxic handlers have trouble doing things just for themselves, keep in mind that you're helping your colleagues by taking care of yourself. Set your colleagues as your intention for your meditation or yoga practice.

Pick your battles

It's hard to ask yourself where you'll have the most impact if you're emotionally drawn to every problem, but it's an exercise that will allow you to be more helpful where you can actually make a difference. Who is likely to be fine without your help? In which situations have you not even made a dent, despite your best efforts? Step away from these interactions.

Learn to say "no"

It's hard to say no to things you want to do, but it's important. Here's how to do it while still being supportive:

- Convey empathy. Make it clear that you feel for your colleague in their pain—you're not denying that they are having a legitimate emotional response to a situation.
- Tell them you're currently not in a position to be most helpful to them right now and, to the extent you are comfortable, explain the reasons why.
- Consider alternative sources of support. Refer your colleague to another person in the organization, or someone having a similar experience (so they can provide mutual support to one another). Suggest an article, book, or other resource on the topic (e.g., something on managing conflict or handling office politics). Or, if you know from experience that the person is good at coming up with creative solutions themselves, you can simply offer them encouragement to do so.

Let go of the guilt

If you feel guilty that you're not stepping in to help someone, here are some things to consider:

- Recognize that conflicts are often better solved by the parties directly involved. If you're stepping in repeatedly, you're not helping people acquire the skills and tools they need to succeed.

- Question whether you are truly the only one that can help in a particular situation. Enlist trusted others in the organization to help you think through this—you may identify a way to share the load.

- Remember that there is only so much of you to go around: Saying yes to one more person necessarily means that you are agreeing to do less for those people and projects you have already committed to.

Form a community

Find other toxic handlers to turn to for support—these could be others in similar roles in your organization, or other team members whom you see dealing with the fallout from the same toxic leader. You can also identify a pal to vent to or create a more formal group that comes together regularly to share their experiences. This is a particularly good option if your whole team or organization is going through turmoil and you know there are others experiencing the same challenges. Keep these outlets from turning into repetitive venting sessions by focusing the conversation on creative problem solving and advice.

Take breaks

These can be as small or as dramatic as you need. Divani started working with her door closed, which she had never done before. "I felt terrible about this, as if I was abandoning my coworkers who needed me. But if I lost my job, I wasn't going to be much good to anybody," she explained. Consider giving yourself a mental health day

off of work or planning a significant vacation. In more dramatic situations, you could also consider a temporary reassignment of your role; because jobs that require you to mediate between multiple teams or groups tend to come under particular fire, you're more likely to get the respite you need if you are able to step away from that role for a time.

These breaks don't need to be forever, though. "Things have since calmed down at work," Divani has reported, "and I find I have gravitated back to being the person people lean on for emotional support, but at this point it is totally doable."

Make a change

If nothing you are doing has resulted in a shift, your best option may be to leave. Sheung-Li explained: "After two years of this [toxic situation], and at the encouragement of my wife, I saw a therapist. It then became clear to me this work reality was not going to change, this toxic manager was not going anywhere, the stress was eating me alive, and I am the one that needed to change. I did a bunch of things, but I think the key thing I did was I ended up making a lateral move in our company to escape this role and to protect my long-term well-being. It was the best decision I ever made."

Consider therapy

It may sound dramatic, but Sheung-Li's decison to talk to a therapist is a highly useful one. A trained psychologist can help you identify burnout, manage your symptoms of stress, help you learn to say "no," and work through

any guilt. Not only can they help you protect yourself from the emotional vagaries of being a toxic handler; they can also assist you in your role. Clinical psychologists themselves are trained to listen to their clients empathetically without taking on their emotions. They can help you build the skills you need to help others without absorbing as much of the emotional burden yourself.

Lastly, here are some things we suggest you avoid. While they seem like good solutions on the surface, they often aren't as helpful as you'd think.

Just venting

While it's good to unburden yourself of your emotions—catharsis *can* reduce aggression—too much venting can actually increase stress levels. You want to move forward, rather than dwelling on problems. And this is as true for those confiding in you as it is for you! When people come to you to vent, consider saying something like, "I hear you! How about we think about what we can change to make this better?"

Going to your boss or HR

Sadly, the role of toxic handler is often underrecognized and underappreciated in organizations, despite its tremendous value. This means that while your boss may want to help, it can be risky for them in many organizational cultures. Similarly, many firms are unlikely to intervene in a toxic situation on behalf of the handler.

Yet toxic handlers are critical to the emotional well-being of organizations and the people in them. If you're a toxic handler, learn to monitor yourself for signs of emotional or physical fatigue—and know how to step away when you need to—so that you can keep doing what you do best.

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SECTION SIX

Understand Empathy

CHAPTER 19

What Is Empathy?

by Daniel Goleman

The word "attention" comes from the Latin *attendere*, meaning "to reach toward." This is a perfect definition of focus on others, which is the foundation of empathy and of an ability to build social relationships—the second and third pillars of emotional intelligence (the first is self-awareness).

Executives who can effectively focus on others are easy to recognize. They are the ones who find common ground, whose opinions carry the most weight, and with whom other people want to work. They emerge as natural leaders regardless of organizational or social rank.

The Empathy Triad

We talk about empathy most commonly as a single attribute. But a close look at where leaders are focusing when

Excerpted from "The Focused Leader" in *Harvard Business Review*, December 2013 (product #R0205B)

they exhibit it reveals three distinct kinds of empathy, each important for leadership effectiveness:

- **Cognitive empathy:** the ability to understand another person's perspective.
- **Emotional empathy:** the ability to feel what someone else feels.
- **Empathic concern:** the ability to sense what another person needs from you.

Cognitive empathy enables leaders to explain themselves in meaningful ways—a skill essential to getting the best performance from their direct reports. Contrary to what you might expect, exercising cognitive empathy requires leaders to think about feelings rather than to feel them directly.

An inquisitive nature feeds cognitive empathy. As one successful executive with this trait puts it, "I've always just wanted to learn everything, to understand anybody that I was around—why they thought what they did, why they did what they did, what worked for them and what didn't work." But cognitive empathy is also an outgrowth of self-awareness. The executive circuits that allow us to think about our own thoughts and to monitor the feelings that flow from them let us apply the same reasoning to other people's minds when we choose to direct our attention that way.

Emotional empathy is important for effective mentoring, managing clients, and reading group dynamics. It springs from ancient parts of the brain beneath the cortex—the amygdala, the hypothalamus, the hippocam-

pus, and the orbitofrontal cortex—that allow us to feel fast without thinking deeply. They tune us in by arousing in our bodies the emotional states of others: I literally feel your pain. My brain patterns match up with yours when I listen to you tell a gripping story. As Tania Singer, the director of the social neuroscience department at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, in Leipzig, Germany, says, "You need to understand your own feelings to understand the feelings of others." Accessing your capacity for emotional empathy depends on combining two kinds of attention: a deliberate focus on your own echoes of someone else's feelings and an open awareness of that person's face, voice, and other external signs of emotion. (See the sidebar "When Empathy Needs to Be Learned.")

Empathic concern, which is closely related to emotional empathy, enables you to sense not just how people feel but what they need from you. It's what you want in your doctor, your spouse—and your boss. Empathic concern has its roots in the circuitry that compels parents' attention to their children. Watch where people's eyes go when someone brings an adorable baby into a room, and you'll see this mammalian brain center leaping into action.

Research suggests that as people rise through the ranks, their ability to maintain personal connections suffers.

One neural theory holds that the response is triggered in the amygdala by the brain's radar for sensing danger and in the prefrontal cortex by the release of oxytocin, the chemical for caring. This implies that empathic

WHEN EMPATHY NEEDS TO BE LEARNED

Emotional empathy can be developed. That's the conclusion suggested by research conducted with physicians by Helen Riess, the director of the Empathy and Relational Science Program at Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital. To help the physicians monitor themselves, Riess set up a program in which they learned to focus using deep, diaphragmatic breathing and to cultivate a certain detachment—to watch an interaction from the ceiling, as it were, rather than being lost in their own thoughts and feelings. "Suspending your own involvement to observe what's going on gives you a mindful awareness of the interaction without being completely reactive," says Riess. "You can see if your own physiology is charged up or balanced. You can notice what's transpiring in the situation." If a doctor realizes that she's feeling irritated, for instance, that may be a signal that the patient is bothered too.

Those who are utterly at a loss may be able to prime emotional empathy essentially by faking it until they make it, Riess adds. If you act in a caring way—looking people in the eye and paying attention to their expressions, even when you don't particularly want to—you may start to feel more engaged.

concern is a double-edged feeling. We intuitively experience the distress of another as our own. But in deciding whether we will meet that person's needs, we deliberately weigh how much we value his or her well-being.

Getting this intuition-deliberation mix right has great implications. Those whose sympathetic feelings become too strong may themselves suffer. In the helping professions, this can lead to compassion fatigue; in executives, it can create distracting feelings of anxiety about people and circumstances that are beyond anyone's control. But those who protect themselves by deadening their feelings may lose touch with empathy. Empathic concern requires us to manage our personal distress without numbing ourselves to the pain of others. (See the sidebar "When Empathy Needs to Be Controlled.")

Daniel Goleman is a codirector of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations at Rutgers University, coauthor of *Primal Leadership: Leading with Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), and author of *The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights* and *Leadership: Selected Writings* (More Than Sound, 2011). His latest book is *A Force for Good: The Dalai Lama's Vision for Our World* (Bantam, 2015).

WHEN EMPATHY NEEDS TO BE CONTROLLED

Getting a grip on our impulse to empathize with other people's feelings can help us make better decisions when someone's emotional flood threatens to overwhelm us.

(*continued*)

WHEN EMPATHY NEEDS TO BE CONTROLLED

(*continued*)

Ordinarily, when we see someone pricked with a pin, our brains emit a signal indicating that our own pain centers are echoing that distress. But physicians learn in medical school to block even such automatic responses. Their attentional anesthetic seems to be deployed by the temporal-parietal junction and regions of the prefrontal cortex, a circuit that boosts concentration by tuning out emotions. That's what is happening in your brain when you distance yourself from others in order to stay calm and help them. The same neural network kicks in when we see a problem in an emotionally overheated environment and need to focus on looking for a solution. If you're talking with someone who is upset, this system helps you understand the person's perspective intellectually by shifting from the heart-to-heart of emotional empathy to the head-to-heart of cognitive empathy.

What's more, some lab research suggests that the appropriate application of empathic concern is critical to making moral judgments. Brain scans have revealed that when volunteers listened to tales of people being subjected to physical pain, their own brain centers for experiencing such pain lit up instantly. But if the story was about psychological suffering, the higher brain centers involved in empathic concern and compassion took longer to activate. Some time is needed to grasp the psychological and moral dimensions of a situation. The more distracted we are, the less we can cultivate the subtler forms of empathy and compassion.

CHAPTER 20

Beyond Empathy: The Power of Compassion

An interview with Daniel Goleman by Andrea Ovans

Two decades before Daniel Goleman first wrote about emotional intelligence in the pages of HBR, he met the Dalai Lama at Amherst College. The Dalai Lama mentioned to the young science journalist for the *New York Times* that he was interested in meeting with scientists. Thus began a long, rich friendship as Goleman became involved over the years in arranging a series of

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Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on May 4, 2015, as "What the Dalai Lama Taught Daniel Goleman About Emotional Intelligence" (product #H021KQ)

what he calls "extended dialogues" between the Buddhist spiritual leader and researchers in fields ranging from ecology to neuroscience. On the occasion of his friend's 80th birthday, he was asked to write a book describing the Dalai Lama's compassionate approach to addressing the world's most intractable problems. *A Force for Good: The Dalai Lama's Vision for Our World*, which draws both on Goleman's background in cognitive science and his long relationship with the Dalai Lama, is both an exploration of the science and the power of compassion and a call to action. Curious about the book and about how the Dalai Lama's views on compassion informed Goleman's thinking on emotional intelligence, I caught up with Goleman over the phone. What follows are edited excerpts from our conversation.

HBR: Let's start with some definitions here. What is compassion, as you are describing it? It sounds a lot like empathy, one of the major components of emotional intelligence. Is there a difference?

Goleman: Yes, an important difference. Three kinds of empathy are important to emotional intelligence: *cognitive empathy*—the ability to understand another person's point of view, *emotional empathy*—the ability to feel what someone else feels, and *empathic concern*—the ability to sense what another person needs from you [see chapter 19, "What Is Empathy?"]. Cultivating all three kinds of empathy, which originate in different parts of the brain, is important for building social relationships.

But compassion takes empathy a step further. When you feel compassion, you feel distress when you witness someone else in distress—and because of that you want to help that person.

Why draw this distinction?

Compassion makes the difference between understanding and caring. It's the kind of love that a parent has for a child. Cultivating it more broadly means extending that to the other people in our lives and to people we encounter.

I think that in the workplace, that attitude has a hugely positive effect, whether it's in how we relate to our peers, how we are as a leader, or how we relate to clients and customers. A positive disposition toward another person creates the kind of resonance that builds trust and loyalty and makes interactions harmonious. And the opposite of that—when you do nothing to show that you care—creates distrust and disharmony and causes huge dysfunction at home and in business.

When you put it that way, it's hard to disagree that if you treat people well things would go better than if you don't or that if you cared about them they would care a lot more about you. So why do you think that doesn't just happen naturally? Is it a cultural thing? Or a misplaced confusion about when competition is appropriate?

I think too often there's a muddle in people's thinking that if I'm nice to another person or if I have their

interests at heart it means that I don't have my own interests at heart. The pathology of that is, "Well, I'll just care about me and not the other person." And that, of course, is the kind of attitude that leads to lots of problems in the business realm and in the personal realm. But compassion also includes yourself. If we protect ourselves and make sure we're okay—and also make sure the other person is okay—that creates a different framework for working with and cooperating with other people.

Could you give me an example of how that might work in the business world?

There's research that was done on star salespeople and on client managers that found that the lowest level of performance was a kind of "I'm going to get the best deal I can now, and I don't care how this affects the other person" attitude, which means that you might make the sale but that you lose the relationship. But at the top end, the stars were typified by the attitude, "I am working for the client as well as myself. I'm going to be completely straight with them, and I'm going to act as their advisor. If the deal I have is not the best deal they can get I'm going to let them know because that's going to strengthen the relationship, even though I might lose this specific sale." And I think that captures the difference between the "me first" and the "let's all do well" attitude that I'm getting at.

How would we cultivate compassion if we just weren't feeling it?

Neuroscientists have been studying compassion recently, and places like Stanford, Yale, UC Berkeley, and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, among others, have been testing methodologies for increasing compassion. Right now there's a kind of a trend toward incorporating mindfulness into the workplace, and it turns out there's data from the Max Planck Institute showing that enhancing mindfulness does have an effect in brain function but that the circuitry that's affected is not the circuitry for concern or compassion. In other words, there's no automatic boost in compassion from mindfulness alone.

Still, in the traditional methods of meditation that mindfulness in the workplace is based on, the two were always linked, so that you would practice mindfulness in a context in which you'd also cultivate compassion.

Stanford, for example, has developed a program that incorporates secularized versions of methods that have originally come from religious practices. It involves a meditation in which you cultivate an attitude of loving-kindness or of concern, or of compassion, toward people. First you do this for yourself, then for people you love, then for people you just know. And finally you do it for everyone. And this has the effect of priming the circuitry responsible for compassion within the brain so that you are more inclined to act that way when the opportunity arises.

You've remarked that the Dalai Lama is a very distinctive kind of leader. Is there something we could learn as leaders ourselves from his unique form of leadership?

Observing him over the years, and then doing this book for which I interviewed him extensively, and of course being immersed in leadership literature myself, three things struck me.

The first is that he's not beholden to any organization at all. He's not in any business. He's not a party leader. He's a citizen of the world at large. And this has freed him to tackle the largest problems we face. I think that to the extent that a leader is beholden to a particular organization or outcome, that creates a kind of myopia of what's possible and what matters. Focus narrows to the next quarter's results or the next election. He's way beyond that. He thinks in terms of generations and of what's best for humanity as a whole. Because his vision is so expansive, he can take on the largest challenges, rather than small, narrowly defined ones.

So I think there's a lesson here for all of us, which is to ask ourselves if there is something that limits our vision—that limits our capacity to care. And is there a way to enlarge it?

The second thing that struck me is that he gathers information from everywhere. He meets with heads of state, and he meets with beggars. He's getting information from people at every level of society worldwide. This casting a large net lets him understand situations in a very deep way, and he can

analyze them in many different ways and come up with solutions that aren't confined by anyone. And I think that's another lesson everyday leaders can take from him.

The third thing would be the scope of his compassion, which I think is an ideal that we could strive for. It's pretty unlimited. He seems to care about everybody and the world at large.

Daniel Goleman is the codirector of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations at Rutgers University, a coauthor of *Primal Leadership: Leading with Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), and the author of *The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights* (More Than Sound, 2011). His latest book is *A Force for Good: The Dalai Lama's Vision for Our World* (Bantam, 2015). **Andrea Ovans** is a former senior editor at *Harvard Business Review*.

SECTION SEVEN

Build Your Resilience

CHAPTER 21

Resilience in the Moment

During difficult interactions, you may begin to question your perceptions about yourself. For example, suppose a direct report says, "I didn't attend the meeting because I didn't think you valued my ideas." In response, you wonder to yourself, "Maybe I'm not a competent manager after all."

For many people, the sense that their self-image is being challenged creates intense emotions. These feelings can become overwhelming, making it virtually impossible to converse productively about *any* subject. For this reason, be sure to address feelings about self-image—in yourself and in the other person—during tough conversations.

Adapted from "Address Emotions" in the Harvard ManageMentor topic "Difficult Interactions" (Harvard Business Publishing, 2016, electronic).

Understand Self-Image

Your self-image comes from many different assumptions that you've made about yourself:

- "I'm an effective manager."
- "I'm a good person."
- "I care about my employees."
- "I'm committed to my organization's success."

This set of assumptions may help you meet a need for self-esteem, competence, and appreciation from others. Few people like to view themselves in a negative light—as incompetent, uncaring, or disloyal.

Why Denial Is Common

Many people view self-image from an "either/or" mindset: "I'm either loyal or disloyal" or "I'm either caring or uncaring." Unfortunately, this perspective makes it impossible for people to tolerate criticism and negative feedback from others.

For instance, if a colleague says, "I was really disappointed when you didn't support my proposal," you might conclude, "I can't possibly be a loyal person if I don't support my peer's ideas." If deciding that you're disloyal feels intolerable, you may practice *denial* and shoot back with something like, "I *did* support your proposal."

Other Reactions to Threats

Other reactions to self-image challenges include:

- **Burying the feelings, adopting a detached manner, and resorting to generalizations:** "Let's calm down and establish precise standard operating procedures here."
- **Striking back at the other person defensively:** "Are you calling me a liar?!"
- **Refusing to face the disagreement directly:** "Let's just forget about it and move on."

None of these responses enables you to listen to feedback and make the changes needed to improve the way you interact with others.

Handle Threats to Your Self-Image

Several strategies can help you effectively handle challenges to your self-image:

- **Understand your self-image.** List all the assumptions that influence your perception of yourself. By anticipating that you might experience defensiveness over threats to these particular beliefs, you may be better able to control negative feelings if they do arise.
- **Adopt a "both/and" mindset.** Instead of assuming that you can be, for example, either competent or incompetent, remind yourself that you and others are a mixture of positive and negative. You're likely competent at some things and not so skilled at others.

- **Accept imperfection.** Acknowledge that everyone makes mistakes at times. The key is to learn from them.

HOW TO RESPOND TO CRITICISM

by Peter Bregman

At one point or another, we've all been blindsided by criticism and reacted poorly. I remember once leading a project that I thought was going great—until my two colleagues took me aside to tell me I was being controlling and overbearing. I immediately became defensive. I had trouble listening to them, and I became self-conscious and awkward for the rest of the project.

Surprise criticism about an issue you haven't perceived yourself often has that effect. It emotionally overpowers you. But you can respond more productively. As you listen to the feedback and your adrenaline starts to flow, pause, take a deep breath, and then follow this game plan.

Acknowledge and set aside your feelings. We call it *constructive* criticism, and it usually is, but it can also feel painful, destabilizing, and personal. Notice and acknowledge to yourself the hurt, anger, embarrassment, or insufficiency you might feel. Recognize the feelings, label them as feelings, and then put them aside so the noise doesn't crowd out your hearing.

Also, look beyond the delivery of the criticism. Feedback is hard to give, and your critic may not be

skilled at doing it well, but that doesn't mean it's not valuable and insightful. Avoid confusing the package with the message.

Next, don't agree or disagree. Just collect the data. Ask questions. Solicit examples. Recap what you're hearing, all in the spirit of understanding. Let go of the need to respond. That will reduce your defensiveness and give you space to really listen.

Criticism, especially surprise criticism, is useful information about how someone else perceives you. Following these steps will help make sure you can fully understand it and can learn from it.

Peter Bregman is CEO of Bregman Partners, Inc., a global management consulting firm that advises CEOs and their leadership teams.

CHAPTER 22

Cultivate Resilience in Tough Times

A summary of the full-length HBR article "How Resilience Works" by **Diane Coutu**, *highlighting key ideas and examples*

IDEA IN BRIEF

Resilient people possess three defining characteristics:

- They coolly accept the harsh realities facing them.
- They find meaning in terrible times.

Adapted from "How Resilience Works" in *Harvard Business Review*, May 2002 (product #R0205B)

- They have an uncanny ability to improvise, making do with whatever's at hand.

Fortunately, you can learn to be resilient. To cultivate resilience, apply these practices.

Face Down Reality

Instead of slipping into denial to cope with hardship, take a sober, down-to-earth view of the reality of your situation. You'll prepare yourself to act in ways that enable you to endure—training yourself to survive before the fact.

> *Example:* Admiral Jim Stockdale survived being held prisoner and tortured by the Vietcong in part by accepting he could be held for a long time. (He was held for eight years.) Those who didn't make it out of the camps kept optimistically assuming they'd be released on shorter timetables—by Christmas, by Easter, by the Fourth of July. "I think they all died of broken hearts," Stockdale said.

Search for Meaning

When hard times strike, resist any impulse to view yourself as a victim and cry, "Why me?" Rather, devise constructs about your suffering to create meaning for yourself and theirs. You'll build bridges from your present-day ordeal to a fuller, better future. Those bridges will make the present manageable, by removing the sense that the present is overwhelming.

> *Example:* Austrian psychiatrist and Auschwitz survivor Victor Frankl realized that to survive the camp, he had to find some purpose. He did so by imagining

himself giving a lecture after the war on the psychology of the concentration camp to help outsiders understand what he had been through. By creating concrete goals for himself, he rose above the sufferings of the moment.

Continually Improvise

When disaster hits, be inventive. Make the most of what you have, putting resources to unfamiliar uses and imagining possibilities others don't see.

Example: Mike founded a business with his friend Paul, selling educational materials to schools, businesses, and consulting firms. When a recession hit, they lost many core clients. Paul went through a bitter divorce, suffered from depression, and couldn't work. When Mike offered to buy him out, Paul slapped him with a lawsuit claiming Mike was trying to steal the business.

Mike kept the company going any way he could—going into joint ventures to sell English-language training materials to Russian and Chinese competitors, publishing newsletters for clients, and even writing video scripts for competitors. The lawsuit was eventually settled in his favor, and he had a new and much more solid business than the one he started out with.

Diane Coutu is the director of client communications at Banyan Family Business Advisors, headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is a former senior editor at *Harvard Business Review*.

CHAPTER 23

Practice Self-Compassion

by Christopher Germer

If a good friend tells you about an ordeal they're facing or a mistake they've made, how do you typically respond? In all likelihood, you'll offer kindness and comfort, perhaps speaking in a warm and soothing tone, and maybe offering a hug to show how much you care. When your friend recovers and the conversation continues, chances are that you'll expand your support by encouraging your friend to take necessary action or try to discover how to steer clear of similar difficulties in the future.

Now reflect for a moment how you might you treat *yourself* when *you* make a big mistake or experience a

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Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on January 5, 2017, as "To Recover from Failure, Try Some Self-Compassion" (product #H03E32)

setback. It's likely that you'd be much tougher on yourself—that you'd spring to self-criticism ("I'm such an idiot!"), hide in embarrassment or shame ("Ugggh!"), or ruminate for a long time about your perceived shortcomings or bad luck ("Why me? Why did this happen to me?"). When things go wrong in our lives, we tend to become our own worst enemy.

To recover emotionally and get back on your feet, however, there's a different approach you can take: *self-compassion*.

I've been working with mindfulness in my psychotherapy practice for over 30 years. It is a powerful resource that helps us stay present and focused on the task at hand. I've come to realize, however, that a component of mindfulness that is essential for emotional resilience is often overlooked. In particular, when we fail in a big way, we're likely to become engulfed in shame and our sense of self is dismantled. We all know what this feels like—we're unable to think straight, temporarily suspended in time and place, dislocated from our bodies, and uncertain who we really are. Shame has a way of wiping out the very observer who is needed to be mindful of our situation.

What does it take to rescue yourself and begin to address the situation in an effective manner? You need to treat yourself with the same kindness and support as you'd provide for a dear friend.

A substantial and growing body of research shows that this self-compassion is closely associated with emotional resilience, including the ability to soothe ourselves, recognize our mistakes and learn from them, and motivate ourselves to succeed. Self-compassion is also

consistently correlated with a wide range of measures of emotional well-being such as optimism, life satisfaction, autonomy, and wisdom, and with reduced anxiety, depression, stress, and feelings of shame.[1]

To achieve these benefits, self-compassion must include three components, according to my colleague and pioneering self-compassion researcher, Kristin Neff:

- **Mindfulness:** Awareness of what's going on in the present moment. To be kind to ourselves, first we need to *know* that we're struggling *while* we're struggling. It also helps to name the emotions we're feeling in tricky situations and to ground ourselves in the here and now (sensations, sounds, sights). These are all skills associated with mindfulness that make space for a compassionate response.

- **Common humanity:** Knowing we're not alone. Most of us tend to hide in shame when things go really wrong in our lives, or we hide from *ourselves* through distraction or with a few stiff drinks. The antidote is recognizing our common humanity—understanding that many others would feel the same way in similar situations, and that we're not the only ones who suffer in life.

- **Self-kindness:** A kind and warm-hearted response to ourselves. This can take many forms, such as a gentle hand over the heart, validating how we feel, talking to ourselves in an encouraging manner, or by a simple act of kindness such as drinking a cup of tea or listening to music.

> When we feel threatened, our nervous system is awash in adrenaline and thus goes into overdrive. When we're in this state, showing ourselves care and kindness is usually the last thing we're inclined to do. When we experience positive, warm connections, however, our system releases oxytocin instead, a feel-good hormone that downregulates the effects of adrenaline. Taking a mindful pause and then bringing kindness to ourselves seems to activate our innate caregiving system and the calming effect of oxytocin, allowing the mind to clear and giving us a chance to take rational steps to resolve the issue.

Even though self-compassion is not the default option for most of us when things go wrong, anyone can learn to do it. Neff has developed an exercise you can use in everyday life when you need self-compassion the most—the Self-Compassion Break (see the sidebar "Self-Compassion Break")—which is based on the three components of self-compassion described above. (This is just one exercise we offer as part of our empirically supported Mindful Self-Compassion training program.)

SELF-COMPASSION BREAK

When you notice that you're under stress or are emotionally upset, see if you can locate where the emotional discomfort resides your body. Where do you feel it the most? Then say to yourself, slowly:

1. ***"This is a moment of struggle."*** That's mindfulness. See if you can find your own words, such as:

    - "This hurts."
    - "This is tough."
    - "Ouch!"

2. ***"Struggle is a part of living."*** That's common humanity. Other options include:

    - "Other people feel this way."
    - "I'm not alone."
    - "We all struggle in our lives."

Now, put your hands over your heart, or wherever it feels soothing, sensing the warmth and gentle touch of your hands, and say to yourself:

3. ***"May I be kind to myself. May I give myself what I need."*** Perhaps there are more specific words that you might need to hear right now, such as:

    - "May I accept myself as I am."
    - "May I learn to accept myself as I am."
    - "May I be safe."
    - "May I be strong."
    - "May I forgive myself."

(*continued*)

SELF-COMPASSION BREAK

(*continued*)

If you're having trouble finding the right language, it can help to imagine what you might say to a close friend struggling with that same difficulty. Can you say something similar to yourself, letting the words roll gently through your mind?

Consider the following example of the Self-Compassion Break in action: Your boss gave you a stretch assignment to lead a large and critical project. The project was a great success, due in large part to your skillful leadership, and you believe you demonstrated that you're ready for a promotion. But when you raise the idea with your boss, she laughs dismissively and changes the subject. Livid with anger, you retreat from the conversation, asking yourself why you bothered to work so hard in the first place, since you would never be recognized for it. *Of course* your boss wasn't going to support you, or even notice—she just wanted someone to do the heavy lifting to promote her own selfish agenda. Or maybe you're hopelessly out of touch and your performance really wasn't as good as you thought it was? When we're in the grip of strong emotions, our minds run wild.

As a savvy businessperson, you might think that this would be the perfect moment to advocate for yourself if it were only possible to make a balanced, compelling case for your promotion. But without a moment of self-

compassion, your emotional reactivity is likely to stand in your way—you'd put your anger on display instead of showing off your leadership skills, or you'd let self-doubt eat at your resolve to see the discussion through to an acceptable conclusion.

How do you activate self-compassion in the heat of the moment? Begin by acknowledging how you feel; for example, recognizing that you might still feel angry ("She's terrible, and I hate her"), see yourself as the victim ("She made me go through all of that—for what?!"), or doubt yourself ("Maybe she's right—maybe I don't deserve a promotion—I didn't do that great a job after all").

Next, acknowledge that others would probably have similar feelings in this situation: requesting a promotion after you've expanded your skills and taken on more responsibility is a reasonable thing to do, and your emotional reaction to the rejection of that request is not out of line. Consider any examples you know of others in similar situations—perhaps Rob in the finance department told you last year that his promotion was also denied and you noticed how angry he was and how he doubted his own worth. You are not alone.

Finally, express kindness to yourself: What would you say to a friend in your shoes? Perhaps you'd say, "It's rough being taken for granted." "Whatever comes of it, that project *was* a huge success—look at the numbers." Also think about how you care for yourself already. Do you go for a run, pet your dog, call a friend? If you do that when you're suffering, that's self-compassion.

Once you've shifted your frame of mind from a threat state to self-compassion, you're likely find yourself

calmer and in a place that you can sit down and write a thoughtful and persuasive proposal about your promotion—one that builds on your project success and exhibits your leadership potential under stress.

Lastly, a warning: Many people dismiss self-compassion because they think it flies in the face of their ambition or hard self-driving attitude—qualities that they feel have made them successful. But being self-compassionate doesn't imply that you shouldn't be ambitious or push yourself to succeed. Rather it's about *how* you motivate yourself. Instead of using a whip—motivating yourself with blame and harsh self-criticism—self-compassion motivates like a good coach, with encouragement, kindness, and support. It's a simple reversal of the Golden Rule—learning to treat *ourselves* as we naturally treat others in need—with kindness, warmth, and respect.

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CHAPTER 24

Don't Endure; Recharge

by Shawn Achor and Michelle Gielan

As constant travelers and parents of a two-year-old, we sometimes fantasize about how much work we could do if we could just get on a plane, undistracted by phones, friends, or *Finding Nemo*. And so in advance of a trip, we race to get all our groundwork done: packing, going through TSA, doing a last-minute work call, calling each other, boarding. But then when we try to have that amazing in-flight work session, we find that we get nothing done. Even worse, after refreshing our email or reading the same studies over and over, we are too exhausted when we land to soldier on with the emails that have inevitably still piled up.

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on June 24, 2016, as "Resilience Is About How You Recharge, Not How You Endure" (product #H02Z3O)

Why can't we be tougher—more resilient and determined in our work—so we can accomplish all of the goals we set for ourselves? Through our current research, we have come to realize that the problem comes from a cultural misunderstanding of what it means to be resilient, and the resulting impact of overworking.

As a society, we often associate "resilience" and "grit" with a militaristic, "tough" approach to our work. We imagine a Marine slogging through the mud, a boxer going one more round, or a football player picking himself up off the turf for one more play. We believe that the longer we tough it out, the tougher we are, and therefore the more successful we will be.

However, this entire conception is scientifically inaccurate. In fact what's holding back our ability to be resilient and successful is the lack of any kind of recovery period. Resilience is defined as the ability to quickly bounce back from stressful situations—no matter what problems are thrown at us, we continually get back up, ready for the next one. But even for the most resilient person, getting ready doesn't happen instantly. It is a process—and an important one. Research has found that there is a direct correlation between lack of recovery and increased incidence of health and safety problems. And lack of recovery—whether it disrupts our sleep with thoughts of work or keeps us in continuous cognitive arousal as we obsessively watch our phones—is costing our companies $62 billion a year (that's *billion*, not million) in lost productivity.[1]

Misconceptions about resilience as nonstop activity and energy are often bred into us from an early age.

For instance, parents might praise the resilience of their high school student who stays up until 3 a.m. to finish a science fair project. But when that exhausted student drives to school, his impaired driving poses risks for himself and others; at school, he doesn't have the cognitive resources to do well on his English test and has lower self-control with his friends; and at home, he is moody with his parents.

The bad habits we learn when we're young only magnify when we hit the workforce. In a study released last month, researchers from Norway found that 7.8% of Norwegians have become workaholics, where *workaholism* is defined as "being overly concerned about work, driven by an uncontrollable work motivation, and investing so much time and effort to work that it impairs other important life areas."[2] And in fact that drive can backfire in the very area for which we're sacrificing ourselves: In her excellent book *The Sleep Revolution: Transforming Your Life, One Night at a Time*, Arianna Huffington wrote, "We sacrifice sleep in the name of productivity, but ironically our loss of sleep, despite the extra hours we spend at work, adds up to 11 days of lost productivity per year per worker, or about $2,280."[3]

The key to resilience is *not* working really hard all the time. It is actually found in the time that we stop working and recover. Ideally, we need to create cycles for ourselves in which we work hard, then stop and recover, and then work again.

This conclusion is based on biology. *Homeostasis*, a fundamental biological concept, is the ability of the body to continuously restore and sustain its own well-being.

When the body is out of alignment and therefore in a state of stress or exhaustion from overworking, we waste a vast amount of mental and physical resources trying to return to balance before we can move forward. As Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz have written in *The Power of Full Engagement*, the more time you spend in the performance zone, the more time you need in the recovery zone; otherwise you risk burnout.

And if, instead of taking a break, you muster your resources to continue to "try hard," you need to burn ever more energy in order to overcome your currently low arousal level, which only exacerbates your exhaustion. It's a vicious downward spiral.

But the more imbalanced we become due to overworking, the more value there is in activities that allow us to return to a state of balance.

So what are those activities that allow us to return to homeostasis and thereby increase our resilience? Most people assume that if you stop doing a task like answering emails or writing a paper, that your brain will naturally recover, so that when you start again later in the day or the next morning, you'll have your energy back. But stopping work doesn't mean you're actually recovering: If after work you lie around on the couch and check your phone and get riled up by political commentary, or get stressed thinking about decisions about how to renovate your home, your brain has not received a break from high mental arousal states. And surely everyone reading this has occasionally lain in bed for hours, unable to fall asleep because their brain is thinking about work, even if they don't have a device in hand. If you're in bed for

eight hours, you may have rested, but you can still feel exhausted the next day. That's because rest and recovery are not the same thing.

If you're trying to build resilience at work, you need adequate internal and external recovery periods. As researchers F. R. H. Zijlstra, M. Cropley, and L. W. Rydstedt wrote in a 2014 paper: "Internal recovery refers to the shorter periods of relaxation that take place within the frames of the workday or the work setting in the form of short scheduled or unscheduled breaks, by shifting attention or changing to other work tasks when the mental or physical resources required for the initial task are temporarily depleted or exhausted. External recovery refers to actions that take place outside of work—e.g., in the free time between the workdays, and during weekends, holidays or vacations."[4]

There are four main researched ways to increase your resilience. First, start by deliberately opening a space for recovery to happen. We've worked with several companies that tout the benefits of investing in employee well-being, but fail to create tangible results because they don't carve out time for their workers to devote part of their workday to those rejuvenating activities. Adding more activities to an already full plate of work increases the stress load.

Second, it is crucial that you take *all* of your paid time off. As we described in a previous HBR article entitled "The Data-Driven Case for Vacation," taking your days off not only gives you recovery periods to recharge, but in fact significantly raises your productivity and the likelihood of promotion.

Third, while it might sound counterintuitive, it is possible to use technology to limit tech use while building internal recovery periods into your daily routine. The average person turns on their phone 150 times every day.[5] If every distraction took only 1 minute (which would be seriously optimistic), that would account for 2.5 hours of every day. In her upcoming book *The Future of Happiness*, based on her work at Yale Business School, Amy Blankson suggests downloading the Instant or Moment apps to see how many times *you* turn on your phone each day; using the app reminds you to make a choice in those moments when you grab your phone—and choose to stay away. You can also use apps like Offtime or Unplugged to create tech-free zones by strategically scheduling automatic airplane modes. In addition, you can take a cognitive break every 90 minutes to recharge your batteries. Try to not have lunch at your desk, but instead spend time outside or with your friends—*not* talking about work.

Fourth, now that you have carved out time for rejuvenation, it's time to engage in an activity or two that make you feel happy and replenished. Take the pressure off and just do something for the fun of it! Go on a walk or run, call and old friend, meditate by watching your breath go in and out for five minutes, try a new recipe, or do something nice for someone else. Choose to do something that makes you feel alive, gives you a mental break from work, and keeps you fully engaged the whole time. Not only does spending your time this way help you come back stronger, oftentimes these activities are more memorable in the long run.

As for us, we've started using our plane time as a work-free zone, and thus as time to dip into the recovery phase. The results have been fantastic. We are usually tired already by the time we get on a plane, and the cramped space and spotty internet connection make work more challenging. Now, instead of swimming upstream, we relax, meditate, sleep, watch movies, journal, or listen to entertaining podcasts. And when we get off the plane, instead of being depleted, we feel rejuvenated and ready to return to the performance zone.

Shawn Achor is *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Happiness Advantage* and *Before Happiness*. His TED talk is one of the most popular, with over 14 million views. He has lectured or researched at over a third of the *Fortune* 100 and in 50 countries, as well as for the NFL, NASA, and the White House. He is leading a series of courses on "21 Days to Inspire Positive Change" with the Oprah Winfrey Network. **Michelle Gielan**, a national CBS News anchor turned UPenn positive psychology researcher, is the best-selling author of *Broadcasting Happiness*. She is partnered with Arianna Huffington to research how a solution-focused mindset fuels success, and shares her research at organizations including Google, American Express, and Boston Children's Hospital. Michelle is the host of the *Inspire Happiness* program on PBS.

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CHAPTER 25

How Resilient Are You?

by Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries

We all face setbacks from time to time, and the ability to bounce back stronger than before is something we envy in others. So how can we develop that ability in ourselves?

A large body of research shows that resilient people are generally strong in three areas: challenge, control, and commitment. They accept that change, not stability, is the norm; they believe they can influence events in their lives; and they are engaged with the world around them.

This test will help you assess your strengths and weaknesses in these areas and provide feedback on ways to improve.

Adapted from material originally published on hbr.org on January 20, 2015

Circle your reaction to each statement, then follow the instructions below to score yourself.

Challenge

1. You're told that you won't be getting the promotion you sought, because another candidate is more qualified.

    a. Although you are upset, you say nothing.
    b. You acknowledge that you are disappointed and request a fuller explanation.
    c. You ask what you need to do to improve your chances for advancement in the future.

2. You learn that your company will be opening an office in Beijing. Succeeding in that market would be difficult, but you know that you have the right experience to lead the office.

    a. You consider the risks and decide not to pursue the opportunity.
    b. You discuss the pros and cons with some of the people in your network.
    c. You throw your hat into the ring.

3. A major client tells you that a contract you worked hard to win has been given to a competitor.

    a. You tell your team that you made every effort to land the client.
    b. You put the setback out of your mind, accepting that some factors in the client's decision were beyond your control.

c. You reflect on the experience, realizing that you now have a much better understanding of how to deal with this client in the future.

Control

4. You overhear an unflattering conversation about yourself.

   a. You pretend it doesn't bother you.
   b. You remind yourself that the speakers don't know you very well.
   c. You approach the speakers calmly and express your desire to understand why they see you that way.

5. Your boss comes to you on Friday afternoon with an emergency: He wants to meet with a client on Monday morning and needs you to prepare a feasibility study first. You have a family camping trip planned for the weekend.

   a. You accept the assignment, not mentioning your weekend plans.
   b. You mention the camping trip but agree to the assignment after your boss emphasizes its importance.
   c. You tell your boss that you have made a commitment to your family and ask if he can schedule the meeting for Tuesday instead.

6. Work has become increasingly stressful. There are too many deadlines, too many requests, too many late nights.

a. You tell yourself, "This, too, shall pass."
b. You try to give some of your work to a colleague.
c. You request a vacation or a leave of absence to recharge.

Commitment

7. Your best friend says that he is worried about your health and suggests that you join his fitness club.

   a. You say, "No, thanks. I'm fine."
   b. You agree that the fitness club is a good idea and make a note in your calendar to look into it.
   c. You take his concern to heart and arrange to visit the club together.

8. Your company's subsidiary in Africa requests financial and technical support for a high school in the region. Although there would be no immediate monetary benefit to the firm, this is a valuable opportunity to build a reputation as a socially responsible employer.

   a. You decline the request on cost grounds.
   b. You agree to give the matter serious consideration.
   c. You give your consent and call a friend at the World Bank for suggestions on how to launch the initiative.

9. Early in your career you had set a goal to become general manager at a *Fortune* 1000 company by

age 50. The clock is ticking: You're 48, and you're a division head.

a. You accept your current role and decide to make the best of it.
b. You continue striving for advancement but lower your ambitions a bit.
c. You figure out a way to reach your goal.

Score Yourself

For each area, record the number of each answer below and add up your total score for that area.

Challenge

of a ____ =

# of b ____ x 2 =

# of c ____ x 3 =

Total = = Challenge Score

If you had a high challenge score (7–9):

You turn difficult events to your advantage and view setbacks as learning opportunities. You have positive relationships with others.

If you had a low challenge score (1–6):

You need to work on turning difficult events to your advantage and reframing them in a constructive light. If you experience setbacks in the process, regard them as learning opportunities, not failures. Remember the importance of positive relationships with others.

Control

of a ____ =

# of b ____ x 2 =

# of c ____ x 3 =

Total = = Control Score

If you had a high control score (7–9):

You can distinguish between things you can and can't control, and you deal with emotionally difficult problems proactively. You see things in perspective and know how to set boundaries.

If you had a low control score (1–6):

Work on distinguishing between things you can and can't control, perhaps with the help of an executive coach or a therapist. Try to deal with emotionally difficult problems proactively. Use humor to "roll with the punches." Set boundaries in both your professional life and your personal life to avoid burnout. Delegate more responsibilities to your direct reports.

Commitment

of a ____ =

# of b ____ x 2 =

# of c ____ x 3 =

Total = = Commitment Score

If you had a high commitment score (7–9):

You pursue goals that are meaningful to you and maintain positive relationships with people who matter to you. You recognize the importance of health and balance and have an active life outside of work.

If you had a low commitment score (1–6):

Clarify what is important to you and pursue those activities. Make an effort to spend time with people who are meaningful in your life. Develop healthy habits, including daily exercise, regular sleep, and relaxation techniques. Don't ignore problems.

To take this assessment online and compare your results to those of other HBR readers, visit https://hbr.org/2015/01/assessment-how-resilient-are-you.

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SECTION EIGHT

Developing Emotional Intelligence on Your Team

CHAPTER 26

How to Help Someone Develop Emotional Intelligence

by Annie McKee

It's easy to point fingers at those in the office who lack basic self-awareness or social skill. Whether clueless colleagues or brutish bosses, these people make life challenging for the rest of us, ruining the dynamic of work teams and shattering productivity and morale. But in fact most of us can stand to improve our emotional intelligence. Even those of us who are adept extroverts can

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learn how to become more empathetic; those who are kind givers can learn to be more persuasive.

As a manager, it's up to you to develop the emotional intelligence of your direct reports—whether they are socially awkward, downright nasty, or simply looking to become more influential. In doing so, you'll help them grow in their careers—and make your workplace a healthier, happier, more productive place to be.

Here's the problem: Emotional intelligence is difficult to develop because it is linked to psychological development and neurological pathways created over an entire lifetime (to learn more, see Daniel Goleman's book *The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights*). It takes a lot of effort to change long-standing habits of human interaction—not to mention foundational competencies like self-awareness and emotional self-control. People need to be invested in changing their behavior and developing their emotional intelligence, or it just doesn't happen. What this means in practice is that you don't have even a remote chance of changing someone's emotional intelligence unless *they* want to change.

Most of us assume that people will change their behavior when told to do so by a person with authority (you, the manager). For complicated change and development, however, it is clear that people don't *sustain* change when promised incentives like good assignments or a better office.[1] And when threatened or punished, they get downright ornery and behave really badly. Carrot-and-stick performance management processes and the behaviorist approach on which they are

based are deeply flawed; yet most of us start (and end) there, even in the most innovative organizations.

What *does* work is:

First, helping people find a deep and very personal vision of their own future.

Then, helping them see how their current ways of operating might need a bit of work if that future is to be realized.

These are the first two steps in Richard Boyatzis's *intentional change* theory—which we've been testing with leaders for years. According to Boyatzis—and backed up by our work with leaders—here's how people really can begin and sustain change on complex abilities linked to emotional intelligence:

First, find the dream

If you're coaching an employee, you must *first* help them discover what's important in life. Only then can you move on to aspects of work that are important to them. Help your employee craft a clear and compelling vision of a future that includes powerful and positive relationships with family, friends, and coworkers. Notice that I'm talking about *coaching*, not *managing*, your employee. There's a big difference.

Next, find out what's really going on

What's the current state of your employee's emotional intelligence? Once people have a powerful dream to draw strength from, they're strong enough to take the heat—to

find out the truth. If you are now truly coaching, you're trusted and your employee will listen to you. Still, that's probably not enough. You will want to find a way to gather input from others, either through a 360-degree feedback instrument like the ESCI (Emotional and Social Competency Inventory), or a Leadership Self-Study process (as described in our book, *Becoming a Resonant Leader*), which gives you the chance to talk directly to trusted friends about their emotional intelligence and other skills.

Finally, craft a gap analysis and a learning plan

Note that I did not say "performance management plan," or even "development plan." A learning plan is different in that it charts a direct path from the personal vision to what must be learned over time to get there—to actual skill development.

Learning goals are *big*. Take, for example, one executive I know. Talented though he was, his distinct lack of caring about the people around him had placed him in danger of being fired. He wanted what he wanted—and watch out if you were in his way. He couldn't seem to change until it finally dawned on him that his bulldozer style was playing out at home too, with his children. That didn't fit at all with his dream of a happy, close-knit family who would live close to each other throughout their lives. So, with a dream in hand and the ugly reality rearing its head at work and at home, he decided to work on developing empathy. As a learning goal, empathy is one of the toughest and most important competencies to develop. The capacity for emotional and cognitive empa-

thy is laid down early in life, and then reinforced over many years. This exec had a good foundation for empathy in childhood, but intense schooling and a stint at an up-or-out management consulting firm had driven it out of him. He needed to relearn how to read people and care about them. He was able to succeed—yes, it took a good while, but he did it.

This sounds like a lot of hard work for your employee, and it can be. Here's where a final important piece of the theory comes into play. They—and you—can't do it alone. People need people—kind and supportive people—when embarking on a journey of self-development. Are you there for your employees? Do you help them find other supporters, in addition to yourself, who will help when their confidence wanes or when they experience inevitable setbacks?

Developing one's emotional intelligence can make the difference between success and failure in life and in work. If you're the one responsible for people's contributions to the team and your organization, you are actually on the hook to try to help those (many) people who are emotional-intelligence-challenged, deficient, and dangerous. It's your job.

But what if you're not the boss? You can still make a difference with colleagues. All of the same rules apply to how people change. You just need to find a different entry point. In my experience, that entry begins with you creating a safe space and establishing trust. Find something to like about these people and let them

know it. Give them credit where credit is due, and then some (most of these folks are pretty insecure). Be kind. In other words, use your emotional intelligence to help them get ready to work on theirs.

And finally, if none of this works, these "problem people" don't belong on your team—or maybe even in your organization. If you're a manager, that's when it's time to help them move on with dignity.

Annie McKee is a senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of the PennCLO Executive Doctoral Program. She is the author of *Primal Leadership* (with Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis), as well as *Resonant Leadership* and *Becoming a Resonant Leader*. Her new book, *How to Be Happy at Work*, is forthcoming from Harvard Business Review Press in September 2017.

NOTE

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CHAPTER 27

Handling Emotional Outbursts on Your Team

by Liane Davey

Do you have a crier on your team—you know, the one with tissue-thin skin who expresses frustration, sadness, or worry through tears? Maybe you have a screamer, a table pounder who is aggressively invested in every decision. These kinds of emotional outbursts are not just uncomfortable; they can hijack your team, stalling productivity and limiting innovation.

Adapted from content originally posted on hbr.org on April 24, 2015, as "Handling Emotional Outbursts on Your Team."

Don't allow an emotional person to postpone, dilute, or drag out an issue that the business needs you to resolve. Instead, take the outburst for what it is: a communication. Emotions are clues that the issue you are discussing is touching on something the person values or believes strongly in. So look at outbursts as giving you three sets of information: emotional data; factual or intellectual data; and motives, values, and beliefs.

We get stuck when we only focus on the first two—emotions and facts. It's easy to do. When someone starts yelling, for instance, you might think he's mad (emotion) because his project has just been defunded (fact). And many managers stop there, because they find feelings uncomfortable or aren't sure how to deal with them. That's why the first step is to become more self-aware by questioning your mindset around emotions. There are several myths that often get in a team leader's way:

Myth #1: There is no place for emotion in the workplace. If you have humans in the workplace, you're going to have emotions too. Ignoring, stifling, or invalidating them will only drive the toxic issues underground. This outdated notion is one reason people resort to passive-aggressive behavior: Emotions will find their outlet; the choice is whether it's out in the open or in the shadows.

Myth #2: We don't have time to talk about people's feelings. Do you have time for backroom dealings and subterfuge? Do you have time to reopen decisions? Do you have time for failed implementations? Avoiding the emotional issues at the outset will only

delay their impact. And when people don't feel heard, their feelings amplify until you have something really destructive to deal with.

Myth #3: Emotions will skew our decision making. Emotions are already affecting your decision making. The choice is whether you want to be explicit about how (and how much) of a role they play or whether you want to leave them as unspoken biases.

With your beliefs in check, you'll be better able to get beyond the emotion and facts to the values the person holds that are being compromised or violated. This is critical because your criers and screamers are further triggered when they don't feel understood. The key is to have a discussion that includes facts, feelings, *and* values. People will feel heard and the emotion will usually dissipate. Then you can focus on making the best business decision possible.

Here's how.

Spot the emotion. If you wait until the emotion is in full bloom, it will be difficult to manage. Instead, watch for the telltale signs that something is causing concern. The most important signals will come from incongruence between what someone is saying and what their body language is telling you. When you notice someone is withdrawing eye contact or getting red in the face, acknowledge what you see: *"Steve, you've stopped midsentence a couple of times now. What's going on for you?"*

Listen. Listen carefully to the response, both to what is said and what you can infer about facts, feelings, and values. You will pick up emotions in language, particularly in extreme words or words that are repeated: *"We have a $2 million budget shortfall and it's our fourth meeting sitting around having a lovely intellectual discussion!"* Body language will again provide clues. Angry (leaning in, clenched jaw or fists) looks very different from discouraged (dropping eye contact, slumping) or dismissive (rolling eyes, turning away).

Ask questions. When you see or hear the emotional layer, stay calm, keep your tone level, and ask a question to draw the person out and get them talking about values: *"I get the sense you're frustrated. What's behind your frustration?"* Listen to their response and then go one layer further by testing a hypothesis: *"Is it possible that you're frustrated because we're placing too much weight on the people impact of the decision and you think we need to focus only on what's right for the business?"*

Resolve it. If your hypothesis is right, you'll probably see relief. The person might even express their pleasure: *"Yes, exactly!"* You can sum it up: *"We've talked about closing the Cleveland office for two years and you're frustrated because you believe that the right decision for the business is obvious."* You've now helped them articulate the values they think should be guiding the decision. The team will now be clear on why they are disagreeing. Three people might jump in, all talking at once: *"We* are *talking about*

people who have given their lives to this organization!" "*Here we go again . . .*" Use the same process to reveal the opposing points of view.

Once everyone is working with the same three data sets—facts, emotions, and values—you will be clear what you need to solve for—in this case, *"How will we weigh the financial necessity against the impact on people?"* Although taking the time to draw out the values might seem slow at first, you'll see that issues actually get resolved faster. And ironically, as you validate emotions, over time people will tend to be less emotional because it's often the suppression of emotions or attempts to cobble together facts to justify those emotions that was causing irrational behavior.

If you're leading a high-performing team, you'd better be ready to deal with uncomfortable, messy, complex emotions. If there's a situation you have failed to address because of an emotional team member, spend some time thinking about how you will approach it and then go have the conversation. Today. You can't afford to wait any longer.

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CHAPTER 28

How to Manage Your Emotional Culture

by Sigal Barsade and Olivia A. O'Neill

When people talk about "corporate culture," they're typically referring to *cognitive* culture: the shared *intellectual* values, norms, artifacts, and assumptions that serve as a guide for the group to thrive. Cognitive culture sets the tone for how employees think and behave at work—for instance, how customer-focused, innovative, team-oriented, or competitive they are or should be.

Cognitive culture is undeniably important to an organization's success. But it's only part of the story. The

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other critical part is what we call the group's *emotional* culture: the shared *affective* values, norms, artifacts, and assumptions that govern which emotions people have and express at work and which ones they are better off suppressing. Though the key distinction here is thinking versus feeling, the two types of culture are also transmitted differently: Cognitive culture is often conveyed verbally, whereas emotional culture tends to be conveyed through nonverbal cues such as body language and facial expression.

In our research over the past decade, we have found that emotional culture influences employee satisfaction, burnout, teamwork, and even hard measures such as financial performance and absenteeism. Countless empirical studies show the significant impact of emotions on how people perform on tasks, how engaged and creative they are, how committed they are to their organizations, and how they make decisions. Positive emotions are consistently associated with better performance, quality, and customer service—this holds true across roles and industries and at various organizational levels. On the flip side (with certain short-term exceptions), negative emotions such as group anger, sadness, fear, and the like usually lead to negative outcomes, including poor performance and high turnover.

So when managers ignore emotional culture, they're glossing over a vital part of what makes people—and organizations—tick. They may understand its importance in theory but can still shy away from emotions at work. Leaders expect to influence how people think and behave on the job, but they may feel ill-equipped

to understand and actively manage how employees feel and express their emotions at work. Or they may regard doing so as irrelevant, not part of their job, or unprofessional.

Emotional Cultures in Action

Nearly 30 years ago, the social psychologist Phil Shaver and his colleagues found that people can reliably distinguish among 135 emotions. But understanding the most basic ones—joy, love, anger, fear, sadness—is a good place to start for any leader trying to manage an emotional culture. Here are a few examples to illustrate how these emotions can play out in organizations.

A Culture of Joy

Let's begin with one that's often clearly articulated and actively reinforced by management—above the surface and easy to spot. Vail Resorts recognizes that cultivating joy among employees helps customers have fun too, which matters a lot in the hospitality business. It also gives the organization an edge in retaining top talent in an extremely competitive industry. "Have fun" is listed as a company value and modeled by Vail's CEO, Rob Katz—who, for instance, had ice water dumped on his head during a corporate ALS Ice Bucket Challenge and then jumped fully clothed into a pool. About 250 executives and other employees followed his lead.

This playful spirit at the top permeates Vail. Management tactics, special outings, celebrations, and rewards all support the emotional culture. Resort managers consistently model joy and prescribe it for their teams.

During the workday, they give out pins when they notice employees spontaneously having fun or helping others enjoy their jobs. Rather than asking people to follow standardized customer service scripts, they tell everyone to "go out there and have fun." Mark Gasta, the company's chief people officer, says he regularly sees ski-lift operators dancing, making jokes, doing "whatever it takes to have fun and entertain the guest" while ensuring a safe experience on the slopes. On a day-to-day basis, Vail encourages employees to collaborate because, as Gasta points out, "leaving people out is not fun." At an annual ceremony, a Have Fun award goes to whoever led that year's best initiative promoting fun at work. The resort also fosters off-the-job joy with "first tracks" (first access to the ski slopes for employees), adventure trips, and frequent social gatherings.

All this is in service to an emotional culture that makes intuitive sense. (Joy at a ski resort? Of course.) But now consider an organization where the demand for joy wasn't immediately visible. When we surveyed employees at Cisco Finance about their organization's emotional culture, it became clear to management that fostering joy should be a priority. The survey didn't ask employees how they felt at work; it asked them what emotions they saw their coworkers expressing on a regular basis. (By having employees report on colleagues' emotions, researchers could obtain a more objective bird's-eye view of the culture.) It turned out that joy was one of the strongest drivers of employee satisfaction and commitment at the company—and more of it was needed to keep up engagement.

So management made joy an explicit cultural value, calling it "Pause for Fun." This signaled that it was an important outcome to track—just like productivity, creativity, and other elements of performance. Many companies use annual employee engagement surveys to gauge joy in the abstract, often in the form of job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. But Cisco Finance measured it much more specifically and is conducting follow-up surveys to track whether it is actually increasing. In addition, leaders throughout the organization support this cultural value with their own behavior—for example, by creating humorous videos that show them pausing for fun.

A Culture of Companionate Love

Another emotion we've examined extensively—one that's common in life but rarely mentioned by name in organizations—is *companionate love*. This is the degree of affection, caring, and compassion that employees feel and express toward one another.

In a 16-month study of a large long-term-care facility on the East Coast, we found that workers in units with strong cultures of companionate love had lower absenteeism, less burnout, and greater teamwork and job satisfaction than their colleagues in other units.[1] Employees also performed their work better, as demonstrated by more-satisfied patients, better patient moods, and fewer unnecessary trips to the emergency room. (Employees whose dispositions were positive to begin with received an extra performance boost from the culture.) The families of patients in units with

stronger cultures of companionate love reported higher satisfaction with the facility. These results show a powerful connection between emotional culture and business performance.

Because this study took place in a health-care setting, we wondered whether companionate love matters only in "helping" industries. So we surveyed more than 3,200 employees in 17 organizations spanning seven industries: biopharmaceutical, engineering, financial services, higher education, public utilities, real estate, and travel. In organizations where employees felt and expressed companionate love toward one another, people reported greater job satisfaction, commitment, and personal accountability for work performance.

Creating an Emotional Culture

To cultivate a particular emotional culture, you'll need to get people to feel the emotions valued by the organization or team—or at least to behave as if they do. Here are three effective methods:

Harness What People Already Feel

Some employees will experience the desired emotions quite naturally. This can happen in isolated moments of compassion or gratitude, for example. When such feelings arise regularly, that's a sign you're building the culture you want. If people have them only periodically and need help sustaining them, you can try incorporating some gentle nudges during the workday. You might schedule some time for meditation, for instance; or provide mindfulness apps on people's work devices to re-

mind them to simply breathe, relax, or laugh; or create a kudos board, like the one in an ICU we studied, where people can post kind words about other employees.

But what can you do about emotions that are toxic to the culture you're striving for? How can you discourage them when they already exist? Expecting people to "put a lid" on those feelings is both ineffective and destructive; the emotions will just come out later in counterproductive ways. It's important to listen when employees express their concerns so that they feel they are being heard. That's not to say you should encourage venting, or just let the emotions flow without attempting to solve the root problems. Indeed, research shows that extended venting can lead to poor outcomes. You're better off helping employees think about situations in a more constructive way. For example, loneliness, which can eat away at employee attitudes and performance, is best addressed through cognitive reappraisal—getting people to reexamine their views of others' actions. Considering plausible benign motivations for their colleagues' behavior will make them less likely to fixate on negative explanations that could send them into a spiral.

Model the Emotions You Want to Cultivate

A long line of research on emotional contagion shows that people in groups "catch" feelings from others through behavioral mimicry and subsequent changes in brain function.[2] If you regularly walk into a room smiling with high energy, you're much more likely to create a culture of joy than if you wear a neutral expression. Your employees will smile back and start to mean it.

But negative feelings, too, spread like wildfire. If you frequently express frustration, that emotion will infect your team members—and their team members, and so on—throughout the organization. Before you know it, you'll have created a culture of frustration.

So consciously model the emotions you want to cultivate in your company. Some organizations go a step further and explicitly ask employees to spread certain emotions. Ubiquity Retirement + Savings says, "Inspire happiness with contagious enthusiasm. Own your joy and lend it out." Vail Resorts says, "Enjoy your work and share the contagious spirit."

Get People to Fake It 'Til They Feel It

If employees don't experience the desired emotion at a particular moment, they can still help maintain their organization's emotional culture. That's because people express emotions both spontaneously and strategically at work. Social psychology research has long shown that individuals tend to conform to group norms of emotional expression, imitating others out of a desire to be liked and accepted. So employees in a strong emotional culture who would not otherwise feel and express the valued emotion will begin to demonstrate it—even if their initial motivation is to be compliant rather than to internalize the culture.

This benefits the organization, not just the individuals trying to thrive in it. In early anthropological studies of group rituals, strategic emotional expression was found to facilitate group cohesion by overpowering individual feelings and synchronizing interpersonal behavior.

So maintaining the appropriate culture sometimes entails disregarding what you are truly feeling. Through "surface acting," employees can display the valued emotion without even wanting to feel it. Surface acting isn't a long-term solution, though. Research shows that it can eventually lead to burnout—particularly in the absence of any outlet for authentic emotions.[3]

A better way to cultivate a desired emotion is through "deep acting." With this technique, people make a focused effort to feel a certain way—and then suddenly they do. Imagine that an employee at an accounting firm has a family emergency and requests a week off work at the height of tax audit season. Although his boss's first thought is *No—not now—no!* she could engage in deep acting to change her immediate feelings of justifiable panic into genuine caring and concern for her subordinate. By trying hard to empathize, saying "Of course, you should go be with your family!" and using the facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice she would use when actually feeling those emotions, she could coax herself into the real thing. She would also be modeling a desired behavior for the subordinate and the rest of the team.

Fortunately, all these ways of creating an emotional culture—whether they involve really feeling the emotion or simply acting that way—can reinforce one another and strengthen the culture's norms. People don't have to put on an act forever. Those who begin by expressing an emotion out of a desire to conform will start to actually feel it through emotional contagion. They'll also receive positive reinforcement for following the norms, which

will make them more likely to demonstrate the emotion again.

Of course, the culture will be much stronger and more likely to endure if people truly believe in the values and assumptions behind it. Someone who is uncomfortable with an organization's emotional culture and has to keep pretending in order to be successful would probably be better off moving to a different work environment. Companies often have more than one emotional culture, so another unit or department might be a good fit. But if the culture is homogeneous, the employee may want to leave the company entirely.

Implementation Matters at All Levels

Just like other aspects of organizational culture, emotional culture should be supported at all levels of the organization. The role of top management is to drive it.

Leaders are often insufficiently aware of how much influence they have in creating an emotional culture. Traci Fenton is the founder and CEO of WorldBlu, a consulting firm that tackles fear at work. She shares this example: At one *Fortune* 500 company, unbeknownst to the CEO, senior employees regularly use text message codes to describe his nonverbal expressions of anger in meetings. "RED" means he is getting red in the face. "VEIN" means his veins are popping out. "ACP," which stands for "assume the crash position," means he is about to start throwing things. This leader is very effective at creating an emotional culture—but it's probably not the one he wants.

So don't underestimate the importance of day-to-day modeling. Large, symbolic emotional gestures are powerful, but only if they are in line with daily behavior. Senior executives can also shape an emotional culture through organizational practices. Take "compassionate firing," which is common at companies that build a strong culture of companionate love. Carlos Gutierrez, the vice president of R&D systems at Lattice Semiconductor, was deeply concerned about the impact of layoffs on his employees. He recognized that the traditional HR protocol of asking terminated employees to clean out their desks immediately and leave the premises would be especially painful to people who had worked side by side for 10–20 years. Along with his partners in HR and R&D, he implemented a protocol whereby employees had an extended time to say good-bye to their colleagues and to commemorate their time together at the company. Also, although two-thirds of the R&D workforce is outside the United States, Sherif Sweha, the corporate vice president of R&D, believed it was important for the affected team members in each region to receive the news from a senior leader face-to-face. So he and members of his staff flew to the company's sites in Asia to have in-person conversations with all the employees to be laid off—and also those who would remain with the company.

Though top management sets the first example and establishes the formal rules, middle managers and front-line supervisors ensure that the emotional values are consistently practiced by others. Because one of the

biggest influences on employees is their immediate boss, the suggestions that apply to senior executives also apply to those managers: They should ensure that the emotions they express at work reflect the chosen culture, and they should speak explicitly about what is expected from employees.

It's also important to link the emotional culture to operations and processes, including performance management systems. At Vail Resorts, the culture of joy has been incorporated into the annual review, which indicates how well each employee integrates fun into the work environment and rates everyone on supporting behaviors, such as being inclusive, welcoming, approachable, and positive. Someone who exceeds expectations is described as not only taking part in the fun but also offering "recommendations to improve the work environment to integrate fun."

Decades' worth of research demonstrates the importance of organizational culture, yet most of it has focused on the cognitive component. As we've shown, organizations also have an emotional pulse, and managers must track it closely to motivate their teams and reach their goals.

Emotional culture is shaped by how all employees—from the highest echelons to the front lines—comport themselves day in and day out. But it's up to senior leaders to establish which emotions will help the organization thrive, model those emotions, and reward others for doing the same. Companies in which they do this have a lot to gain.

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NOTES

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Karen Dillon

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What You'll Learn

Every organization has its share of political drama: Personalities clash. Agendas compete. Turf wars erupt. It can make you crazy if you're trying to keep your head down and get your job done.

The problem is, you can't just keep your head down. You need to work productively with your colleagues—even the challenging ones—for the good of your organization and your career.

How can you do that without crossing over to the dark side? By acknowledging that power dynamics and unwritten rules exist—and by constructively navigating them. "Politics" needn't be a dirty word. You can succeed at work without being a power grabber or a corporate climber, and the expert advice in this guide will help.

You'll get better at:

- Building relationships with difficult people
- Gaining allies and influencing others
- Working through tough—but productive—conversations

- Wrangling the resources you need
- Moving up without ruffling feathers
- Dealing with the boss's pet
- Coping with office bullies and cliques
- Claiming credit when it's due
- Avoiding power games and petty rivalries
- Collaborating with competitive peers

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Introduction

Every office is political.

For years, I naively thought I worked at a place that wasn't. I saw our office as more or less fair, more or less healthy, and highly inclusive—perhaps overly so—in decision making. People competed with *themselves,* I'd proudly tell prospective recruits, not with one another. And I meant it.

All those good things I believed? They were true—but only to a point, I realize with hindsight. We competed with ourselves, but also with one another. Our bosses had favorites, and we noticed. We grumbled about promotions that didn't seem deserved, assignments that didn't seem fair. People subtly found ways to elbow one another out of pole position for C-suite attention. Our office was political. Of course it was.

In a 2011 survey by the UK-based management-consulting firm Revelation, 95% of respondents said that manipulation and hidden agendas in the workplace had affected them personally. So you're in good company if these issues make you crazy. Maybe you're plagued by an office bully who constantly questions what you're doing

and undermines you in meetings. Or a boss who pits you against your peers. Or a clique that wields an inordinate amount of organizational power. Perhaps you've even encountered backstabbing, one-upmanship, or shifting alliances.

You can't escape politics—no matter what your role or function. That's what Franke James, founder of Office Politics.com, has learned from the professionals around the world sharing their struggles on her website. It's inevitable even if you're self-employed. "If you're dealing with clients," James says, "you're dealing with their office politics, too. You have to make them look good. You have to understand the dynamics behind the scenes for them."

Does that mean you have to fight fire with fire? Connive and scheme? Get your blows in faster? No. As the experts and consultants cited in this guide argue, you can weather—and even participate in—politics without selling your soul. They base this observation on research, their work with clients, and abundant personal experience. And it's supported by the many examples (real but disguised) I've included throughout.

So what's the solution? It's about being *constructively* political—understanding personal dynamics among colleagues, working together for mutual advantage, and ultimately focusing on the good of the enterprise.

What happens if you simply do what's asked of you and mutter about colleagues who curry favor? Executive coach Beth Weissenberger, cofounder of the Handel Group, says you're doing yourself in. She's seen it happen again and again in her years of coaching: Those who try to stay completely out of the political fray are less likely

to meet their job and career goals than those who engage. So she advises her clients to stop getting worked up about the unfairness of it all and build their own positive relationships with colleagues who will help them do their jobs well.

Ron Ashkenas, a managing partner at Schaffer Consulting, agrees. As he puts it: "It's easy to use politics as an excuse for a lack of achievement or an outlet for your frustration. But it's a lot more effective to use politics as a way to get things done." This guide will help you do that. It's not realistic to assert that you can make all of your work relationships warm and fuzzy. Let's face it, there are people you'll work with who are just jerks and no amount of advice can change that. But not having a strategy for dealing with them can definitely make things worse. And you can control much more than you might assume. Here are some common themes you'll notice throughout:

- **Question your reaction:** When people appear to be playing political games, we often think we know their motives, but sometimes we're off the mark. Step back and reevaluate: What else could be driving the behavior? Maybe it's not as vengeful as it seems—or even intentional.

- **Try removing yourself from the equation:** Everybody brings her own quirks, worries, and stresses to work. What you assume is a personal attack may have absolutely nothing to do with you.

- **Accept that not all conflict is bad:** Great performance can come out of being challenged by an

aggressive colleague or being forced to collaborate with someone who you can't stand. We can and often do rise to challenges. Don't assume "uncomfortable" means bad.

- **Take charge of your fate:** Even if the playing field isn't level, you'll accomplish little by complaining about it. Assume responsibility for your progress. Don't give your manager and others any reason to dismiss you as a whiner.

- **Keep your cool:** Office bullies and other game players win every time they see they've rattled you. Never give them that satisfaction—you'll just perpetuate the problem. Stay composed, and they'll lose their power.

When asked to write this guide, I jumped at the chance. Since I understood the challenges people faced, I'd approach it with empathy. But secretly, I also felt a little smug—I thought I'd successfully navigated most political scenarios in my career. Then, after interviewing about 20 experts and synthesizing their advice on the various dilemmas, I recognized several mistakes I'd made over the years: stewing over injustices, fighting the wrong battles, making things personal when they didn't need to be. Now, looking back at those moments, I wish I'd done my research sooner.

It's never too late to learn, though—thank goodness for that.

So what's the main takeaway, if I had to boil it down to one? As organizational development and HR expert

Susan Heathfield puts it, don't try to be the boss's pet—be *everyone's* pet. That is, devote your energy to being a terrific employee and colleague. You'll find that you're less preoccupied with all the jockeying that's going on around you—and more focused on positive pursuits like performance, growth, and fulfillment.

Section 1

Political Challenges with Your Boss

Chapter 1
The Boss Who Holds You Back

The Problem

You've been quietly showing your boss the ropes for a long time. He relies on you heavily for help with everything from interpreting monthly reports to sizing up market demand to placating cranky stakeholders. Yet only his name appears on the e-mails that update higher-ups on your projects. You feel like the stagehand behind the curtain—you're running the show, but he's the one out front, taking a prolonged bow.

Why It Happens

When the person who should be your organizational guide and cheerleader keeps your smart contributions under wraps, of course you don't feel valued. Even if he's not intentionally undermining you or holding you back, it's hard to stay motivated—after all, you know your efforts will go unrecognized.

Some bosses simply don't like sharing the spotlight. Others get nervous when their shortcomings are thrown into sharp relief by a direct report's strengths. You may run into this problem with a boss who is new to his job, for example, and feels threatened by your deep organizational knowledge and close internal ties. Or perhaps your manager inherited you in a merger or a reorg and has discovered that you bring critical new skills to his team—skills everyone assumed he already had.

What to Do About It

You may fantasize about changing jobs, but you probably won't have to resort to that. You can improve your day-to-day relationship with your manager—but you'll need to lead the transformation.

Own the problem

Jessica Pryce-Jones, CEO of the UK-based leadership consultancy iOpener and author of *Happiness at Work,* says people are often too quick to dub a work relationship a failure before taking their share of responsibility for fixing it.

How can you do your part? Remember that your boss wants to succeed in his job as much as you do in yours. That will help you adopt a constructive mind-set so that you can move beyond your frustration and improve the dynamic. Think about what you share with your boss rather than what divides you: If you have only "transactional" conversations, Pryce-Jones says, you're unlikely to warm to each other. But looking for personal similarities will make it easier for you to connect professionally. Did

you grow up in the same area? Do you admire the same people?

Finding common ground will help you interpret events and interactions more positively. Are there reasonable

BRANCHING OUT: ALEXY'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

I had a "dive-bomb" manager. He'd disappear for weeks with very little contact, until he got wind of some project I was involved in. Then he would swoop in and demand reports, details, every scrap of information he could get. These urgent requests came in the form of rat-a-tat e-mails arriving at 10 PM or later. Often he'd take my responses to board meetings, passing off the work as his own. Then he'd lecture me on the need to keep him in the loop.

WHAT I DID:

I tried to keep my boss informed, but he'd ignore my updates and still somehow be taken by surprise. So I found myself pointing him to e-mails or memos I'd sent weeks earlier, which just annoyed him. I started to feel cut off from the rest of the organization, so I reached out to managers above him, asking if I could help with their cross-functional initiatives. That way, when he came back and demanded to know what was going on, I could say, "So-and-so signed off," and he'd have to drop it. I also began to let people know what ideas and contributions were mine because he was taking credit for everything. I copied key people on my e-mail updates to him, spoke up more in meetings, made casual comments that showed my depth of knowledge, and attached my name to documents I created for him.

DID ALEXY GET IT RIGHT?

It's hard to strike a healthy balance with an alternately indifferent and needy boss who shuts you off from others. Alexy was smart to put his name on his contributions and form alliances with other senior managers—otherwise, he'd have remained isolated and resentful—but it probably wasn't the best idea to go behind his paranoid boss's back (or over his head). That just fed the perception that he couldn't be trusted with independence and visibility.

explanations for what you perceive as negative signals? Maybe your boss appears to be shutting you out of critical meetings with his boss, for instance—but it's really because one-on-ones feel more efficient to him, not because he wants to keep you from growing and advancing.

Once you're open to his point of view, you can begin treating him as you'd like to be treated: Find genuine opportunities to make him look good. "Tell someone he respects—perhaps one of his peers—about an insight he shared with you or something he accomplished that you admired," Pryce-Jones suggests. And express your appreciation after he helps you meet an important goal or solve a tough problem. You don't need to be effusive. Just sincerely acknowledge what he's done for you. At the very least, you'll lower his defenses. Best case, you'll set a gracious example that he wants to follow.

Tap his former direct reports

If you can easily get in touch with someone who used to work for your boss, invite her out for coffee. (You may already know someone who managed the relationship effectively if you've been in the organization for a while. Otherwise, you might need to rely on friends to discreetly point you in the right direction.) Explain that you're eager to develop in your role and that you'd like to pick her brain about her experience working with and learning from your boss. Pitch it as a tutorial for you, not as a gripe session: See if she can share insights about his mentoring style, for example, and tips on how to earn his trust so that he'll feel comfortable giving you stretch assignments and placing you on cross-functional teams. Even if you feel safe confiding in this person, assume that anything

you say could make its way back to your boss and edit yourself accordingly.

If the former report has only bad news for you—your boss really *is* a jerk—at least you're forewarned. You know it's not personal to you and that someone else understands what you're going through if you need a sympathetic ear.

Katie, a research scientist (names and details are disguised in examples throughout this guide), suffered for several years under a supervisor who treated her with contempt. Katie had been recruited into her plum position by her boss's boss, so she assumed that her boss resented her for that reason. Not wanting to make waves, she kept quiet and tried to do a good job. But then a chance conversation with one of his former direct reports led her to realize that the guy didn't hate *her*—he was generally a bad manager and grumpy guy. That gave Katie the courage to stand up to him in one-on-one meetings. "It was so helpful to realize that it wasn't just me," Katie recalls. "I stopped taking it personally and started thinking about how to get him to back off instead."

Network with his peers

Make sure your manager's peers know how hard you work and how much you care about the company. If your boss isn't giving you opportunities to demonstrate that to others, you'll need to do it by slowly building your own relationships with people in a position of influence, says INSEAD leadership professor Herminia Ibarra. Start by getting to know a couple of people outside your immediate group (see chapter 16, "Forging Alliances"). The relationships can be casual—based initially

on chitchat about movies or hobbies—or you can ask for formal introductions. Do a six-degrees-of-separation exercise if you can't think of an easy way to connect: Who in my circle can introduce me to this person?

One ally isn't enough, even if it's someone with lots of power. No matter how well placed that person is, your boss can damage your reputation with others in the company if you've got no one else in the senior ranks looking out for you.

Paula learned this the hard way. She emerged from a massive corporate reshuffle with her job intact and a new manager, Liz. Though Liz needed her expertise to get up and running, things between them quickly got rocky since Paula clearly had the CEO's ear. When the CEO asked Paula to handle a project for him on her own, Liz went into attack mode—criticizing her in public meetings, finding fault with her data. Paula saw the CEO's support as guaranteed job security, so she continued to work around Liz at his behest. But over time, Liz chipped away at her reputation—and the CEO's confidence in Paula eroded. She was eventually fired from the company.

Had Paula forged ties with a few influential people a level or two up, says leadership consultant Ron Ashkenas, she would have been less vulnerable to Liz's steady campaign against her.

Confront him

If you haven't managed to subtly change the dynamic with your boss, it might be time to speak openly with him about the problem. It's a risky move, but it could be your last, best chance to fix the situation, says Ashkenas. Don't

have this conversation if you aren't prepared to switch jobs; it could backfire if your boss really does have it in for you. But in a case like that, you wouldn't want to stick around anyway.

Approach your boss in the most constructive way possible. Let him know that *you're on his side.* Say you want to find better ways to support him. No good will come of sulking with your arms folded or ranting about how unappreciated you are. Even if that's true, your boss won't respond calmly to that—he'll get defensive.

After you've set a positive tone by putting his needs front and center, make it clear that you're looking to grow, too. Explain that you're hoping to do that within the organization—ideally with his guidance. But say you'll also consider outside opportunities after a certain amount of time has passed (offer a reasonable time frame—maybe a year). To give him something concrete to work with, describe your big-picture professional goals and how you envision getting there. Suppose, for instance, you're eager to build your analytical skills: Volunteer to take on assignments that will require you to gather and interpret data. For example, you might comb through customer renewal rates to see if there are any patterns worth discussing. Ask your boss if he has other suggestions for developing those skills in your current role or if he'd recommend ways to get other senior managers in the company to see you in a new, high-potential light.

Of course, once your cards are on the table, be prepared for things not to go your way. But at least you'll have given yourself and your boss every opportunity to right the course.

Chapter 2
The Boss Who Pits You Against Your Colleagues

The Problem

Your boss has you competing against your peers for her respect and attention. It's a "reindeer games" scenario—only one of you can win some coveted prize, whether it's the chance to lead a team, get a promotion, or just have a moment in the limelight. She has created a horrible, cutthroat environment for an otherwise collegial group of direct reports.

Why It Happens

Though some bosses don't realize they're creating this problem, in many cases it's a deliberate management tactic: Task several people with solving a business challenge, and make it an implicit horse race. Even when a

RETALIATION: ANDREA'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

I worked in a small organization where two of us had the same title but very different jobs in practice. Our boss didn't see a problem with the ambiguity, but it created tension. I managed a team of people. My peer didn't manage anyone, but she had significant influence. She took every opportunity to undermine me by bad-mouthing me to my team. My direct reports would defend me, but it was rattling for them. In many cases, they'd come to me to tell me what was happening.

WHAT I DID:

I told my boss, and he said, "Don't worry, I'll take care of it." I assumed he spoke to her, because for two or three months, the behavior disappeared. But then she began sending around nasty e-mails about me—sometimes "inadvertently" copying me. Here's the really bad part: I figured out that people like that can be manipulated because they're convinced that others are actively working against them. So it was easy to fight back. I'd say things like, "I saw the owner of the company today, and we had a really good chat." That would freak her out. It implied that I was having some kind of exclusive conversation with the big boss. I wasn't—but she didn't know that. Ultimately her behavior got out of control, and she unspooled publicly. She got fired around the same time I left the company.

DID ANDREA GET IT RIGHT?

Andrea was effective, but at great cost to her colleague and herself. She allowed herself to slip down to her colleague's level—and it didn't make her any happier, just guiltier. She would have felt better taking a higher road, calling her colleague on the bad behavior and asking her boss to create more-distinct job titles and descriptions to clarify their responsibilities.

promotion isn't on the table, senior executives often leave roles and responsibilities ambiguous as a test. They want to see who can take the pressure, who will rise to the occasion, who wants to get ahead badly enough to throw some sharp elbows.

Abraham Lincoln famously assembled a "team of rivals." He harnessed their competitive energy to bring out the best in each member and to produce the greatest results as a group. Bosses do the same. In some industries, such as investment banking and consulting, it's even considered a rite of passage, observes leadership consultant Jessica Pryce-Jones. The boss thinks, "I made *my* way to the top through healthy competition, so why shouldn't you?"

What to Do About It

An environment like this is frustrating for both you and your peers—and it can actually harm performance. When people focus intensely on beating one another out, they inevitably lose sight of larger goals and the greater good. Here are some ways to establish a friendlier, more collaborative dynamic—even when your boss (knowingly or not) sets the stage for conflict.

Make a pact

You and your colleagues can find your own ways of working together that don't ratchet up the competition. Leadership consultant Kathryn Heath figured this out early in her career, when an indifferent boss unwittingly set up a rivalry between Heath and a coworker. "We were in two different areas," Heath recalls, "but we needed to work together. Our boss didn't make roles and decision rights clear for us, so we had to sort them out ourselves." The colleague wanted to take the lead, just tapping Heath for whatever support he needed. But Heath didn't intend to play a supporting role. In fact, her colleague relied on resources *she* controlled.

Rather than engage in passive-aggressive games, Heath decided to have a straightforward discussion with him about how they could work together on a level field. "It was a tough conversation," she recalls, "because we were held accountable for different things." They tried to keep emotion out of it by focusing on coming to an understanding that would benefit both of their teams. "We came up with a detailed plan for how we'd handle certain situations. And we agreed to not make any big commitments or moves without talking to each other first." It wasn't a perfect solution, but by dealing with the issue directly, they diffused what could have been an incendiary relationship.

Establish ground rules, advises Susan Heathfield, an organizational development and HR expert. What if your colleague is playing dirty—by one-upping you in meetings, for example, or leaving you out of the loop so that you'll look clueless? Describe exactly what you see him doing, and ask him to stop. You may not feel comfortable confronting him, but work up the courage to do it. He'll be more likely to play fair in the future because he probably doesn't enjoy confrontation any more than you do. "He usually gets away with his behavior," says Heathfield, "so it's key to call him on it. If you allow it to continue unchecked, that trains him to do it more often—or to more of an extreme."

Call a time-out

You don't have to duke it out just because your boss has thrown you and a colleague in the ring. You can refuse to

fight. Mary Davis Holt, one of Heath's partners, learned this in a past job—but not as soon as she'd have liked. Her boss had put her on a project with someone without making clear assignments, and it created conflict. Though Holt and her colleague had sat down in the beginning to sort out who would do what, over time she realized that she had allowed herself to do 80% of the work while her colleague was happy to claim credit for leading the effort.

"I probably should have recognized the imbalance earlier," she says. "But I was so eager for the next promotion, I wanted to show my willingness to go with the flow and be a flexible team player." The more she put up with, the more she saw her colleague as an adversary. In hindsight, what does she wish she'd done? Though she's glad she didn't let her anger erupt into a nasty fight over division of labor, she says, "I should have asked my boss to clarify our respective responsibilities right away." Once she spoke up and her boss realized what he'd set in motion, he agreed to step in to better divide the tasks.

Manage up

Tell your boss how you feel about the situation, but be diplomatic and constructive. If she thinks you're grousing, she won't take your concerns seriously. Or she might conclude that you have difficulty getting along with others (see chapter 4, "The Boss's Pet"). Discuss it with your colleague first, advises Heathfield—and then meet with your boss, perhaps together. Say you'd both like to stop vying for the spotlight because it's distracting you from

doing your best work. Ask if she can avoid putting you in competitive situations (and give a few examples, in case she's not tuned in to the competition) so that you can both be more productive—to the benefit of all.

Some bosses think fostering internal competition helps them identify the truly talented, "like some kind of Darwinian gauntlet," says Pryce-Jones. She recently advised a junior investment banker who faced that problem. His boss tried to pit him directly against another colleague: Whoever had recommended the best-performing investments by the end of six months would be the "winner." The prize? The boss's favor—and job security. So the fledgling banker approached his boss with a different idea: Could he and his colleague work *together* to come up with the best picks? He identified reasons that would be better for the company, citing research about the benefits of collaboration. The boss agreed to try the experiment, and he's been pleased with the results. In Pryce-Jones's experience, this example isn't an outlier. "Most bosses are open to trying a different tack," she says. "Especially when you say, 'Here's how you could get more out of me.'"

Chapter 3
The Control-Freak Boss

The Problem

Your boss is smothering you. At first you thought, "It's because I'm new—that's why he insists on reviewing every document before I distribute it and sitting in on all my meetings." But now that you're no longer learning your role, the tight leash feels downright oppressive and embarrassing. The other day, he actually scolded you for having a hallway chat with one of his peers about an idea you've been kicking around. You're hard-working, competent, smart. How are you ever going to escape your boss's shadow?

Why It Happens

Your boss is acting this way for a reason—though he may not be aware of it. Think about what could be driving his behavior. Try to get past the easy answer—it's probably

not that he's evil or that he truly wants to keep you from being successful. Rather, his actions might be explained by factors that have little to do with you, such as a poor understanding of his role as manager, a micromanaging boss of his own, a lack of motivation to question how he's always done things, or personal insecurity.

What to Do About It

"Few people get the guidance they need to become good managers," says Carol Walker, a principal at Prepared to Lead, "and just about all of them have some insecurities about their competence. Accepting this may help you feel a little less frustrated with your boss. It's likely he's simply a flawed human being who thinks he is doing his best."

It can be hard to see things that way when your boss isn't cutting *you* any slack. His harping about every small misstep you take can feel overwhelmingly personal. But you don't have to resign yourself to being nitpicked to death. "You can't change your boss," Walker says, "but you have more power to improve the situation than you probably realize. It must be a process, not an event. It's a process that *you* have to own and direct."

Avoid his panic buttons

Form an educated guess about where your boss's sensitivities lie. If you believe, for example, that he's intimidated by those above him, think of ways you can alleviate that pressure, such as running reports to better prepare him for meetings with his manager. Or perhaps he's afraid that people don't perceive him as essential, and he's on a tear to prove how much you and others need

him. Dispel his fears, advises communication and branding expert Dorie Clark, author of *Reinventing You*. Show him that you value his guidance. Ask him for feedback. Bring him any news you hear, and take your ideas to him before sharing them with others. As your boss begins to trust that you'll come to him without prompting, he may loosen his grip.

Once you get to know him better, you'll gain more insight into the areas he's touchy about. Looking at what has set him off historically—budget surprises? schedule changes?—will help you find ways of putting him at ease now, says Clark. Then you can assemble a dashboard to keep your boss as informed as he wants to be. Agree on your top priorities and the metrics that will demonstrate progress, and ask him how often he'd like to receive updates.

Your proactive, tailored-to-him system will comfort him. That's important, since micromanaging often stems from a boss's insecurity. "I call it 'snoopervising,'" says Stewart Tubbs, former dean of the College of Business at Eastern Michigan University. Turn the behavior around by preempting it: Tell your boss you want him to feel he can count on you and your work. Frequently report to him on your progress—before he can even think to check up on you. And use language that signals active listening. Tubbs recalls one young man who said "Consider it done" at the end of every meeting with his boss. Another young woman said "Understood" to show that she was engaged and on board. This isn't about simply placating your boss, notes Tubbs. You have to earn his trust by performing well. These employees consistently delivered, so

over time their verbal reassurance meant something and helped their bosses relax.

Don't fight it

If you openly rebel against micromanagement, Clark cautions, your boss may clamp down even more. Leadership consultant Ron Ashkenas agrees. Instead of viewing it as a blow to your ego, he suggests, think about how you might actually benefit from it. Your boss may have your best interests in mind. Perhaps he wants to ensure that you have a sound understanding of the company's protocol or the most effective ways to work the system to get things done.

Regardless of the cause, says Ashkenas, accept that your boss may have something important to teach you. Just try to learn as much as you can, as quickly as you can—in case he doesn't eventually let up and you decide you can't take it anymore.

Scrutinize yourself

If your boss doesn't appear to have faith in your ability to do your job, consider whether you've given him a reason to feel this way. Have you missed important deadlines? Delivered presentations that fell flat? Assembled proposals that failed to win business? Take a hard look at yourself—and look around. If your boss isn't micromanaging other colleagues, his behavior could be a clue that you're underperforming.

If you suspect that's the case, ask him about it, says Clark. Tell him you feel he's monitoring you extra closely and you want to understand what's behind it. Is there a

particular area where he feels you need guidance? Some bosses are reluctant to be straight with employees about their shortcomings, especially if criticism might be met with hostility. They may go to extremes, such as overly aggressive monitoring, to avoid having awkward conversations. So make it easier for your boss: Say you're genuinely interested in feedback on your weaknesses, even if it's hard to hear. Stay calm as you listen to the feedback (don't even let a grimace cross your face). Once you get a clear sense of where you stand, you'll have a better shot at addressing his concerns.

Thank your boss for his insights and tell him that you want to come back to him with an improvement plan. You might need to soothe your ego for a day or two, but the sooner you return to him with a proposal, the more seriously he'll take you. Ask if he can recommend potential mentors (inside or outside the company). See if human resources might help by suggesting a course to develop your project management or public speaking skills. If you approach the conversation openly—and then earnestly work on your shortcomings—you'll likely find your boss trusting you more and more.

Look ahead

Focusing on your future may help you and your boss interact more productively in the present. So initiate a discussion about your long-term professional goals. Set up a one-on-one meeting, or ask if you can use one of your scheduled check-ins to talk about your role. Explain that you want to start communicating more regularly—and explicitly—about your growth and about how else you

MICROMANAGED: LUKE'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

After I'd worked for years at a large company, my two bosses moved me to a small division to run the problem child: a start-up that had already cycled through three directors in two years. My bosses had many other people reporting to them, but I was their chief focus because the new venture had already burned through a lot of money on an untested model. They micromanaged like crazy. They had no idea what would work, so they tried 10 new things a week, yanking the team this way and that. I realized pretty quickly that my job was to manage them, to serve as a heat shield in hopes of keeping my staff on something resembling a plan.

But I wasn't able to do that at our staff lunches at the end of each week, when everyone in the division piled into a large conference room to share updates and brainstorm ideas. The room was filled with both senior and junior staff. Anything could set off my more volatile boss, whose sidekick would then join him in publicly stomping me or my managers to a pulp over a perceived lapse in procedure or strategy. When the controller couldn't spit out numbers fast enough to answer any and all questions fired at him—what do we know about X this week?—he was pummeled, and then so was I for not having him prepare properly for the meeting. And on it went, week after week. I would spend each weekend scrambling to contain whatever damage had been done or rushing off to the next fire that the bosses had declared our New Top Priority. These lunches were, of course, in addition to daily floggings, plus phone calls night and day (Sunday, 7 AM: "Why didn't you know this server was down since 4 AM?").

WHAT I DID:

Finally, after two years of this, my beleaguered controller and I hit upon one number that hadn't yet been questioned: How much had we spent on these lunches? When I mentioned the number in a cost-cutting discussion, suddenly the lunches went from weekly to biweekly. Then monthly. Then not at all. I didn't cure my bosses of their management styles. But at least I managed to take some of the sting out of my week.

DID LUKE GET IT RIGHT?

Luke probably couldn't have diffused his bosses' control-freak tendencies altogether in such a highly charged situation—the running of a troubled start-up division. But he was savvy in using costs, an issue they cared about deeply, to get them to drop the painful, unproductive lunches. Luke could have also tried to get ahead of their expectations. Knowing they saw such meetings as opportunities to grill employees on the spot, Luke could have used the time to showcase how his staff was on top of problems. And he could have met with his boss privately in advance to suss out areas of concern and then prepared his staff to address them with metrics or analysis. Finally, he could have proposed cost-control measures on a monthly or quarterly basis, because he knew his bosses would always respond favorably to that sort of discussion.

could support the department. Give him some examples of the types of projects you'd like to work on and the future role you envision for yourself. Say you're ready for more independence, and you'd like some opportunities to demonstrate that. Emphasize how important his feedback is to your growth. Offer some ideas on how you might realize your vision—and see if he can suggest others.

Keep the conversation constructive and forward-looking. Complaining about the past won't open your boss's mind or make him want to support you, Walker says. Being positive and taking ownership will. Let him know that you appreciate his guidance, but you're eager to spread your wings a little, too.

Ashkenas says junior colleagues at his firm have had this conversation with him—and it's worked well. He admits he struggles to fight his own microman-

ager tendencies. "I don't think I'm a control freak, but I do have strong feelings about quality," he says. His colleagues were subtle, but he understood what they were getting at ("Ron, do you still want to see the final slides and documents in advance?" "Would it be all right if I worked directly with the client to finish these?"). When people have diplomatically pointed this out to him, he's been happy to find ways to step back—once they've demonstrated that they can meet his quality standards.

Ease your boss's fears by emphasizing that you're willing to take this in steps. Chances are he'll welcome your enthusiastic, respectful approach—not resist it. If he does resist, there's little point in fighting, Ashkenas says. "If your boss isn't ready or willing to let go, it might take more time for him to trust you and have confidence." You can revisit the subject down the line. Or, Ashkenas says, it might be possible that his need for being involved is so deep-seated and emotional that it will never change.

If your boss is receptive, however, thank him. But that meeting is just the beginning. Offer to update him on your progress at your regular check-ins, advises Walker. Use those meetings to share your thinking with him—not just what you're going to do but *why*. Ultimately your boss has to trust not only that you'll follow his instructions but also that you'll tackle problems in a way he approves. Close each meeting by proposing next steps and getting his buy-in.

Develop other champions

If your boss is micromanaging you, others may notice and start questioning your skills. That's why it's critical

to build relationships outside his ken. "It's so important not to have all your eggs in one basket. Have points of contact with other people who can see your good work," says leadership expert Herminia Ibarra. You want them to get to know you and see what you're capable of when you're unfettered by your controlling boss.

Join interdepartmental committees, and get involved in cross-disciplinary pursuits. Organize a companywide volunteer day or a brown-bag lunch series that brings industry luminaries into your office. But avoid dabbling in areas where your boss considers himself the expert: He might feel upstaged by your efforts and pull the plug on them—or try to insinuate himself. Tell him what you'd like to do *before* you volunteer so that you don't take him by surprise and trigger his instinct to micromanage.

Chapter 4
The Boss's Pet

The Problem

Your boss has a pet employee who gets the most interesting assignments and special perks, such as flextime and an expense account. She invites her pet to social events, confides inappropriately to him about "problem" colleagues, and acts like they're old friends. And she doesn't seem to hold him to the same standards that apply to the rest of your team: You all log in extra hours and go above and beyond, while he appears to just coast along. It drives you crazy.

Why It Happens

Sometimes favoritism is actually fair: The pet has a burning talent and desire to excel, works hard without complaining, and shares the boss's goals and vision. Understandably, the boss is high on her star performer.

But what if she favors an average performer? In that case, her pet is just a buddy. Like everyone else, your boss

enjoys having friends at work. So she may latch on to an employee she sees as a kindred spirit—someone with whom she's comfortable. Or perhaps she's inherited a direct report she's already friends with outside of work.

BEST IN SHOW: ALICE'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

When I started my first job as a journalist at a magazine in New York, I swiftly realized that my boss—the maker or breaker of careers there—favored people with the "right" pedigree. He was far more impressed by someone with an Ivy League degree and Park Avenue parents than by a summa cum laude who'd put herself through a state school. For the first few months, I gnashed my teeth as I watched one of my peers—I'll call him Yale boy—get assignments and opportunities that were clearly above our entry-level position. The boss just treated Yale boy differently.

WHAT I DID:

After spending weeks complaining to my roommate about how unfair it was, I realized something: My boss didn't really know me yet. He didn't know what I was capable of doing. So of course he initially favored the guy with the same credentials he had—at that point, there was little else for him to go on. But over time, I established my skills and ambition. I threw myself into my job. I volunteered for assignments I knew I'd learn from rather than waiting for my boss to hand me growth opportunities. I also worked at building my internal network. One Sunday afternoon, my boss called the office, and I happened to be there, picking up some files. When I answered the phone, he was clearly pleased that I was working that hard. He said, "That's how people get ahead in this company." And that was true. I was promoted pretty soon after that—and Yale boy didn't stick around long enough to achieve the same.

DID ALICE GET IT RIGHT?

Once Alice stopped obsessing about her peer and started focusing on what she could control—her own development and performance—things fell into place for her. She proved to her boss that she had the skills and dedication he was looking for, and the pet's pedigree ceased to get in her way.

"Buddy" pets often take advantage of their status to obtain benefits for themselves. For example, they might ask for extra vacation days, off the record. Or they might turn a casual lunch or drinks after work into an opportunity to gain an insider's perspective, pressing for details about meetings above their pay grade and asking what the boss thinks of others in the group.

When your boss plays along, it can really stick in your craw—but don't let it.

What to Do About It

Build your own positive relationship with your boss instead of looking for ways to dethrone the pet. That's how you'll get the resources and attention you want without picking—and losing—a fight.

Stop obsessing

There's little point to moaning that your boss has a favorite and it's not fair. That's not going to change the situation. In fact, it could make things worse. "You'll just look like you're whining," says leadership consultant Jill Flynn. Both your boss and your colleagues may see it as evidence that you have trouble getting along with others (see chapter 2, "The Boss Who Pits You Against Your Colleagues"). Your boss may not want to assign you to projects with her pet for fear that you won't play nicely. And the pet might pick up your negative vibe and steer clear of you—effectively making you a pariah.

Get to know your boss

It's not sucking up to ask your boss how her weekend went or to compare notes on restaurants you'd like to try.

As Kent Lineback, coauthor of *Being the Boss*, points out, your relationship with your boss is as much a reflection of what you put into it as what your boss does, so invest time in getting to know her. Ask about the article she's writing. Invite her to coffee or lunch, without an agenda.

As a manager, I liked it when someone on my team suggested going out for lunch just to chat. Even when I was too busy to accept, I always appreciated the invitation. Bosses enjoy sharing stories about their families and vacations as much as anyone else. So cut your boss some slack and reach out to her. You may not replace her "pet," but you'll create goodwill.

Of course, even if your relationship with your boss becomes friendlier, she's still your boss. If you try to get too chummy, she may see you as a sycophant. Colleagues may think you're angling to be the new pet and start gossiping.

Communication and branding expert Dorie Clark says not to lose sight of decorum—especially when connecting through social media. If you (or your friends) post with abandon on Facebook, think twice about "friending" your boss. You can follow her on Twitter (or suggest that she follow you, if you're a prolific tweeter) as long as you keep it professional: Comment on news stories and industry trends, share useful articles recommended by members of your network, that kind of thing. This may help your boss realize that you've made smart contacts and you're in tune with important ideas.

Shine your own light

Many people are reluctant to draw attention to their successes, leadership consultant Kathryn Heath points out.

"They don't talk about their accomplishments in the first person. They say 'the team did this' instead of 'I led the team doing this.'"

Does this sound like you? If so, Heath advises getting over your modesty if you don't want the pet to consume all your boss's attention: "You can speak diplomatically, but make your contributions clear." Your busy manager may be so focused on his own challenges that he fails to notice all the good work you do. So you'll have to toot your horn a little. "Give others credit where it's due," Heath says, "but take your own credit, too."

When Heath recently reviewed a presentation that a coaching client was planning to make to her boss, she noted that the woman used "team" language to describe work she had done to win a big assignment from a new customer. Heath pointed it out, and her client revised the presentation, saying she had cultivated the customer relationship and identified the right people to help win the job. Instead of allowing her contribution to be swallowed up by a faceless team-player credit, "she told a very compelling story and got promoted."

Women tend to find this particularly difficult, Heath says, based on hundreds of 360-degree reviews that she and her colleagues have conducted. They want their performance to speak for itself. If I do good work, they think, it will be noticed—people will consider me for great assignments because I'm so productive and reliable.

Unfortunately, that's not how it works. If you want to be top of mind, you need to boost your visibility. When you attend a conference, for example, send your boss a list of 10 takeaways you'd like to share with the team when you

return. You'll impress her with your initiative and team focus. And schedule a regular check-in with your boss to discuss your priorities and the progress you've made on them. At annual review time, provide a summary of your year, highlighting key accomplishments, before your boss does her write-up. This will make it easy for her to remember what you did a few months ago, too, not just your recent achievements. The meetings and documentation will serve as reminders that her pet isn't her only valuable contributor.

It's possible to make a positive impression on your boss without irritating your colleagues or behaving in a way that doesn't feel authentic to you, says organizational development and HR expert Susan Heathfield. Transform yourself into an indispensable employee. Ask for more challenging assignments. Raise your hand for projects that others don't want to do. Don't just alert your boss to problems she'll need to solve; suggest solutions. Be a team builder—tap the strengths of your coworkers, praise them when they make good contributions, elevate the discourse of the entire organization. "So often bosses are subjected to complaints," says Heathfield. "If you rise above the nonsense, that's a really good place to be."

There's a standout employee in Heathfield's own company who voluntarily mentors junior staff members, organizes social functions, and gives people in other departments a hand when she can—for instance, by helping HR screen candidates in early-stage interviews. She's approachable, knowledgeable, and trustworthy. "She's just a go-to person," Heathfield observes. "She never comes

across as self-promotional. She's always focused on what would be best for *the company*." That's why no one begrudges her success or wants to see her fall from grace. It's also why she's been promoted twice in recent years—and she's on senior managers' high-potential list.

Chapter 5
The Disaffected Boss

The Problem

Your boss has "checked out." He's there physically but not in spirit. He doesn't meet regularly with your group or bother to fill any of you in on the critical decisions that senior management is wrestling with. So you're often the last ones to hear about big initiatives and changes. He doesn't fight for resources, raises, or promotions for your team—or seem to care about his people at all. If he's given up on his career, fine, but he's essentially giving up on yours, too. He's practically invisible in the organization, and you're at a loss for how to get anyone to notice your contributions so that you can advance.

Why It Happens

Some bosses become so consumed with lining up the Next Big Thing on their impressive rise to the top that

they lose interest in their present roles. Others disengage as managers when they sense that their *own* futures are limited. Feeling embittered toward their companies, they may passive-aggressively refuse to manage and view that as payback for all the wrongs they've endured. They stop jockeying for budget dollars, perk allocations, new-hire slots, and so on—and quietly allow performance to fizzle out as a result.

It's also common for a boss to start phoning it in near the end of his career. People burn out over time, especially in high-pressure roles. If that's the case with your manager, he may no longer have the energy to care—and he's probably just biding his time until he can leave to focus on his photography and gardening.

Whatever the reason, it's probably not about you. It's all about him.

What to Do About It

When your boss lacks drive and commitment, it can be hard to see the upside. But you may actually benefit from his disinterest. It gives you a chance to fill the void with your own good work. If he doesn't seem to care about much of anything, then he's not likely to mind if you find ways to step in and raise your own profile, as long as your efforts don't make more work for him. Of course, you're probably on your own to figure out *what* to do. Here are some guidelines.

Try speaking up

Sometimes bosses just need a little prompting, says Boston University management professor Kathy Kram. "I've

STEPPING UP: JOHN'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

In hindsight, I think I was hired because my boss had already checked out. He'd been in charge of a key division of a small private company for nearly two decades. I later learned that he'd asked the owner for equity and been denied. But the owner trusted and valued him, and my boss knew his job was safe. Essentially, he brought me in to do his job—or to make his job as easy as possible. I was hired as a number two. My boss, it soon became clear, didn't work the same hours as the rest of us. He'd blame traffic patterns for coming in midmorning. And he'd spend a lot of days "working from home." I didn't really mind, for the most part. It made my job easy and fun. He stayed out of my way, and I ran the division.

WHAT I DID:

I just tried to make him look good whenever possible, knowing it would give the owner confidence that things were being run smoothly and make my boss trust me.

We happily bumped along like that for a few years, until the owner of the company decided to sell. Then my boss kicked back into gear. I think he wanted to impress prospective owners and possibly get that equity stake he'd longed for. Suddenly he became deeply involved and dithered over every decision. He second-guessed things I'd done for years that hadn't bothered him before. I ended up feeling like I couldn't quite get it right anymore with him. When the company was sold, he didn't manage to impress the new ownership team. He resigned shortly thereafter. I stayed on long enough to find a decent new job, but I ultimately chose to leave, too.

DID JOHN GET IT RIGHT?

John was in a tough position, but he made the most of it. In some ways, he'd been given a dream job: He was the acting boss, without the bottom-line responsibility. He could learn, experiment, and develop without anyone breathing down his neck. But working for a disaffected boss isn't really a long-term career strategy. Even if the company hadn't changed hands, something else would have put an end to this unspoken agreement. His boss might have retired, or John may have decided he wanted the responsibility after all, not just the freedom.

seen managers and employees in my class who say, 'I just wish my boss would meet with me more often, give me more feedback . . .' I always pose the question 'Have you *asked* for that?' Very often, they haven't." Many bosses are oblivious to their employees' needs, Kram points out, but respond well to reasonable, diplomatic requests, especially if they're easy to grant.

Make delegation attractive

Volunteer to take on tasks your disengaged boss doesn't enjoy, suggests Stewart Tubbs, former dean of the College of Business at Eastern Michigan University. You don't want him to take offense or resent your ambition and energy—so how do you gently encourage him to delegate to you? Invite him to coffee or lunch, says Tubbs, and ask if you can do anything to lighten his workload, even on a trial basis. Say you're eager to learn new skills. Frame it as a win-win—you want to help him out and grow in the process. Most bosses would welcome the opportunity to delegate to a *willing* taker, says Tubbs, especially if you promise to send completed projects or reports to him first so that he can decide with whom and how to share them.

Fill in the gaps

Show your boss that cultivating your talents will give the team more muscle—with little or no extra effort on his part. Offer to learn new technologies, for example, or to do first drafts of reports he's responsible for. Have a good relationship with Manny in finance? Work with him to file the team's expense reports so that your boss won't

have to. Sharpen the skills you know that he lacks; he might see it as a lifeboat.

Tubbs knew a young woman who got on her indifferent boss's good side by creating outstanding PowerPoint presentations. Before long, he was asking for her help with all his slides, and eventually he invited her to do some of the presenting. Once other leaders in the company saw her skills in action, they started tapping her for presentations, too. When the company later went through a severe downsizing, she was one of the few people who still had a job, primarily because her boss had come to rely on her so much. The same principle can apply to spreadsheets, social media, and so on. You may need to offer your assistance several times before the timing is right, Tubbs advises. But sooner or later, your boss will be so busy, he'll accept your offer. Do your best work when he asks you to step into the breach—you'll increase your chances of scoring repeat opportunities.

Build your own network

You probably already realize how critical it is to build relationships with colleagues, since your boss isn't doing that on behalf of your team. But he may actually be a good source of inspiration when you're deciding which people to add to your network and how to reach out to them.

Here's what communication and branding expert Dorie Clark suggests: "You might say something like 'Look, I'm really committed to the company, really interested in expanding my knowledge and working my way toward a senior role in the marketing department. But I need some guidance on networking to make that happen.

What advice would you give me?'" Your boss may surprise you with helpful ideas. Few people are so emotionally disengaged that they won't respond to a flattering request like this. "But don't just wait for the pearls of wisdom to drop," Clark adds. "Ask specific questions: 'If I want to develop strengths in X, which people do I need to talk to?' 'Who in the company really excels in that area?'"

Your boss may not go to bat for his team on a day-to-day basis, but if you engage him in a big-picture conversation about your development, he may be inclined to share contacts or ideas. It's a low-effort way for him to give you meaningful help. Ask if he'll introduce you to people he's named or if he'll keep an eye out for opportunities where you could gain more related experience, now that he knows your long-term plans.

Even if your boss can't quite muster the motivation to make introductions, you'll at least come away with a name or two. You can then create your own opportunities to meet or work with those people by volunteering for committees they work on, for example, and taking time to chat with them at lunch. Sometimes personal ties that start in cafeteria lines evolve into supportive professional relationships.

As you're working on those internal relationships, you'll want to cultivate external ones, too. Research shows that creating connections beyond your company is critical to building a robust network, says leadership expert Herminia Ibarra. That's because they exponentially increase your awareness of job opportunities in other organizations and industries, your chances of being re-

cruited, and your ability to find mentors and allies with whom you can safely discuss career hopes and challenges. Ask colleagues if they know people outside work with expertise or knowledge you're trying to acquire—and if they do, don't be afraid to ask for introductions.

Section 2

Political Challenges with Your Colleagues

Chapter 6
The Hypercompetitive Peer

The Problem

There's one in every office: a colleague who is so competitive, so obnoxious, that she stops at nothing to get every advantage over her peers. She brags about her successes, races to be first in line for high-profile projects, weasels out of grunt work, and consistently "forgets" to mention anyone else's contributions when she's praised for something that's really a team effort. She's dead set on getting ahead, even at the expense of everyone else.

Why It Happens

People become overly competitive at work for two reasons (assuming they aren't just jerks, see chapter 15), says

leadership and networking expert Brian Uzzi at Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management. Often they feel they have to fight for limited resources, such as promotions, raises, or travel. Or they may view you as a threat. "Maybe you have fresh ideas, or you do especially well in front of clients. You do something better than your peer does," Uzzi explains. "If the other person wasn't threatened by you, he or she wouldn't waste time competing."

What to Do About It

Rivalries can be deeply destructive to your career. You'll be unhappy in an environment where you have overtly or subtly hostile relationships. And you might signal to your superiors that you aren't leadership material if you get caught up in a cold war at work. Here's how to avoid the drama and the damage that comes with it.

Give her the benefit of the doubt

Thinking about your peer as hypercompetitive is actually part of the problem, says Diana McLain Smith, author of *The Elephant in the Room: How Relationships Make or Break the Success of Leaders and Organizations.* Smith points out that individuals behave better or worse depending on the relationship patterns they unwittingly create with one another. So, for example, if you view someone as a competitor, you'll treat her as one. And, in turn, she'll *feel* more competitive toward you. Your behavior will feed hers. This isn't to say that people don't have characteristic ways of behaving—a competitive person will naturally be so in all kinds of situations. "But relationships have the power to amplify or modify those

ways of behaving," Smith says. Her advice? "Act as if" you believe the other person wants to succeed, but not necessarily at your expense. That trick of mind will stop you from doing things that could trigger or escalate an arms race, such as overreacting to a slight, one-upping her at meetings, or trying to undermine her before she undermines you.

Also consider whether you've accidentally done anything to provoke the attacks. It may seem to you that she's just launching into you out of spite, but an abundance of social-cognitive research shows that we're blind to our parts in these encounters. Ask a trusted colleague for a reality check. You may discover a trigger that you can easily avoid in the future.

Address the root of the problem

What if you find that you're not provoking the behavior? You'll need to figure out what's causing the competition, says Uzzi. By considering your peer's point of view and understanding what's behind her actions, you may be able to come up with a solution that eases the tension.

Suppose you're both associates trying to make partner at your firm. If just a few slots are open to new partners, competition is baked into the career track—your peer isn't to blame for it. In a case like that, Uzzi suggests approaching key decision makers to try to fix the problem at its root. You could talk to current partners before they've decided on the next crop of promotions, for example. Frame the conversation constructively: You've identified a problem, and you'd like to help address it. Maybe the cutthroat environment has led employees to

leave your firm and join others. Point to those losses, and quantify their impact on the top or bottom line, to show how important it is to stop the bleeding. Ask if there's any flexibility in the promotion cycle: For instance, can the firm add two partners in one year and none the next to retain two superstars and give others time to develop their portfolios? If you and your rival are clearly assets to the company, decision makers should be receptive to a conversation like this. It's in their best interest, not just yours.

Call in friendly reinforcements

Still having problems? "What I've seen people do effectively is to band together with other colleagues," says leadership consultant Ron Ashkenas. "If there's one highly ambitious person annoying you and playing political games, she's probably also doing it to other people." Ashkenas advises gently approaching the competitive colleague with one or two peers (not a large gang—that would get her defenses up). Perhaps take her out for coffee. Your conversation should be friendly. Ask if she realizes she's been sending off a competitive vibe. "Be as specific as possible," Ashkenas says. "Give examples. If she takes it reasonably well, offer to speak up in the moment so that she can see when it's happening." Sometimes simply making a competitive colleague aware of how others perceive her behavior is enough to change the pattern.

Don't take the bait

If your colleague makes the competition public—in meetings or with your boss, for example—it's critical to

keep calm, advises communication and branding expert Dorie Clark. "It will become clear to other people that she has some kind of agenda," Clark says. "Don't participate in the rivalry." If you do, you'll only fuel your colleague's ambition further and perhaps lower others' estimation of you. And, if you're spending emotional energy worrying about how you stack up against her, you won't have enough left to do your job well.

That's not to say you should let her batter you or your reputation—you'll just invite more of the same (see chapter 7, "The Bully"). Suppose your colleague Barb calls your work "irrelevant" in a staff meeting, says Smith: "I'd be prepared to respond—both publicly and one-on-one with Barb afterward."

At the meeting, you might ask dispassionately, "What makes you say so?" If she claims your logic is flawed and you've no solid data to back it up, calmly respond: "Perhaps you've missed the data and analysis on pages 5 and 6." And if she insists that the numbers don't support your case, you can say—again, in a controlled, even tone—"I realize that's your view, but saying something is irrelevant doesn't make it so. I'd be interested to hear what others think of the data and analysis."

And privately, here's how you might put her on notice: "Barb, it's hard for me to see how calling my work irrelevant would ever serve the team or even you. If anything, it makes you look bad. What was that all about?" She might surprise you with a contrite response—or she might refuse to acknowledge her behavior. Either way, you've established that you're not an easy target and that attacking you probably isn't worth her effort.

DOUBLE-CROSSED: JANET'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

I'd been given the top position in my group at a relatively young age—I wasn't even 30, and my peers in other divisions were all in their 40s. So I brought in a highly ambitious number two to shore up areas where I didn't have as much expertise. On paper, Matt, my number two, looked like a better fit for certain aspects of my job, but I knew my boss trusted me and wanted me in the position. About a year in, I thought I'd built a great relationship with Matt. I'd given him lots of freedom, responsibility, and visibility, and I'd learned a lot from watching and working with him. But then a senior executive pulled me aside to tell me that Matt had gone to the top boss and asked for my job. I was flabbergasted and hurt. In hindsight, I realized that my letting him shine had allowed him to take sole credit for things and position himself as the real power player in the department.

WHAT I DID:

I called Matt into my office, closed the door (rare at our company), and told him I knew. After he stammered through an explanation that he was just expressing his ambition, I voiced my disappointment: I'd prided myself on helping him grow, and I certainly never intended to hold him back—but now he'd lost my trust. He left my office with his head hanging. I knew his ambitions wouldn't diminish, but from that point on, I didn't let him take the spotlight nearly as much. I made presentations without him. Held meetings without him. Treated him more like a direct report than a partner. Not surprisingly, he soon left the company for a prominent position in a start-up.

DID JANET GET IT RIGHT?

Tough call. Janet's decision to hire an openly ambitious number two had the potential to backfire. Janet was, in some ways, an ideal boss for Matt—it made sense to add his strengths to the bench and give him lots of room to grow. But she also had a hand in creating the problem. Self-conscious that she didn't have some of his particular expertise, she stepped *too* far out of the picture, allowing him to elbow his way past her. She looked weak, not like a confident boss who was delegating. And she should have had an open conversation with Matt early on about his ambitions and helped him chart a career path. That way, he would have viewed her as a catalyst rather than an obstacle.

Charm and disarm

If you sense that your competitive colleague feels threatened by you, find ways to support her. Say, for example, you're an academic with a gift for teaching, and your peer struggles in the classroom but does superb research. Suggest teaming up so that you can work together toward earning tenure. "Tell your colleague you'd like his or her input on your course materials," Uzzi suggests. "Or offer to have him sit in on one of your classes to provide feedback. You'll both benefit from a fresh eye and new ideas. Involving your peer in your work turns a rival into a collaborator. And a shared activity can build trust." By initiating some give-and-take, you can neutralize the perceived threat and, over time, transform the relationship into one of mutual respect.

Advocate for yourself

You can obsess about how horrible a competitor is—or you can focus on your own work and advancement. "In our firm," says executive coach Beth Weissenberger, "we see so many clients who get passed over for great jobs because their strategy was effectively 'I do a good job. Everyone should know that. My work will speak for itself.' But you're not going to be promoted if you keep your head down and steam about how unfair things are."

Weissenberger coached two high potentials who had this problem. Both had been flagged by their company as potential CFOs, but neither had articulated their career goals to their boss. So they risked losing out on chances to develop skills and gain visibility—those would go to people who spoke up and said they were looking

for growth. “People need to know that you’re ambitious,” says Weissenberger, “as long as you don’t express it in an obnoxious way. Does your boss even realize you want to be promoted? Everyone always assumes yes, but it’s not always the case. You have to be very clear: ‘I’m committed to doing this job well, but here’s what I’m striving for. If you’re looking for a future CFO candidate, I’d like to work toward the opportunity.’”

Chapter 7
The Bully

The Problem

Your colleague is a bully. When you're speaking in meetings, he doodles, sends e-mails, whispers to colleagues—to the point of distracting others, and sometimes even you, from what you're trying to say. He's also blown up at you in front of others for petty reasons. You dread interacting with him and find yourself constantly waiting for his next attack. You can't just brush it off, and it's ruining your focus at work. The specifics may sound silly to someone who's not experiencing this, but to you it feels like psychological harassment.

Why It Happens

Bullying in the workplace is not much different from what happens on the playground. Bullies of all ages want to manipulate the political and social power in their environment to control others. You'd think we'd outgrow it,

but it's all too common in the office: In a 2010 Workplace Bullying Institute survey conducted by Zogby International, 35% of Americans reported being bullied at work. Why is the problem so widespread? People and organizations put up with the bad behavior, afraid to confront or penalize the culprits.

What to Do About It

Being bullied at work can wreak havoc on your mental and emotional health—and your performance on the job. This happens a lot, according to a study by Christine Pearson at the Thunderbird School of Global Management and Christine Porath at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business: 78% of participants who believed they'd been treated rudely by colleagues said they felt a decreased commitment to their work, with a direct negative effect on their performance. You—and your work—don't have to suffer. These steps will help you change the dynamic.

Consider his intentions

Some bullies don't mean to be bullies. So make sure you aren't projecting a motive that isn't there. If, for example, a peer consistently criticizes you in public, think about what he might actually be trying to accomplish, suggests leadership consultant Ron Ashkenas. Is it possible he has honorable intentions? Is he being critical of *you* or just striving to ensure high quality?

Gut-check your feelings with a work friend, or discreetly ask a trusted colleague to sit in on a meeting where the problem usually arises. A neutral perspective may help you see that the bully is not out to get you. Per-

haps he's insecure in a new role and overcompensating, for instance, or he lacks the emotional intelligence to see how cutting his words and actions are. If he doesn't realize how he's coming across, you can pull him aside and ask him if everything is OK. "You seemed angry about that report. Is there something we should talk about?" As with many of the political challenges in this guide, it's entirely possible that your colleague is so wrapped up in his own thoughts or anxieties that he has no idea how he behaves toward you. Simply mentioning it might make him more self-aware.

With third-party feedback, you may also realize it's not you; it's him. Knowing that, you can shrug off his bad behavior more easily. Bullies notoriously pick on people who appear weak and fragile. Show that you're not afraid of criticism and that you're willing to stand up for yourself, and your bully may well back down.

Offer an olive branch

Disarm your bully by expressing your desire to have a good relationship with him. If he's intentionally pushing you around, he's assuming you're his adversary. So show him that you want to be on the same team. If he routinely derails your project launches, approach him before the next one: Tell him how important his input is and that you appreciate his eye for potential obstacles. After you've set a constructive example, he may change his tune: "Maybe I should have come to you with my concerns *before* the last launch . . ." Even a small concession like that can be a first step toward a more productive working relationship, says communication and branding expert Dorie Clark.

Find safety in numbers

Although you don't want to create a rival gang to counter the office bully, there is power in people banding together to support one another publicly. If you notice your bully targeting others, too, tell them about the behavior you've observed and what you've experienced yourself. Discuss how you might join forces. You could agree to stand up for one another in moments of confrontation, for instance, or help one another anticipate and address the bully's criticisms. At the very least, you'll have others to turn to when you're feeling the need to vent.

Break the pattern

It's easy to get trapped in a negative pattern with a bully. He always does certain things, and you always respond in a certain way. Maybe you find yourself complaining to a colleague after every showdown. Or you try to outbully him by doing your own masterful doodles and rolling *your* eyes when *he* talks.

How do you put an end to this destructive dance? The easiest thing to change is your own behavior. Take a quick walk outside after a frustrating encounter. Or send a positive e-mail, such as a thank-you note or a compliment to another colleague you've been meaning to write. Break the cycle of negativity with something positive.

Call him on it

Book a one-on-one meeting with the bully. Public confrontation will only exacerbate his natural tendencies, so find a space where there's no audience. Bullies often bank

on the fact that people won't call them on their behavior, so your initiating a meeting will get his attention.

Suppose your bully is passive-aggressive. He makes snide remarks under his breath, and you've heard from reliable sources that he's bad-mouthing your ideas to the rest of the team. Tell him you'd like to talk to him because you get the sense he's unhappy with the proposed process changes (or whatever he's grumbling about). Stick with the facts. Don't attack him, as in "You always do such and such . . ." Instead, be specific and neutral, Clark advises. Say something like, "In today's meeting, you were muttering to yourself when we went over the process proposal. I wanted to discuss it because the same thing happened at last week's meeting, and I'm concerned about the way we're interacting. Can we talk about how we're working together so that we can both be more effective?" Be direct, but give him the opportunity to express his point of view (see chapter 14, "Conducting Difficult Conversations"). Ask him how he thinks his concerns can be addressed.

The same technique works well for colleagues who are more blatantly disrespectful: "You asked some great questions this morning, but your tone was pretty harsh. I'm wondering, was there a problem?" Odds are, the bully will back down immediately because he doesn't want a confrontation. Your directness will serve as a warning: You noticed his behavior, and you're willing to address it. At a minimum, observes organizational development and HR expert Susan Heathfield, it makes the bully think twice about targeting you in the future.

PUBLIC FLOGGING: JASON'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

When I first began working in a well-known global consulting firm, a senior colleague asked me to prepare data slides for an important client presentation. He gave me very specific, detailed instructions on what he wanted and then left for the night. When I reviewed the task, I thought I could do the same thing a lot more efficiently. So that's what I did.

The next day, as we were presenting the material to the client, he called up my data slides. When he saw I hadn't done it the way he'd asked, he just went nuts. He embarrassed me in front of the client and my peers. He even followed me back to my desk after the presentation to continue haranguing me. It was awful. But that was typical of the way he treated me the entire time we both worked there.

WHAT I DID:

I avoided him. I did no favors for him, never volunteered to help him, just tried to fade into the background as far as he was concerned. And I secretly celebrated each time he made a mistake. It didn't make him go away, but at least I kept my distance.

DID JASON GET IT RIGHT?

Jason might have turned things around if he'd shown more empathy for his colleague. Yes, this guy was a bully, but he'd received no heads-up about the slides—and he'd felt blindsided in front of a big client.

After the blowup, what if Jason had approached him privately, explained that he hadn't meant to do an end run, and asked if they could figure out a better way to communicate to avoid the same situation in the future? That approach might have earned his colleague's respect. And if not, it would at least have put his bully on notice: Jason wouldn't just slink away after a public flogging like that. He'd speak up.

Go toe-to-toe with the bully

You don't need to simmer silently the next time your bully acts up. Peter Freeth, a director of UK-based Revelation Consulting, which specializes in high-performing cultures, advises his clients to calmly stand their ground during the attack: "He aggressively questions you? Ignore his questions. Absolutely ignore them. He whispers? He's drawing other people into his game. Stop and look directly at him. Continue only when he's quiet. When he does it again, stop and look. His behavior is disrespectful. You know it; everyone else knows it. The problem is that they're all too polite to do anything about it." You don't need to get caught up in retaliating. Simply take away his power to rattle you. He'll move on to another victim or perhaps put his energy toward something more useful.

Just say no

What if somebody more senior, such as your boss, is the one bullying you? You still have to draw a line. Otherwise, the entire relationship will take on a master-servant dynamic.

Leadership consultant Jessica Pryce-Jones describes a client who faced this problem—a very senior investment banker whose boss frequently made unreasonable demands on her. "He'd say, 'I want you in the office at 6:30 AM to look at my presentation.' Or 'I need to be able to reach you at 11:30 at night.'"

The banker was warm and helpful by nature. But she grew increasingly resentful when her boss started taking advantage of that. Pryce-Jones advised her to think

about circumstances when she could reasonably say no—for instance, when preparing for an event would keep her awake at night. If a request seemed excessive by those standards, she needed to explain what she wouldn't do (by simply declining the request) and what she would do instead. Pryce-Jones encouraged her to try this out a few times and then evaluate how it felt. After declining a couple of such requests, she had a clearer sense of her boundaries—and she felt much less resentful. This gave her more energy for what she said yes to. Making active decisions empowered her and increased her confidence.

Work up the courage to say no a couple of times to make it clear that you aren't a pushover. Of course, if you worry about your job security or if your work environment becomes hostile, you should report it to human resources.

Chapter 8
The Clique

The Problem

There's a group of "golden" people in your office. They get assigned to high-profile projects, receive lots of public praise for their work, and ascend the ranks faster than others. They're a tight crowd: They have one another's backs in meetings and socialize after work. You've never been tapped to be on their teams. You're good at your job; you're just not in the right circle.

Why It Happens

Office cliques form—and thrive—for lots of reasons. Sometimes, for instance, you'll find bands of colleagues who have moved together from other companies, particularly in industries that are worlds unto themselves, such as media and technology. (And it makes sense: As leadership expert Herminia Ibarra points out, research consistently shows that the key to getting a new job is networking.) When people know one another socially or from past jobs, they naturally have stronger, deeper ties.

FITTING IN: REBECCA'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

I was thrilled when I got a foot-in-the-door position at a really hot company. But I was definitely low woman on the totem pole, with a low salary to match. On days that my coworkers rounded one another up for lunch, I literally couldn't afford to join them, but I wanted them to ask me. They were the office in crowd. Not only did they eat together—they shared weekend plans and tales, and had an easy, comfortable rapport with the boss. They were never mean to me, but I was invisible to them.

WHAT I DID:

I collaborated with one of the "cool kids" on a couple of projects, as her junior, and I worked really hard on them, which made her look good. She warmed up to me after that and started extending invitations to join the group for dinner and drinks after work—usually spontaneously, so I didn't have time to budget. But I said yes the first time I was asked, not wanting to lose my opening.

After that night, they still occasionally invited me along. And occasionally not. I didn't say yes every time—didn't have the cash—but I knew I'd somehow cracked the group. And with that, I was more accepted at work. I felt more part of things, and I think my work was better, too. I gained confidence. But in time, I also realized I more naturally gravitated toward people who took joy in their work. Bonding over drinks wasn't really my thing. So I started working, somewhat voluntarily, late nights in the office. Those of us who stayed after hours got free dinner and cabs home on the company, so money wasn't an issue. The dinners I shared huddled in an office conference room felt much more like bonding experiences to me. We talked about work, we talked about ourselves, we built mutual respect. Little by little, I found my own in crowd, and it was a much better fit.

DID REBECCA GET IT RIGHT?

Rebecca found a toehold into the clique, and that was all to the good, because it helped her integrate with her colleagues. And she learned soon enough that she was better off making personal connections with colleagues she respected and admired than hanging out with the flashiest group. Building her own in crowd worked beautifully, because those relationships would make her happier and more connected with her job in the long run.

Of course, they also tend to gel if they frequently work together on projects. They understand and trust one another's strengths and weaknesses, and even have shorthand ways of communicating that outsiders might not understand at first. In other words, they cultivate a group "emotional intelligence," to use psychologist Daniel Goleman's term. In teams, emotional intelligence can be critical to doing great work, but it's not automatic—it must develop over time.

When senior managers see a group operating so smoothly, why *wouldn't* they go with that well-oiled machine for the next big project? Though they don't mean to deny others chances to excel and advance, that's often the unfortunate outcome.

What to Do About It

If you find yourself outside the right clique at work, you may miss out on opportunities—both professional and social. But you don't have to sit at your desk just waiting for someone to notice you and invite you along. Break into the group—or build your own.

Work with the existing clique

Don't let the golden children get all the heat and light. Even if you're not invited to contribute to their big projects, express interest in them. Leadership consultant Ron Ashkenas advises, "You can say to your boss or colleagues, 'I know I'm not on that assignment, but could I sit in on a status meeting to learn more about it?'" And once you're in the room, offer to pitch in. Raise your hand for *any* role to start with, says Ashkenas: "Be willing to do some scut work to prove yourself." Volunteer

for all-hands-on-deck QA work, for instance, or offer to update process documentation. When you do help out, overdeliver—and look for even more ways to showcase what you can do. People will start to see what you bring to the party, and in time you may find yourself a regular in the go-to group. Ashkenas recalls a client's secretary who successfully did this years ago. "She volunteered to sit in on meetings and take notes," Ashkenas says. "She created great summaries and eventually helped do some secondary research in support of the project. A few months later, my client had promoted her to an analyst role and hired a new secretary."

Another alternative, Ashkenas says, is to ask a member of the golden group to mentor you. That will require a long-term commitment on both sides. But if you can identify someone in the clique you could learn from—and she'd be willing to invest time and energy in your development—that might provide you with entrée as well.

Form your own alliances

Maybe chumminess at the office feels artificial to you or seems like a waste of time. You may be thinking, Why put aside my "real" work just to make friends? But the reality is, it'll help you do your work more effectively.

First, you'll gain support for your ideas. No matter how respected you might be individually, you'll always bolster your case by lining up allies. Suppose, for example, you're proposing a new CRM database. You'll need buy-in from your IT colleagues because they'll be involved in picking and maintaining the software if the project becomes a reality. So you'll want a buddy in IT to help you think

through how to enlist his team's support before you bring your idea to senior managers.

Second, people will share more information with you if they feel connected to you. When they catch wind of a big decision or organizational change in the offing, you'll hear about it sooner—so you'll have more time to prepare for it. If you're not part of an informal alliance, people simply won't think to clue you in.

To form alliances that'll give your ideas traction and keep you informed, you'll need to network deliberately and efficiently (see chapter 16, "Forging Alliances"). Ask your boss and a trusted mentor or two which people in the organization you should get to know better, suggest leadership consultants Kathryn Heath, Mary Davis Holt, and Jill Flynn. Set up lunches with those folks. Find out about their pet projects and challenges.

Flynn adds: "Get a big-picture view of whatever company you are working in. What are the challenges? Who are the leaders? Have that down cold in your mind." Then, she says, you can seize opportunities to talk with colleagues about these issues. But make your outreach subtle. "You shouldn't make an appointment to interview the person and just sit there taking notes," suggests Flynn. "Formal is your last resort."

Flynn coached someone who had identified a power player she wanted to learn from at her company. But he was busy and didn't know her well, and they didn't interact much on the job. So Flynn's client figured out a natural way to collaborate with him and build a relationship. She offered to help him with a big training session he held once a year—to organize it, run errands, whatever

he needed. He gratefully accepted, and that was the start of a productive mentoring relationship.

Create opportunities to socialize with the colleagues you're eager to know. Another client of Flynn's discovered that a couple of important people in her company took the train home at a certain time every day. So for a few weeks, she kept an eye out for them on their way to the train. When she spotted them, she walked along with them, chatting as they went. "It worked," Flynn says. "They became comfortable with her, and she learned a lot."

It's essential to do all this in a way that feels and looks authentic—you don't want to come off as a stalker. The key is to initiate relationships *before you need them*, so it's not just about angling for favors. Otherwise, you won't have the stomach for it, and you'll end up avoiding alliances rather than building them. And that can have a devastating impact on your career, says Kent Lineback, coauthor of *Being the Boss*. Very few people rise to the top of their profession without allies to support them along the way. It might be critical, for example, to have them backing your candidacy for a sought-after promotion. Or to have a go-to team for high-profile projects you need to knock out of the park.

Lineback knows this all too well. Years ago, he didn't focus on building relationships outside his own department, even though he held a senior management position. "I just didn't *want* to," he recalls. During a strategic-review meeting, Lineback shared his ideas about what direction the company should go. He was stunned when nobody responded with even a glimmer of enthusiasm. He had carefully worked through his proposal with

members of his own group, but he hadn't gut-checked or socialized it with anyone in the room ahead of time. And no one there felt obliged to give him the benefit of the doubt—he didn't have anyone in his camp. After the meeting, a consultant involved in the review pulled Lineback aside and offered his two cents on what went wrong: "You didn't build any bridges," he said.

"I knew he was right," Lineback says. "It was one of those instant recognitions. I hadn't wanted to dilute my idea, make it messy, by bringing other senior people in. Shame on me. After a while, you realize you have to be plugged in."

Connecting with colleagues doesn't have to be self-serving or manipulative. Be transparent with them about what you're hoping to achieve, whether it's gaining a broader understanding of the organization, exploring other career paths in the company, or something else entirely. But also make it clear that you want the relationships to go both ways. And then, of course, look for opportunities to support *them*.

This worked for Heath and Flynn, who formed an alliance back when they worked in different departments of the same company. Over the years, they've found ways to support each other, discovered opportunities for each other, and generally enjoyed working together. Initially Heath reported to Flynn, but they later became peers. "It's not a social relationship," Heath explains, "but we're best friends in a professional sense." While they were trying to figure out how to navigate the company, they'd

each pass along feedback or news that might be helpful to the other. "We would trade information," Heath says. On more than one occasion, they trusted each other to discuss job opportunities that would take them outside the company. "One time I was getting ready to take another job and she said, 'You're running away from something . . .'" Heath recalls. "We were pretty straight with each other. You need to have a truth teller in your group, and we just became that for each other."

They ultimately parlayed their successful partnership into a consulting firm, Flynn Heath Holt Leadership (with Mary Davis Holt). If you can build strong relationships with people you respect—as they did—the time you invest will have long-term benefits for you and your allies.

Chapter 9
The Credit Stealer

The Problem

You've put in long hours on a project, and some of your best ideas made the final cut. Yet no one knows it. When your colleague presented the final proposal at a recent team meeting, she didn't specifically claim all the credit for herself. But she avoided mentioning you and used the pronoun "I" every time she could. Afterward, your boss thanked her *for doing such a great job—and your colleague still said nothing about your contributions. Once or twice this kind of thing could be an honest mistake. But it happens all the time. How will you ever get ahead if no one sees the good work* you *do?*

Why It Happens

People may appear to take credit for your work without realizing it. When they're making a presentation or talking to a superior, they genuinely get caught up in their own role and simply miss the opportunity to name other key players. And collaborative environments can

make it tricky to even identify who contributed what. Most bosses don't go digging for those details because what they ultimately care about is the team's work as a whole.

What's more, in some professions, the culture makes it very difficult to get credit for your work before you reach a certain level in the hierarchy. In management consulting, for example, the senior partner on an assignment usually gets the client's accolades, whether she's done the work or just supervised at arm's length. In academia, the tenured professor almost always appears first in an article byline, although her junior team may have done most of the research. Even in the court system, hardworking, bright judicial clerks help shape the opinions of their bosses without much—if any—recognition.

But sometimes, a more insidious motive lurks behind credit stealing: The thief is insecure or desperate to look better to her superiors—and figures she can get away with it if she's stealthy, says leadership and networking expert Brian Uzzi.

What to Do About It

Don't rush to point fingers. Consider whether there's any chance you're wrong. Maybe your colleague *did* have the same idea as you, or maybe you heard it kicked around somewhere else without remembering it. Uzzi's research suggests it's common for people to overvalue their own contributions. "It's called *fundamental attribution error,*" he says. "We all think that our role is much bigger than everybody else's. Ask five people, 'How much did you contribute to this project?' Every person will say he

did 50% of the work." So if you think someone hijacked the credit for your hard work, make sure your perception isn't skewed. "Check with others to see if they agree," Uzzi says. Don't just assume the worst.

But if, upon reflection, you *do* see a problem, try the following steps to solve it.

Stop it before it starts

If you've been burned before on a team, prevent it from happening again by writing down the group's expectations and assignments up front, advises leadership consultant Ron Ashkenas. Begin with a discussion about goals. Then, as a group, create a work plan that supports them: Lay out all the tasks, sequence them, and agree on individuals' assignments. If you and your colleagues draft the work plan together, there will be less room for confusion later about who was responsible for what. You'll also have a written history of your shared intentions. If your work involves a presentation, don't let someone fly solo. Divide up the slides—and share the visibility.

Clear the air

If you're not able to preempt the credit stealer, have a candid conversation with her. Give specific examples. For instance: "Sophia, when you presented our report, I was a little surprised when you said, '*I* stayed up all night . . .' because we both did. Can we talk about why you said that?" Many times just pointing out the behavior will put an end to it, says communication and branding expert Dorie Clark. Your colleague may immediately apologize and say, "I didn't realize it came across that way."

Or she may simply deny the charge: "That's ridiculous—I did almost all the work on this project myself." Don't accept that answer. Push back. Showing her that you won't quietly step aside makes it harder for her to gloss over your efforts next time.

Go to your boss

It's always best if you can work things out directly with your colleague. Tattling over a minor incident or two may antagonize her and put her on the defensive. "You don't want to create an enemy just because of a mistake," Clark advises. But after you've talked to her, if she refuses to see your side of the situation and continues her behavior, go to your boss. Otherwise, your morale and motivation will suffer. When you speak with your boss, keep your tone neutral. Talk about the impact on the business, not just on you, so that you won't sound petty or overly emotional. Maybe your colleague's grandstanding has caused others to avoid collaborating with her, for example, or your team is earning a reputation in the company for being embroiled in controversy and ineffective. Review the steps you've already taken. Suggest another solution or two that you've thought of, and ask your boss for his input.

What If the Credit Stealer Is Your Boss?

Many managers believe that a direct report's success is rightfully their success, too. After all, they laid out the vision, assigned the tasks, nurtured and developed the talent, and so on. In some organizations, Uzzi says, that's simply a given.

Your boss may not even remember where she gets every idea. And she may get annoyed if you seem easily wounded by what she considers a normal by-product of collaboration.

Take a long-term view

The "reward" for your contributions may not be immediate applause but something more tangible in the future—such as better resources for your group or a promotion down the line. That's how it works at MTV. A case study of the entertainment company found that many of its best ideas, such as the wildly popular *Real World* television series, actually come from unpaid interns. But as a policy, no single person or team gets credit. It's always "MTV" as a whole, largely because the company wants to retain intellectual property rights. But MTV does, Uzzi observes, track individuals' contributions. The people who make a significant impact during their tenure get the best recommendations for paid jobs at other companies looking for talent trained in the MTV brand.

MTV evaluates interns informally through observations of teamwork and feedback from peers. If someone consistently adds to the creative process or plays a significant role in developing a product that no one could have come up with alone—such as a new concept for a show—his contributions will get noticed. Comedian and nighttime talk-show host Jon Stewart was once an MTV intern. He worked on a new idea called "being real," which became the DNA for reality TV and helped get Stewart on the short list of high potentials at MTV. MTV rewards team-based work by "basically being a big employment

agency," Uzzi says, where placement in good, paying jobs after an MTV internship is the "currency used to reward people over the long run."

Even though your boss doesn't give you a nod for every accomplishment, your overall impact may not be lost on her. Does she have a track record of eventually rewarding those who've paid their dues? If so, it's probably worth being patient. If not, you may need to have a chat.

Tread very, very carefully

You can get credit without embarrassing your boss, but it's a delicate procedure. Organizational development and HR expert Susan Heathfield recalls a consulting client who did this effectively. Assigned to work on a companywide profit-improvement project, Heathfield's client ended up doing the lion's share of the research, but her boss delivered almost all the findings. That made sense because he needed to get buy-in for the ideas. But Heathfield's client wanted senior managers to know she'd played a key role. So she found ways to graciously add supporting facts and background information during meetings. She didn't upstage her boss, but she subtly demonstrated her level of knowledge and involvement with the project. "Over time," Heathfield says, "it became clear to the big bosses who really knew what was going on." The company promoted her to oversee the project full time—"with huge kudos and credit," Heathfield adds.

Of course, diplomacy is critical. Don't try to put your boss in her place in front of others. "If she takes credit for your work, there's a very good chance she's doing it out of some deep-seated personal need for recognition," says Kent Lineback, coauthor of *Being the Boss*. So she

won't forgive you for a public shaming—and she'll probably retaliate. Instead, advises Lineback, talk to your boss privately. Tell her that you're motivated by recognition for your ideas. If she doesn't start sharing the credit after you've brought it up, she's not likely to change her ways. Unless you can derive longer-term rewards from your work (as in the MTV example described earlier), it might be time to look for another job.

THWARTING THE THIEF: BERNARDO'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:
A colleague put one of my PowerPoint slides into his own deck—without mentioning my name in a source line. He just presented my ideas as his own.

WHAT I DID:
I went to see him and said, "I feel like this is my intellectual property. If you're going to use it, I'd like credit." But he pushed back, saying that people in our organization shared everything, so there wasn't a need for a source line. We went back and forth. When he still didn't budge, I involved third parties in our network—people we both respected. He knew if his reputation for withholding credit spread, no one would want to collaborate with him. So he backed down. Not only did he stop using the slide—he stopped giving the lecture entirely. All to avoid putting a single line of credit in a 40-slide deck. To him, giving credit diminished his originality in front of his audience. But in the end, he cut himself off from the very material that could have made him appear more original—and more collaborative.

DID BERNARDO GET IT RIGHT?
Bernardo handled the situation well. He approached his colleague respectfully and asked for nothing more than a source line—hardly an unreasonable request, even in an organization that "shared everything." Had he backed down, his colleague would have taken that as tacit permission to keep plagiarizing.

Chapter 10
Managing a Disgruntled Former Peer

The Problem

A recent, and well-deserved, promotion changed the social structure in your group. A pal and former peer now reports to you—and he doesn't like it. He acts as if he doesn't realize you're the boss, bypassing you whenever possible. Sometimes he's downright hostile. It's awkward for both of you. You're afraid you'll look ineffectual if you don't get it under control quickly, but you're not sure it's possible to fix the situation and save the relationship.

Why It Happens

It's common for a former peer to resist a reporting change like this. The problem stems largely from the complex

issue of self-esteem, says Carol Walker, a principal at Prepared to Lead. We all benchmark ourselves against colleagues to gauge how much we've achieved, for instance, and how much people respect us. We don't even realize we're doing it most of the time. But when our guideposts change—as they do when a peer becomes the boss—it disturbs our sense of self, Walker points out. No one likes to lose relative position.

So your promotion probably dealt a significant blow to your peer's ego: He wasn't chosen for the role, after all. And he may have less access to senior leaders than before. If your promotion created a new level of management, for example, he may now be a rung lower on the org chart, reporting to someone with a lesser title. These are very real losses—and he might act out as a result. It can be especially difficult—on both sides—if he's older than you. You may feel guilty about the promotion and hyperaware of your youth; he may be embarrassed that he was passed over for someone less seasoned. That tension makes any interaction uncomfortable at first. And if you were friends, it complicates matters even further. You may struggle to maintain personal ties as you try to establish the parameters of your new professional relationship.

What to Do About It

It's tempting to dismiss your employee's reaction as shallow, selfish, or status-driven. You may even resent it, Walker says, and vent to others about it. Ironically, he's probably venting about *your* behavior, which may be less than sterling if your self-esteem feels threatened, too.

When your former peer doesn't respect the new pecking order, it can be difficult to empathize with him. But resist the urge to act out peevishly, Walker cautions. That would amount to stamping your feet in a childish tantrum and screaming "I'm the boss now—you have to do what I say!" As a manager—especially a newly promoted one—you need to make sure your people perform well. You'll get more energy and better contributions from them by fostering healthy egos.

So what should you do when your former peer lashes out? "Recognize the behavior for what it is—a natural reaction to unwelcome change," Walker says. "Your challenge is to restore equilibrium as quickly as possible."

Reset your own expectations

After a shake-up in the org chart, can you and your former peer still grab drinks after work? Can you continue to trade snarky comments about annoying colleagues?

Yes and no, says leadership consultant Jessica Pryce-Jones. You have to acknowledge that your relationship has fundamentally changed, even if you're good friends. You can't remain an inner-circle confidante—or treat your direct report as one—now that you're the boss. But that doesn't mean that you suddenly have to defriend your pal on Facebook or scratch his name off your holiday card list. Just put a little distance between the two of you. Find a new sounding board, and encourage him to do the same.

Expect him to test you to see how much of the original friendship remains intact. Maybe he'll ask you for information that you shouldn't share, for instance, or wait

until you really push before he responds to your requests. You may be tempted to cave because you feel uncomfortable about the change in chain of command. But you have to set new boundaries. If your colleague asks you an inappropriate question—"How much are you budgeting for raises this year?" or "What does the CEO think of so-and-so?" or "What happened in the executive committee meeting this morning?"—don't answer. Count to 10 before responding, if you have to. Think about whether your boss would want you to share those details, and edit yourself accordingly. You can end the conversation with a statement such as "It's not appropriate for me to say right now." If you dismiss the question quickly but firmly, he will probably stop asking. If he persists, be direct: "You know I can't share confidential management information with you. Please don't keep asking me. I promise I'll fill you in when the time is right."

Check your perspective

Before going into problem-solving mode, though, make sure there's actually a problem to solve. You might be projecting negative feelings onto your new report ("I would feel that way, so that's how he must feel").

Step back and do a reality check, advises Pryce-Jones. Do you have concrete evidence that he's upset about the situation? For example, is he avoiding you? Meeting with your boss on his own without informing you? Has anyone told you that he's specifically complained about you? If not, you may be imagining hostility that doesn't exist.

LEAPFROGGING: MICHAEL'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

When I was in my late 20s, my boss created a new position for me that had me leapfrogging over two colleagues who used to be higher than I was on the org chart. They would now report to me. I was thrilled about the promotion, but I was so unprepared for it that I didn't pause to think through how to handle the situation with my colleagues. My boss told them he was promoting me and then briefly let me know that it hadn't gone too well, but that was my first and last conversation with him about it. One of them quit the next day. I felt terrible about it—I had considered us friends and didn't even have a chance to discuss it with him. But the other one, he stuck around. And that was worse than leaving, because he fought back with classic passive-aggressive behavior. We were in the middle of a huge project, and he suddenly went from putting in a great effort to doing the minimum. I kept finding mistakes in his part of the project and started panicking that he was actually putting them there on purpose.

WHAT I DID:

I did two very stupid things: First, I apologized to him for getting my promotion. And then I just worked harder. Instead of addressing any of the real issues, I decided that I personally had to make sure everything was perfect. It was exhausting, both emotionally and physically. He seemed to take pleasure in the frantic circles I was running. When the project was finished, I saw a mistake in the final report the first day it went public. I wanted to cry. When my colleague quit about a month later, I was relieved.

WHAT SHOULD MICHAEL HAVE DONE?

Michael didn't do anything right here. He was so unprepared to be the boss that he never *acted* like the boss. He didn't clear the air with his colleagues, so they had no choice but to assume (correctly) that he hadn't considered the situation from their point of view. When the first one resigned, Michael should have responded to the wake-up call by having an open, direct conversation with the remaining colleague. But by keeping mum and picking up all the slack himself, he just made it easy for that colleague to misbehave. From the beginning, Michael should have emphasized his desire for a productive relationship, clearly laid out the team's needs, and asked his direct reports how he might help them succeed in their roles.

Talk it out

If you do find evidence of bitterness, say something right away. Ideally, though, you'd ward off resentment as soon as you're promoted. In the beginning, it may be enough to show a little sensitivity and say, "I know we'll need to work through a new professional relationship. I hope we can be candid with each other about that." Delaying the conversation won't make it easier—it will only allow hard feelings to build up. Though you may be uncomfortable explicitly discussing the change in roles, you're in charge now, so it's your responsibility to take the lead.

It's not possible to have a comprehensive and constructive conversation about your new relationship the minute your promotion is announced. But briefly acknowledging that things are different now will help soothe frayed nerves and put you in a stronger position to have a positive, forward-looking conversation down the road. Assure your former peer that he's still one of your most trusted colleagues, and give him time to adjust to the new dynamic. And then, if he struggles with the transition, get that out in the open.

That's the advice leadership consultant Ron Ashkenas recently gave a client who'd been promoted to CEO over a tight-knit group of peers. One colleague in particular struggled with the new hierarchy because she'd wanted the job. Making matters worse, everybody who worked with them closely watched the tense relationship, viewing it as the new CEO's first test. "I advised him to have a private, honest conversation with his former peer," says

Ashkenas. "That's how you defuse this kind of problem: You address it head-on and focus on both parties' needs. Say that you want to be successful in your role—and you want your new report to be successful, too." Ashkenas says that approach helped repair the relationship and alleviate tension so that the former colleagues could work together productively.

If you think the dynamics are strained, say so when you sit down to talk, suggests Pryce-Jones ("This isn't easy for either of us . . ."). Assure your colleague that you'll consider previous conversations confidential, especially if you've shared personal thoughts with each other in the past. Then talk about how you look forward to strengthening your working relationship. You're striking a balance here: Clarify what you expect from the other person—but also express your loyalty and support.

Even after you've taken these steps, does your former peer seem reluctant to open up? Offer a few observations about what you think his concerns might be, and then ask him to fill in the picture for you. Make it easier to discuss taboo topics, such as visibility and status, by bringing them up yourself. Tell him how much you value him and that you're committed to helping him reach his professional goals. Say you realize it'll take a little time to earn his trust in your new role. And ask him to speak up (respectfully) when you make mistakes so that you can learn from them. That will emphasize the two-way nature of your relationship.

Todd, a newly promoted manager in a small media company, recounts facing just this situation with his former peer Carlos. They had both reported to the same

senior manager, but that person decided to have Carlos report to Todd instead. While the move was initially awkward for both of them, they went to an off-site lunch to hash out their concerns. When Carlos confessed to never feeling valued by the former senior manager in the first place, it was easy for Todd to build on their existing relationship of trust. "You know that I understand your strengths as well as anybody here," he said. "Tell me what you'd like to see yourself doing that you aren't doing already."

Of course, one air-clearing conversation isn't enough, says Ashkenas. You'll continue to face issues that require candid discussion. For the CEO in Ashkenas's example, meetings presented a challenge. When he raised provocative questions to stimulate healthy debate, his former peer froze, unsure whether it was permissible to challenge her boss in public. Puzzled by her silence, the CEO asked about it later in a one-on-one, and the colleague spoke openly about her concerns. That was the only way to identify and solve the problem: The CEO explained that he saw debate as a good thing, as long as it was collegial, and that thawed the ice.

Correct course

Even if you and your employee have both behaved badly and are feeling a little hostile toward each other, you can turn things around. Leadership and networking expert Brian Uzzi suggests the following three steps, based on his extensive research and consulting work in leadership and organizational change:

1. **Redirection:** Look for ways to redirect your new report's—and your own—negative feelings. For instance, when you talk, try blaming circumstances rather than people. Set up the meeting in a conference room or an off-site spot. Calling him into your office would only reinforce that you are now in charge and he isn't. "Moreover," Uzzi says, "it shows you need to lean on the crutch of your authority. Neutral ground indicates that you have confidence in your leadership position." You might even try to find something *better* than neutral ground, Uzzi suggests, such as a place your new report likes. Meeting at his or her favorite restaurant can signal your intention to invest in the new report. "That can evoke positive feelings that spill over into the discussion," Uzzi says. As obvious as those tactics might seem, Uzzi's research shows that they *do* work. Redirection allows the person to continue feeling his natural emotions but shifts them from a destructive place to a safer one.

2. **Reciprocity:** Now that you're the boss, you'll need your new direct report to do things for you—preferably willingly. Before you ask for something, try giving him something: an unexpected perk, perhaps, or an opportunity to showcase a strength. Also, find common ground to discuss. Maybe you're both committed to the success of an R&D effort, and you share the view that the

demographic of your ideal customer is shifting. Focus on addressing that—working toward a common goal will help replace the hostility with something more productive. You might, for example, ask him to attend an important management meeting so that he can inform the discussion with his technical expertise. By doing this, you'll signal that you're looking for ways for him to grow and gain exposure to more senior managers. You'll also demonstrate that you trust him to make smart contributions. Small steps like this will help lay a more positive foundation for your relationship. "The secret to effective relationship building through reciprocity is to give before you ask," Uzzi says. "If you give and ask at the same time, you don't create a relationship—you create a transaction."

3. **Rationality:** Have a rational discussion to clarify your expectations. You can't avoid this conversation; it's critical if he is to trust that your other steps (redirection and reciprocity) aren't just ploys to marginalize him by pushing him into new assignments or areas that might be out of the mainstream workflow. "To avoid skepticism creeping back into the relationship," Uzzi says, "never leave the conversation with the other party saying to himself, 'So-and-so was great to me in the meeting. He offered me many valuable things, but he didn't say what he wanted

in return. I wonder when the other shoe will drop?'" Say what you need to, and be specific, whether it's "I need you to be my ally" or "We need to make some changes to your job description." Discussing your expectations may actually relieve stress for your new direct report. A clear sense of what you expect of him, how he fits into the big picture, and what role he'll play for the team will allay his fears about you as the new boss. And, Uzzi advises, "Don't say you need the other person in a needy way. A good approach is to let the other party know that he or she is valuable and that your offer is distinctive, but that you also have other relationship options. This elevates the offer by expressing its value (others want it, too)." One way to do that, Uzzi suggests, is to say "I wanted to give you the right of first refusal . . ."

Bring your boss into the loop

Don't just hope *your* boss won't notice any adjustment problems you and your direct report are having, advises Walker. Let her know it's been a tough transition and explain how you're approaching the situation. She may have anticipated difficulties on both sides but held off to see if you could figure out a path on your own first, to show she does consider you to be in charge now. But asking her for guidance won't make you look "green" in your new role. View it as a chance to highlight your problem-solving abilities. Describe your game plan, but

let her know you'd appreciate her feedback and other suggestions. Complaining about your employee's behavior without detailing what you're doing to manage it will only lead your boss to think that you aren't taking ownership. If she offers help, don't be afraid to accept. Is your former peer continually doing end runs around you? Ask your boss to redirect him back to you when he tries to go over your head with a problem. But keep your tone even and calm: Present yourself as sensitive, patient, and on top of the situation. Raising and addressing issues in a prompt and professional manner will help your boss see your management skill.

What if your colleague still acts up after you've tried all these tips? Then it's time to wield your new legitimate authority, says Stewart Tubbs, former dean of the College of Business at Eastern Michigan University.

"I had this situation myself with a couple of people who had wanted to be dean but didn't get the job," says Tubbs. "Boy, they were not about to cooperate with me when I was appointed instead. Eventually, I had to sit them down and say 'We can do this the easy way or the hard way. The easy way is I'll support you, you'll support me, and we'll work together. The hard way? If you don't come around, we'll have to start making things formal. We'll have 30-, 60-, and 90-day performance reviews. If you continue to rebel and aren't meeting your goals, I will take up the matter with HR in formal disciplinary proceedings. All things considered, I'd like to do it the easy way.'" Eventually, both colleagues left the university,

having never really come around. But Tubbs felt that he had done all he could to get the relationships back in line before resorting to dramatic measures.

Of course, you can say all this in your way—in your own voice. But if you've tried everything else to no avail, you'll probably need to pull rank to put an end to the game playing.

Section 3

Political Challenges in Your Organization

Chapter 11
Surviving the Office Outing

The Problem

Your company has a couple of splashy employee events every year—and that kind of "forced fun" is not your cup of tea. You like most of your colleagues, but you dread the thought of trust falls, or pelting one another with paint balls, or laughing politely at your boss's bad jokes over charred burgers and potato salad. You'd rather skip it, but everyone is expected to attend, so your absence would be duly noted.

Why It Happens

Companies organize events like these with good intentions—often to raise morale, help employees blow off steam in an informal setting, foster team building and idea sharing, or reward people for good performance. After all, research shows time and again that engaged employees are far more likely to be loyal to an organization,

and those with friends in the workplace are both happier and more productive. But the challenge is knowing exactly how to socialize with coworkers you're *not* already close to: Whom do you talk to? What if the conversation doesn't come naturally? How can you make a good impression without feeling fake? How do you strike the right tone? How much should you let your guard down? Where do you draw the line between casual and inappropriate? These sorts of questions can stress you out and prevent you from enjoying the very benefits the event is meant to provide.

What to Do About It

You have to make a reasonable effort to participate. It's not uncommon for people to bow out, citing pressing deadlines or last-minute conflicts—and many companies don't make social events mandatory. But as communication and branding expert Dorie Clark points out, avoiding them sends a bad signal. It suggests you're disinterested in the company and your colleagues—or perhaps that you don't see a future for yourself there. Those perceptions aside, the carefully crafted excuse you make once might be greeted with skeptical smirks when you use it a second or third time.

Here are some guidelines for gracefully navigating office outings and actually getting something positive from them.

Find a comfortable way to participate

If you're lucky, you welcome the opportunity to hang out with your coworkers because you're fond of them. But

even if that's not the case, says leadership coach Susan Alvey, a principal at Pemberton Coaching, assume the most positive perspective you can. "Instead of looking for the first moment to escape, think about how you can have a good time." If the outing involves something you can't imagine yourself doing, you don't have to go *all* in. You'll get extra credit with your colleagues, Clark adds, just by showing a little team spirit. If you really can't stand to play ultimate Frisbee, for example, get involved in a different way. Go and cheer on your teammates. Bring lemonade to the barbecue afterward. Take photos. But show up.

Focus on connecting

View the outing as a personal-growth exercise, Clark advises: "Use it to hone one of the most talked about, but least practiced, skills in corporate life: asking questions that draw people out and then really *listening* to their answers." Before your event, think about what you could ask your colleagues—even boring Floyd from HQ—that would help you relate to them. "It's a low-stakes laboratory," Clark says. If you can figure out how to engage with Floyd, you can also learn to have richer conversations with clients or collaborators.

Beth Weissenberger, an executive coach, agrees: "I ask my clients before they go to an event, 'How many people will you meet?'" Give yourself a concrete, obtainable goal. For example, you might plan to have conversations with five colleagues you don't know well—or make a point of speaking to the CEO for the first time.

Part of connecting is letting more people know who *you* are. This doesn't mean you need to chat up everyone

in your path or prattle on about your accomplishments. "When people are nervous, they either retreat or talk incessantly about themselves," observes Boston University management professor Kathy Kram. A better way to make your presence felt is to demonstrate your sincere interest in others. "As you encounter people," she says, "really focus on building the relationship. Express genuine curiosity instead of worrying about being impressive. Listen, and then share your thoughts in response to what you're hearing." And if you're shy, don't torture yourself to overperform. "It's not necessary to stay to the bitter end," advises Kram. Just meet your goal and gracefully excuse yourself. You don't have to make a big deal of leaving—try a simple "I've enjoyed talking with you. I'm going to head out now, but I look forward to learning more about your project next time I see you." No one is taking attendance at the end of the party. A trip to the bathroom could take a discreet left turn to the coatroom and out the door.

Don't check your inhibitions at the door

Of course, as you're trying to relax and be yourself, you'll want to maintain some sense of decorum. We're all adults—and most of us know our limits—yet we've all seen people have too many drinks at office events. Yes, an extra glass of wine might ease your frazzled nerves or help you endure sitting next to the world's most pedantic colleague, but be more disciplined with your intake than you would with close friends. People aren't likely to notice what you're drinking, but they'll certainly notice if you start acting goofy or making indiscreet com-

ments. And they'll remember serious missteps for a long time.

If you mess up, own up

So what if you wake up the morning after and realize that you may have crossed the line at the office party? "If you do something embarrassing, own up to it," Alvey says. You don't need to send out a mass e-mail to everyone in the company. But have the courage to apologize to anyone who witnessed your behavior.

If it happened in front of a group, touch base with each person individually. Don't belabor it—self-flagellation isn't required. Alvey recommends a short, direct statement along these lines: "I realize that my behavior might have put you in a difficult position, and I never meant to do that." Or try a little bit of humor, company culture permitting: "No more punch for me!"

Admit the mistake, apologize, and move on. "Psychologically, it might seem easier to slink around and try to avoid people," Clark says, "but ultimately, that's not the right thing." *You* become the elephant in the room. People might whisper when you walk in, or you'll catch them staring at you or laughing. It may or may not be about you, but your imagination will run wild. Much better to put the elephant away by taking control of the apology. That way, at least, smirks, eye rolls, or looks of pity can't catch you off guard. You'll have already owned up.

Make amends face-to-face if you can. But if you feel that e-mail is your best option (perhaps because it's the only way you can manage to get the words out), omit

the embarrassing particulars—written messages stick around and may be forwarded.

If your mistake was a big one, apologies might not be enough. Weissenberger recently worked with a media company that fired a new employee in his first week because he got drunk at an event and ended up making out with a subordinate.

"Once you mess up your reputation, it's hard to get it back," Weissenberger says. "Not impossible, but hard."

Chapter 12
Lasting Through Layoffs

The Problem

Something big is happening in the senior ranks at your company, and it can't be good. You've noticed lots of closed-door meetings and heard rumors of layoffs. Everyone you know feels vulnerable. You've seen colleagues chatting up muckety-mucks and taking them out to lunch, but that feels calculated and phony to you. You want to keep your job—and ideally take on more responsibility if there's an opportunity—but not by glad-handing the leadership team. How can you protect your career without sacrificing your self-respect?

Why It Happens

Even strong companies go through reorgs, for a host of reasons: CEOs face constant pressure to do more with less. New leaders want to put their mark on the firms

they run. Organizations rework their business models to stay competitive in evolving industries. When times are changing, even the most stable, reliable departments can be seen as obstacles to progress.

As much as we'd like our leaders to include us in any thinking about pending layoffs, they have to keep the information closely held. It's probably painful for them to have those closed-door meetings—they know they're about to make life-altering decisions. But the last thing they need is for panic to set in while they're sorting out the specifics. There's still work to be done. A company can't lose its day-to-day momentum. And legal and security considerations may make it impossible to share information more widely—the organization can't risk having employees take valuable data, contacts, or intellectual property out of the building when they get wind they're going to lose their jobs. When layoffs do come, the news must be announced on a very tight schedule to control who knows what, and when, no matter how much compassion a well-intended manager may want to show his employees.

What to Do About It

When forces beyond your control threaten to reshape your organization, don't just passively await your fate. Create a survival strategy. You'll have a far better chance of sticking around and maybe even improving your position. This isn't about playing games or backstabbing others—it's about managing how decision makers perceive you and the value you bring.

Keep calm and carry on

It's easy to imagine all kinds of things happening behind those closed doors. But you might be wrong. Or maybe you're right to suspect a reorg, but there's still plenty of time for names to change on a layoff list. Either way, it does no good to fly into a panic. Act like a survivor, not a victim. That's what *Harvard Business Review* authors Janet Banks and Diane Coutu say in "How to Protect Your Job in a Recession" (September 2008), and it's good advice no matter what the economic climate. You don't have to be stoic or turn into a corporate cheerleader. But maintain your composure and professional demeanor—demonstrate your ability to focus and keep up your good work, despite swirling uncertainty. If you stop going full throttle because you might be out the door tomorrow, you're not doing yourself any favors: You may land yourself a spot on the layoff list if one does exist.

So rise above whatever back-channel chatter may be consuming your colleagues, says leadership consultant Jessica Pryce-Jones. People who spend a lot of time whispering aren't proving themselves indispensable. It's natural that the topic of pending layoffs will come up, especially when the boss is out of earshot. And there's always someone in the group who excels at sniffing out gossip and wants to share tidbits. But don't indulge in those discussions—walk away from the coffee machine if the conversation devolves. Quickly get meetings back on track when people start griping instead of working. Be a leader, even if you aren't officially one.

If you need to talk through your fears, turn to a trusted friend or relative. "Don't air your concerns with colleagues or in a way that your boss might hear," cautions one manager who has led teams through corporate restructurings several times in her career. That goes double for venting on Facebook or Twitter: It can only harm your chances of surviving if colleagues or managers see you as a complainer or, worse, a confidentiality risk.

That said, you'll need to keep up your network connections in a time of job uncertainty, says communication and branding expert Dorie Clark—and social media will help you do that. She notes that LinkedIn activity can signal when layoffs are brewing: You'll suddenly see lots of people in an organization updating their profiles and adding new connections. Get ahead of the LinkedIn rush, advises Clark. Refreshing your profile early on will allow your contacts to receive your skills and experience updates before hasty detail changes and requests to connect come through en masse from panicked peers. You can also start putting out feelers for informational interviews and job leads by touching base with former colleagues and superconnectors in your network. Often when people are laid off, they're given just a few minutes to clean out their desks—and they're not allowed to take any information, including contacts, from their computers. So make sure your LinkedIn connections are current and active long before you get called to HR for an unscheduled meeting. Also, tweet about industry trends you're noticing, smart articles you're reading—anything to show your contacts that you're still engaged in your work.

Mentally prepare

If you're bracing yourself for layoffs, much of your stress comes from losing control. Big decisions that will affect your future are out of your hands. Though you probably can't prevent a reorg if one is in the works, you can get ready to weather one—which will help alleviate some of your anxiety.

Start by visualizing scenarios: What will you do if you lose your job? How about if you keep your job, but you end up on a team of one, doing work that was previously handled by six people? And so on. Develop a Plan B, C, and D, with strategies ranging from seeking a new position in the company to signing up with different headhunters to taking a sabbatical to consider what you'd like to do next. In practical terms, it's always wise to keep your résumé up to date. But if you haven't done that, give it a fresh look and see if you can jazz it up with new experiences, skills, and responsibilities.

Also, assess your rainy day fund—how long can you afford to be out of work? (Clearly, it's not the best time to make a down payment on a new house or sign a lease that requires stretching your salary.) If you don't have much of a cushion to fall back on, map out your expenses and see where you can start saving. All this helps you reclaim some control, which puts you in a more constructive frame of mind. You'll be less inclined to engage in politically risky behavior, such as kvetching with colleagues, making bitter remarks to your manager, or openly surfing the internet and looking for jobs instead of doing your work.

And try to get a sense of how long the reorg process will take, says Pryce-Jones, so that you'll know how far you'll have to stretch your resilience. If you have a good relationship with your boss, ask about the time frame for pending decisions, or discreetly tap your broader internal network for clues.

Get ahead of your boss's questions

Downsizing is often about streamlining operations. In large-scale restructurings, for example, companies typically focus on producing more and spending less, not on cutting specific individuals loose. With this in mind, Pryce-Jones advises, try to suss out your boss's concerns—and help address them.

If you feel comfortable approaching your boss directly, do so, and present yourself as a problem solver. She might not be at liberty to let you in on specifics, but she may still welcome a proactive conversation. You could open with something like, "I realize you probably can't share details at this point, but I'm guessing you've had to consider how we might do things more efficiently. If you'd like, I can share some ideas in a brief proposal. Am I jumping the gun, or would that be helpful?" Tell her you've been thinking through how the team can shave time off a complicated process, for example, or handle more tasks. Arm her with solutions to recommend to decision makers.

Position yourself

Don't assume your manager and others above her already know how valuable you are. Show them, says leadership

coach Susan Alvey. Write up your contributions to the company, and sit down with your boss to review them—even if the potential for layoffs isn't out in the open. Your boss will certainly figure out that you've picked up the vibe, but there's no reason to wait to put your best foot forward, as long as you don't appear desperate or pushy. You're indicating that you know she has difficult decisions to make and you want to make your best case to stay. Give her an updated résumé or just a list of bullets. But clearly spell out how you've added to the organization's success. This makes it easy for her to forward your document or copy and paste from it as she formulates her plan. If she's agonizing over which names to put on a layoff list, she may be grateful for reasons to keep you aboard.

Of course, don't suggest other candidates for that list. Your boss probably knows where the dead wood is, and your pointing it out will signal that you aren't a team player. This also isn't the time to say how underappreciated you are or how much a layoff would hurt you ("I'm the primary breadwinner in our family"). That's the last thing she wants to hear if she's struggling with a tough layoff decision—and it can actually make you more vulnerable by giving you a pathetic aura. Rather, Alvey says, emphasize the positive: Remind your boss of projects and accomplishments that demonstrate your breadth and depth of skill and your ability to adapt.

Your goal is to make a strong case for why you deserve a spot on the new, streamlined team. Quantify the value you add to the company, suggests Clark. If, for example, you bring in revenue that offsets big costs, pull together a simple spreadsheet that highlights this. If it's hard to

calculate your impact in dollars—perhaps you're a communications specialist, for example—find ways that you *can* keep score. Track the number of media hits you get for your company and how much your company's Twitter following has increased since you've been leading its social media efforts. Do you work in an operational role? Document productivity improvements you've made. You

REINVENTION: HANNAH'S STORY

WHAT HAPPENED:

Where I work, a major restructuring brought two previously battling divisions together. My boss and the other unit head became comanagers of the combined group, so neither division "won" over the other. But as they began to articulate a vision for the newly formed unit, I could see that my role would soon become outdated.

WHAT I DID:

I polished up my résumé, highlighting skills that I knew would be useful in the new structure, and shared it with my managers. And I asked lots of questions about changes to our strategy and business model to show that I cared about where we were headed as a group. Essentially, I reintroduced myself to my managers and proposed changing my role to better support their evolving goals. I was genuinely enthused about the possibilities I'd identified, which I think showed.

DID HANNAH GET IT RIGHT?

By clarifying what her role could become—and showing that she had the skills and experience to pull it off—Hannah secured a place for herself and for several of her direct reports in the new order. Though she didn't know for sure whether she'd have a job after the dust settled, she acted in a way that said "I'm with you," which signaled strength, flexibility, and loyalty. She figured out how she and her team could help her managers implement their strategic plans instead of waiting for them to sort everything out.

don't have to cite *every* achievement. Hit the highlights, and be ready to continue or deepen the discussion if your boss requests it.

Still feeling uneasy after reviewing your skills and contributions with your boss? You may want to discuss alternatives to layoffs. Say you've learned that your organization is cutting a certain amount from its budget. Would you volunteer to go half-time to keep your job? Could you suggest job sharing? "It's a risky strategy," Alvey says, because you might give something up without needing to. But you may be able to have an honest conversation in the abstract: "Would it make a difference if some people went part time?" Talk about possibilities without necessarily offering yourself up as a sacrificial lamb. If you enlist your peers to have similar conversations with your boss, the team effort might succeed without costing individuals too much. But if your colleagues get scared and back off, you could find yourself the only one with a thinner wallet.

Engage at a higher level

Pryce-Jones urges her coaching clients to learn everything possible about the company's new direction or strategy. Be curious. Ask good questions: Why has the strategy changed? What were the driving forces? And keep up with news about your industry. If you understand the larger context in which your company is operating, you'll better equip yourself to survive changes. "Be as proactive as you can as soon as you can," suggests leadership consultant Ron Ashkenas. "The more you can be part of the discussion, the more you can influence it."

Talking with your boss has already given you some perspective, but find out what pressures other departments face. Speak with other unit heads and peers with internal influence. It's entirely possible that your boss won't have any say in the specifics of the layoffs at all—higher-ups are making those decisions. So it's critical to make yourself known, in a positive way. The more perspectives you gather, the better informed you'll be. And if people can see that you're a curious, intelligent participant in conversations about the company's future, you'll increase your chances of being part of it.

Section 4

Build Your Skills

Chapter 13
Managing Conflict Constructively

When we think of conflict, often what comes to mind is war: factions diametrically opposed over a significant issue. But there are many types of conflicts. Not all of them are struggles for power or property or people. Lines are often drawn at work, too, and can sometimes be just as fiery: A colleague erupts in a meeting over a perceived injustice. Or a discussion grows heated and loud. But just because most workplaces are civil and quiet doesn't mean they're devoid of conflict.

Consider this story. Robin and Eli worked together on a joint project virtually, from different time zones. Robin spent her mornings drafting the piece of the project she'd be working on that day with Eli. When Eli came online several hours later, he wouldn't read what Robin had done; instead, he wanted to work together in real time to create a bullet-point outline. This practice annoyed Robin. Why had she spent hours getting a head start if

Eli was going to ignore her work and control the conversation later in the day anyway? She fell in line, ceding to his way of working, but she also started getting grumpy with him, growling at his suggestions or huffing her way through his re-creation of work she'd already done. This passive-aggressive dance went on for weeks, until finally Robin quit doing any work on the joint project. Eli didn't even notice that Robin had stopped contributing until she broke and flagged it for him. Sometimes, conflict is quiet.

It's also widespread. In fact, employees at all levels spend 2.8 hours a week dealing with unproductive conflict, according to a 2008 study by CPP Global. That adds up to more than $350 billion a year in wasted wages. *Unproductive conflict* might be as simple as experiencing a perceived slight or misunderstanding a process, as was the case with Robin. Or it could be as complicated as locking horns in a client presentation. We waste company time and money either entrenched in these fights or avoiding a confrontation while things get worse.

Work disputes not only prevent you from focusing on doing your job well but also likely bleed into your personal life, consuming your precious free time with worry, dumping misplaced frustration on your family, and placing unwelcome stress on you.

So why don't we have the argument and then move forward? In general, we avoid addressing uncomfortable issues because few people like to deal with conflict head-on. "People have a basic need to be liked," says leadership consultant Ron Ashkenas. "As soon as you get into a conflict, there's this discomfort that the relationship is going

to be broken." And on top of that fundamental human need, there are layers of complicated reasons that make it difficult to confront someone. Maybe you aren't sure where you fall in the informal hierarchy. Perhaps you've tried, and failed, to resolve clashes in the past. You could be secretly hoping that if you just wait it out, it will go away. Or maybe you imagine that your boss will notice and intervene.

But conflict is seldom resolved through avoidance or wishful thinking. Even the most conflict-averse of us can develop productive ways to confront—and resolve—thorny issues. The guidelines that follow will help you manage conflict more constructively.

Get More Comfortable with Conflict

First, you need to recognize that not all conflict is bad. In fact, it can be a healthy thing for an organization, leading to creativity, innovation, collaboration, and problem solving. Consider the classic tension between sales and product teams: Aggressive reps make customers promises that the product teams can't possibly deliver. Or so it seems—until the drive to satisfy the customer and meet expectations leads to innovations in manufacturing, product design, and sometimes completely new offerings.

"Teams composed of high-performing individuals are naturally subject to contradictory tensions, such as cooperation and rivalry," suggests Mark de Rond, an associate professor of strategy and organization at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, and the author of *There Is an I in Team.* But these tensions should not necessarily be managed away. They boost productivity and

help teams perform better, because they stem from the group's same diversity of skills, approaches, and opinions that help it build a complete big-picture view, says de Rond, who has researched high-performing teams extensively.

But even if you recognize the benefits of different viewpoints and know that sometimes conflict leads to better work, how do you actually grow more comfortable with it?

Separate emotion from outcome

Consciously separate how you *feel* about the conflict from how it's affecting your work. It's possible that even though a situation seems tense to you, it's not actually interfering with excellent results, de Rond's research suggests. Participating in an after-action review of a failed product launch may raise your blood pressure, for example, but this discussion may also yield useful process changes to avoid such disasters in the future.

To help disentangle your feelings from your output, ask yourself whether your struggles with a colleague have actually had a negative impact. Have they made the project schedule slip, resulted in inferior work, or jeopardized a client relationship? It's not uncommon for work that *feels* difficult while it's under way to actually be stellar in the end—and recognizing this can help you see how tension is an integral part of the creative process.

Don't make it personal

You may also feel uncomfortable with conflict because you don't like the idea of "attacking" someone. But you can confront someone without shredding her character.

When you focus on the problem at hand, instead of the person involved, you can challenge a colleague without it sounding like—or being—an attack, advises Ashkenas. Asking probing questions and challenging assumptions, for example, and using language such as, "Have you thought about this?" and "Correct me if I'm wrong, but . . ." can go a long way toward shifting the conversation from "attack" to a calmer exploration of an issue. (For more on conducting difficult conversations, see chapter 14.)

When you focus on the outcome of your work and on whatever problems—not personality differences—there are, you'll grow more comfortable in confronting people, because it will feel less like they're out to get you or purposefully trying to make you crazy. Still, conflict is inevitable. Here's how to cope.

Identify and Resolve Your Conflict

Now that you've done some work on how you think about conflict, it's time to unearth the root cause of the tension at hand, find the courage to deal with it, and successfully work through the issue with your colleague. No matter what the source of conflict is, the key to resolving it is not to struggle in silence, says Ashkenas, but to bring your concern out in the open. "Try to make the implicit, explicit," he says. Name it. Say it out loud. Identify it for yourself first: "Nicolas and I have fundamentally different priorities on this project." A problem that is never articulated is unlikely to be solved—whether it's something you're harboring or your colleague is.

When you've collected your thoughts and cooled down from any anger or annoyance you were feeling, go see your colleague, privately, to discuss what's bothering you.

Ask him when a good time would be to meet. In essence you're asking for his permission to have a discussion, advises organizational development and HR expert Susan Heathfield. You can do it by e-mail or popping by his office. If your colleague isn't ready to have a discussion, he's likely to beg off: "Not today, I'm swamped." And then at least you know you need to give it a bit of time. But try again the next day. Don't go in with guns blazing; have your key points about your view of the differences, but be prepared to listen.

When you find a time that works for you, acknowledging the actual conflict will be an important start to solving it. Although situations vary, there are several universal pieces of advice for having a productive disagreement.

- **Articulate.** Understand and be able to clearly express what the clash is about.
- **Empathize.** Consider your colleague's point of view.
- **Have courage.** An honest conversation that recognizes your different perspectives will propel you forward.

Most disagreement stems from one of three sources, says Jeff Weiss, a partner at Vantage Partners consulting group and an expert in conflict management: different agendas, different perceptions, or different personal styles. Although many of the approaches offered here are broadly applicable, each of these three main sources has its own nuances that require attention. Here are suggestions for recognizing and navigating them.

Different agendas

When it comes to conflicts born of different agendas, we often see well-intentioned people working toward different and legitimate aims who allow a situation to turn into a black and white dispute: I want X. You want Y. We can't agree. One of us has to lose for the other to win. This is the most common source of disputes in a company, and it isn't personal, Weiss says. You simply have different roles and goals.

How can you find common ground despite these different goals? You need to sit down to talk with the other person to figure out what you're each driving toward.

Tips on the conversation.

- **Explain what you're trying to achieve.** Express your desire to understand and be understood. Clarify that you're not after a battle of retorts. Say something such as, "I'm up against a hard deadline, so trading e-mails back and forth is going to mean we lose the business, and it'll probably make us both unhappy in the process. Can we meet to discuss ways we might satisfy our client—and both of our needs?"

- **Ask your colleague what's at the root of his concern.** Really listen, and ask questions. Be open to his point of view. Genuinely try to grasp it. Using language such as, "May I ask why . . ." and "I'd like to hear what concerns you're trying to address

with . . .” will demonstrate that you’re listening with an open mind.

- **Work with your colleague to come up with a better plan.** Now that you know what you’re both working toward, is there a way to address both of your concerns and needs? Two well-intentioned people can usually work through their disagreement in any negotiation to get to a place they both feel good about. “Let’s aim to get a revised proposal to the customer by the close of business tomorrow. Can we spend an hour together today working through language that might work for both of us?”

Let’s see how a conflict of different agendas might unfold.

The wrong way.

Suppose you’re a salesperson trying to close a large deal with a customer to meet your monthly goals. You’ve decided to offer a substantial discount and forgo the customary 25% deposit in advance of any work. This is a longtime customer, and you don’t want to risk losing it to an aggressive new competitor. You try to slip the paperwork under the legal department’s nose on a busy Friday so that it won’t hold you up. But your colleagues are used to such frenzied month-end tactics. They know well the high price of poorly outlined terms that make it painful or impossible for finance to collect. They intercept the documents, calling out the deviations from standard contracts, and return a redlined nightmare that prevents

you from closing the deal, serving your customer, and meeting your target.

A better way.

Explain what you're trying to achieve: "This is a longtime, reliable customer, and we've never had a problem with payment. I'm really worried that we're at risk of losing this substantial customer to a new competitor who is offering far more favorable terms. I'm trying to take some of the bureaucracy out of our agreement here to close a deal quickly and edge out our competitors." Empathize with your colleagues. What were they trying to achieve? "May I ask why you're leery of putting the contract through as it is? What concerns are you trying to address with your edits?" Get beyond accusations and ultimatums such as, "You can't do that" to discover what's motivating the behavior you don't like. The key to a productive outcome here is coming to an understanding of what's driving each other's agendas, says Weiss. When you learn more about why someone has a different view than you do—and you have a chance to explain your own—you're far more likely to find a creative solution that works for both of you.

Your goal isn't to "win" but to find a better way forward based on your increased comprehension of each other's interests. It may be that the legal department doesn't want a culture of one-off contract terms to become the norm. You may discover a new law that exposes your company to unseen liability if a particular clause is excluded from a contract. With an open conversation and brainstorming, you'll likely find a path that is better for the company.

Different perceptions

In conflicts that arise due to different perceptions, the basic facts are not in dispute, but what you think about those facts varies based on your personal filters. Two people can be in the same meeting and walk away with different ideas about what the next steps are. You just see the world differently. Resolving differences in perception, de Rond says, requires an explanation from both parties. Understanding your colleague's point of view—and how she came to it—and sharing how you came to yours will help you create a shared view.

Tips on the conversation.

- **Understand how you developed your own view.** Before you confront your colleague, Weiss advises, ask yourself, "What data, actions, or examples was I looking at that led to my conclusion?" Also ask "How am I interpreting this data? What meaning am I assigning to it?" It's possible your personal experiences or preferences have colored the information you received. Knowing what has shaped your perception will help you have a more productive conversation.

- **Ask your colleague how she reached her perception of the situation.** When you meet, have your colleague walk you through the data (it doesn't have to be quantitative), and the meaning that she gave to it, that led to her conclusion, suggests Weiss. You have two different pictures of what's going on that are both viable, and also likely quite understandable

given your interpretations and experiences. Use open, nonconfrontational language. "Can you help me understand how you see . . .?" Listen to her side, without interrupting or debating.

- **Acknowledge that you have different perceptions.** Whether or not you agree with your colleague, acknowledge the difference in your views and explain that you realize why she reached her position. Doing so sets the right tone for a useful discussion. People are far more likely to come out of defensive mode when they feel they've been heard. Say, explicitly, "I might not agree with you, but I see why you came to that conclusion."

- **Share the thinking behind your own perspective.** This is your chance to rationally walk through why you've come to your point of view and to have a meaningful conversation. Because you were a good listener when your colleague was speaking, you've raised the odds for her to return the favor. If she tries to interrupt or dispute, a simple "Please hear me out" should help get the conversation back on track, advises Ashkenas. Keep the tone collegial and collaborative. Use language that acknowledges that you may not have all the answers. "You could be right, but I just wanted to talk through why I think it's important to . . ."

- **Allow your colleague to challenge you.** When you've both had a chance to air your views, it's time to discuss them. It's possible your perception feels wrong to the other person, so be open to hearing

that. Give your colleague a chance to air whatever she has to say. Don't interrupt and defend yourself mid-sentence. Don't start building up your response in your mind before your colleague has finished. Force yourself to really listen to what she's saying. And when she's done, repeat to her what you think you heard, using neutral terms. "Do I have this right? You have consulted with a number of colleagues who feel that this particular project is different from previous ones and needs more input than normal. And my suggestions are not taking that into account?" If your colleague hears it come back to her accurately, then she opens up the possibility of listening closely to you. You've both shifted into neutral. If your colleague clams up—her hostile body language the only indicator—solicit her challenge. "I'm guessing you disagree. Can you tell me what you're thinking?"

- **Come to a third point of view.** It may be that neither of you is able to agree with the other person's perspective, but at least you'll know why you disagree. And your conversations may then lead to a third, alternative view.

Here's how a conflict of perceptions might play out in real life.

The wrong way.

Say you and your colleague Rohit are asked to join the team that will redesign your company's website. The

CEO's mandate is to create a high-quality web presence using the best internal resources possible. But what does "best internal resources possible" mean? You think it entails targeting resources—getting internal buy-in on key aspects related to function. As such, you're willing to risk delaying the launch so that finance, sales, and marketing are happy with the shopping cart functionality. But Rohit seems to be interpreting "best internal resources possible" to mean that *everyone* needs to weigh in on the look and feel of the new site. Rather than giving formal presentations to keep folks up-to-date on how the redesign is coming together, he's conducting one-on-one sessions with random people—for instance, asking finance colleagues what they think about color palettes or fonts. His seemingly whimsical feedback collection strategy threatens to delay the schedule, and for what purpose? Needless niceties of tapping a group that has no expertise in this area? The CEO put you both on the team because you're known for bringing difficult projects in on time. But you're steaming over Rohit's approach, whereas he thinks the approach you're advocating excludes employee input.

You confront Rohit: "Enough with the cube-by-cube tour of wireframes! You're more concerned with looking like a superhero project manager of the people than you are about the impact all this feedback will have on the people who actually need to implement and act on it." He's genuinely shocked and hurt. The way he sees it, he's been following the CEO's orders to use company resources, gathering input and keeping a complex project on track. How did you get to such different places?

A better way.

Assume that your colleague has good reason for his different opinion; it's unlikely he's working just to spite you. Ask him to explain how he sees the issue, and then you should have the same opportunity. Digging into what you each think something means (what does "best use of internal resources" look like to you?) will help you both better manage your expectations and future behavior. "Can you help me identify which presentations you thought were important, and which ones you decided to pass on?" Listen to his reply. It could be, for example, that Rohit's informal conversations with people in the finance department suggested that they'd rather not sit through an hour-long PowerPoint presentation and preferred to offer their recommendations in a more ad hoc format. You don't have to agree with his view, but you should acknowledge it: "I can see why you wound up chatting with the finance folks one-on-one, given their schedule constraints." Then share what's behind your perspective: "Let me explain why I think it's important to consult people from different departments only on their area of expertise."

It may be that neither of you is able to agree with the other person's perspective, but at least you'll know why you disagree. And your conversations may then lead to an alternative view. Together, you can craft a productive solution: The two of you could cohost town-hall-style meetings to targeted groups, but make attendance voluntary. You could then send summary briefings to the core team members for their feedback before they finalize decisions—all well within the bounds of your schedule.

Different personal styles

Type A personality versus creative maverick. Deadline-driven person versus a "schedules are only guidelines" type. Conflicts born of different personal styles can be the most difficult to navigate, because at their core, it might be that you and your colleague are completely different. But as with the other two sources of disagreement, your primary goal is to see where your colleague is coming from and what is motivating his request or behavior, says Weiss. Understanding, appreciating, and trying to take advantage of your different views will help you move forward.

Tips on the conversation.

- **Give your colleague the benefit of the doubt.** "Make the starting point in your mind the assumption that the other person isn't intentionally trying to screw you," Ashkenas advises. Most people are trying to do their jobs the best way they know how. Your colleague's behavior has nothing to do with you. He's probably like this with everyone. It's just how he operates.

- **Acknowledge that there are differences—and identify them.** Recognize that the core issue might simply be a different way of thinking. Articulate what you perceive to be the central differences. It can't simply be that she "bugs" you. (And if someone grates on you, you probably don't have grounds for an air-clearing conversation with

her. Take a walk around the block instead. See chapter 15, "Working with People You Just Can't Stand.") Name the specific *behavior* or *actions* that you disagree with: "You and I seem to have a different view on when meetings start. I expect the meeting to start at 9 if we've called it for 9. But you seem to think the meeting doesn't really start until everyone is there."

- **Find a way forward.** When you have both perspectives on the table, together you can find a solution without rehashing past offenses or pointing fingers. To do that effectively, frame the conversation toward the future: If you spend your time picking over "he said, she said" analysis, you'll never get anywhere. Mary Shapiro, management consultant and author of the *HBR Guide to Leading Teams,* suggests asking the question, "What do we need to do differently going forward?" For instance, what reporting relationships need to change? What time lines? What team processes? How can you or others change the context to prevent unhelpful behavior going forward? How would you like to work with your colleague in the future?

A real-life conflict of personal styles might look like this.

The wrong way.

Say you're a punctual person. You make a point of being on time or early to every meeting you attend or facilitate. You come prepared, you've put away unnecessary

electronics, and you don't get caught up in small talk that eats away at planned meeting time. Your colleague Alan, on the other hand, routinely turns up to meetings 10 minutes late. He breezes in, all apologies, and then looks expectantly at you as facilitator to bring him up to speed. Everyone who arrived on time endures a rehashing of material they covered only minutes ago. The people in the meeting roll their eyes at you for not being sensitive to their time, and you're mentally throttling Alan. Everyone's frustrated, and now you're behind on your agenda, too.

The next time Alan turns up late for your meeting, you dramatically stop the discussion and make a spectacle of his tardiness: "Alan, how *nice* of you to join us!" Or perhaps you begin overloading his inbox with excessive meeting reminders, hovering near his desk when it's time to head to the conference room. You're so focused on your annoyance with him, you don't pay attention to the five other people who consistently turn up for your meetings on time and prepared.

A better way.

When your conflict is the result of a clash of personal styles, take a moment to remind yourself that people who are different from each other can still get along. Think about what's really bothering you. When you've collected your thoughts and emotions, meet with your colleague to learn more about where he's coming from and to find a way to work together. You might say, "Alan, I'm frustrated when you're late for meetings, because I feel that we either can't start without you or if we do start, we'll need

to pause and bring you up to speed. Is there something I can do to schedule them in a way that works better for you?" He may reveal a very good reason for consistently being late to meetings. Perhaps he assumes that you know he's in meetings so much of the day that it's physically impossible to finish one meeting at noon and be in his seat for the next one by 12:01. Or he may have seen from the agenda that the first five minutes would be an overview of the project—really for the benefit of the more junior employees—and that his contributions would be needed when you were further along the agenda. Once you've both shared your perspectives, you can work toward a solution. For example, you might conclude that Alan will take a narrower role in the meeting. You remain leader, and he joins the group at an agreed-upon time to serve as an expert on a key issue. Or you could let him know when it's particularly important that he attend a meeting so that he can rearrange his schedule or commitments to be on time.

There are many shades of gray in those three broad types of discord, so it's no wonder it can seem easier to just avoid having a confrontation. But analyzing what's driving the tension can help you ameliorate it. If you're prepared to walk through the steps of understanding what the disagreement is about, giving your colleague the benefit of the doubt, and hashing out a better way forward without creating "winners" and "losers," you'll genuinely be developing your skills as a collaborator and colleague whom people respect.

Know When to Bring In the Boss

As a last resort, it's OK to escalate a problem with a colleague to your boss, says Weiss, but only after you've given some real thought to why you two haven't been able to resolve the problem on your own. Most managers aren't interested in fighting your battles for you. But if everything you've tried together has failed, enlist the other person in the escalation to avoid looking as if you're "tattling." In a calm moment, go to your colleague and see if you can at least jointly define the problem and diagnoses for it to better help your manager help you.

Acknowledge that you're both trying to do the right thing; you just happen to disagree on what that is, and admit that you're at a standstill. "John, I don't think you and I are getting anywhere trying to resolve this issue. Would you be willing to go with me to ask Lydia for her help in working through a solution?" Transparency builds trust.

Agree that you'll reach out to the boss together, and work out the specifics: Will the two of you stop by to ask her to meet with you? Will you send an e-mail invitation that you both draft and are copied on? Approaching the boss in this way sends a clear message that you're cooperating in your quest for a solution.

It's in your mutual interest to avoid being seen as difficult to work with or unwilling to compromise. When you meet with the boss, explain that you seem to have different objectives (or work styles, or perceptions) and that you're at an impasse. This is not an opportunity to complain about the other person—either directly or

through passive-aggressive language (such as "*John* seems to think that it's worth risking losing a key customer in order to keep the historic blueprint of all our contracts intact").

Instead, state the issue clearly, focusing on the problem, not the personalities: "We're stuck, and we need your help thinking this through." Frame the conflict by describing its impact on the organization. "This customer is worth $10 million in business to us annually. We want to be careful not to establish a bad precedent for overlooking important legal protections, but if we can't agree on the right language for this contract quickly, we risk the customer looking elsewhere." Briefly explain what you've tried thus far. Your neutral airing of the issue, your united front in appearing at the meeting, and your demonstration of how you've tried to solve the problem will make your boss more willing to work with you both. She may know of other internal resources—such as in-house mediation services or organizational guidelines for conflict. Or she may just make a judgment call that you both have to live with.

Finding productive ways to work through conflict with your colleagues offers tremendous benefits: a unified front for working with customers or suppliers, faster and better internal decision making, reduced costs through sharing resources and expertise, and the development of more innovative products and solutions, Weiss points out.

As you grow more comfortable with conflict and your resolution skills improve over time, your boss and colleagues will come to respect the way you work collaboratively through obstacles. Some of the greatest leaders in history have excelled by navigating conflict effectively. Abraham Lincoln, for example, famously brought his rivals into his inner circle. According to de Rond, "I think workplaces today place far too much emphasis on harmony in teams, assuming that the better you and I get along, the better we will perform. Most teams that I have studied have not been easy places to be for a lot of the time. But they were effective." Choosing to be effective involves working through conflict. It's a skill that can help drive your own performance and career to a much better place.

Chapter 14
Conducting Difficult Conversations

Many of us find ourselves in professional situations when we believe someone has wronged us, just plain made us mad, or treated us badly. The advice often given by the experts in this book is to have the courage to have an honest conversation; air the grievance. No one can help you solve a problem if she doesn't know you have it. But that's easier said than done, right?

We've gathered advice from some of the world's top thinkers on communication challenges in the workplace. If you have a strategy for difficult conversations before you need one, you're far more likely to get through them successfully. Here's how.

Why We Avoid Difficult Conversations

Why are we afraid to face a conversation even if it has the potential to make things better for us? It's because

we fear what we might lose more than we want what we might gain. "It goes to the nature of who we are as human beings," says Cornell professor Jim Detert, who has researched why employees are often afraid to speak up in organizations. "We have deep financial, material well-being concerns. We have deep, deep social concerns. Fear of ostracism is one of the biggest fears humans have. At the deepest level, that's why people are afraid to challenge their colleagues." We fear so much: losing the respect of our colleague, spiraling out of control in the moment, being proven wrong, getting pushed aside or fired for not going along with the status quo. Detert also says that it's human nature to disproportionately remember times we've spoken up (or witnessed someone speaking up) and it's gone wrong, amplifying that fear.

It can be so overwhelming that many of us try everything we can to put it off or avoid it altogether. Some people would rather *change jobs* than actually attempt to directly confront a colleague or manager about something that's bothering them. But "while it's completely human to have a tendency to delay," observes INSEAD's Jean-François Manzoni, "a delay is largely unproductive. The dynamic gets worse. You think you're hiding your aggravation, but you're not. The other party will sense something's wrong, and that's probably not going to help."

But if you find ways to navigate difficult conversations, your colleagues will come to respect your candor and your ability to work through a problem without making it personal. And when you conduct difficult conversations, you're contributing to an environment where having hard talks, offering different points of view, and

giving honest feedback are accepted—and that is better for everyone and for your organization as a whole.

How to Have a Productive Conversation

There's no one-strategy-fits-all approach to challenging conversations, but there are guiding principles. The process should proceed in two phases: the preparation you do, if you can, to set yourself up for success; and then the navigation of the actual conversation. If the two of you aren't able to work things out on your own, there may be organizational resources you can lean on.

Prepare

Although most people might focus on changing how they feel and act *during* a confrontation, Manzoni says it's more important to prepare before you have the conversation. "My experience is that 75% of the battle is fought before you walk into the room," says Manzoni, who has conducted extensive research on conflict management. The most effective things you can do, Manzoni says, are to manage your own state of mind and consider how you'll frame the conversation. To psych yourself up for a difficult, but positive, chat, follow these guidelines.

Manage the timing.

You want to avoid delaying a difficult conversation just because you dread it, but sometimes choosing *not* to have it is the right call, says Jeanne Brett, director of Kellogg School of Management's Dispute Resolution Research Center. If you're so angry that you can't control your

emotions, you're not in a good frame of mind for a discussion. "In the heat of the moment, it's important to recognize 'I'm in no emotional shape to have this conversation,'" she observes. You'll say the wrong thing, embarrass yourself or your colleague, or create awkward scenes for others. In those instances, she advises, it's wiser to take time to cool down. Walk around the building. Change your surroundings, and work in a small conference room or head home to work in peace there.

If your colleague confronts you in the hallway after a meeting or walks into your office ready to explode, Brett suggests you do whatever you can to put off the conversation. "I see that this is a problem, and I'd like to take some time to think about ways to resolve it. I promise I'll come by your office tomorrow to discuss it." Acknowledge your colleague's feelings—"I can see you're really upset about this"—and then ask whether you can set a time to talk when you're both calmer. "It's tough not to be defensive in such a situation, especially if you were caught off guard," Brett advises. (For more on confrontations, see chapter 13, "Managing Conflict Constructively.")

When you're ready, find a good time to talk to your colleague. Not first thing on Monday when you're both coming in to a full inbox. Not last thing on Friday when you're eager for the weekend to begin. Instead, find a time and place that are least likely to add tension to the meeting. Right after lunch in a neutral conference room? Over coffee at the local greasy spoon? Avoid "turf" settings; inviting people into your office for a conversation gives you home field advantage, because it's filled with your professional mementos, you're the one sitting be-

hind a desk (and usually in a larger chair, signaling your higher power), and so on, Detert advises. Ideally you'll find a time and place where you'll both feel up to working through a healthy conversation.

Manage your message.

What do you want your counterpart to take away from the conversation? You'll have a better chance of being heard if you define your message and decide how you'll convey it.

- **Articulate your goal.** Ask yourself what you're trying to achieve with the conversation, suggests Manzoni. Does what you want make sense? Is it realistic? If not, let it go and set your sights a little lower.

- **Identify a constructive frame.** Considering how you'll approach the conversation—literally what you'll say and won't say—will set you up to succeed. View it as a presentation: What information does your partner need to hear? Identify the key points you'd like to make, highlighting mutual benefits when possible.

- **Consider your colleague's point of view.** Before (and during) the conversation, try to get a sense of what your colleague might be thinking. She made her choices or behaved in a certain way for a reason. What might that reason be? How might she respond to your approach? Also ask yourself whether there's any other explanation for what's

bothering you. Is your take on the situation fair? Ask a colleague for his interpretation of the events to see whether your conclusions are reasonable. Paint the situation for him as neutrally as you can. Cataloging every fault and misstep will probably get you sympathy but not constructive feedback, so focus on the problem.

With your emotions and thoughts collected, and an appointment on the calendar, you're ready to talk.

During the conversation

Whether your discussion happens unexpectedly or it's something you've scheduled, these guidelines will help you as you conduct it.

- **Make it two-way.** Maintain the most positive, open, and constructive mind-set you can. "Don't assume that the other party is unreasonable," advises Manzoni. Walk into the room "as present in the moment as possible. Be prepared to listen to what is being said—or not being said." If you have something to say that might not be easy for others to hear, recognize that there are other points of view, while presenting your thoughts as part of a conversation. In this way, people will be far more likely to *hear* you rather than shut down. According to Detert, using language that acknowledges that everyone's view, including your own, is a "partial view"—such as "I understand the current thinking is X, but I'd like to share my view and

hear yours"—is far more conducive to an open, nondefensive conversation.

- **Focus on the problem, and not the personalities.** You may feel as though someone repeatedly disrespects you, but just airing that isn't likely to solve your disagreement. When you focus on the *problem,* and not the person, you're less likely to get your colleague's defenses up and so you're more likely to have a good outcome. Camille may never read your reports even though you worked hard to write them well and on time, but the larger problem is that when she fails to read the reports, she isn't up to speed on what your group is doing, and that could lead to conflicts or mistakes down the line. Highlighting the impact of her behavior is a better approach than telling her it annoys you: "I'm adding a lot of details that you might not be aware of in my reports to you. I'm concerned that if you aren't finding time to read them routinely, then you and I aren't in sync. Is there a better way for me to keep you informed?"

- **Accept responsibility.** Americans, in particular, says Brett, tend to want to point to factors beyond their personal control when something goes wrong: "Liam's team never responded when I asked for updates." But that's the last thing any boss wants to hear. You're more likely to infuriate him and suggest that you can't handle responsibility. If you are part of the problem, say so up front.

Even if it's not really your fault, "own" the problem: "I know you wanted this to come in on budget, but I didn't manage to make that happen." Your boss may well be angry with the news—and in fairness, you have to allow him the opportunity to express that anger—but there's little for him to stew on if you've clearly accepted responsibility and addressed concerns so that it won't happen again.

- **Propose solutions.** Don't merely scratch at a problem. Flag it, and then show up at the meeting with ideas on how you can fix whatever is going wrong. Be a problem solver: "I know we ran over budget, but I have two ideas for how we can cut costs on the next phase of the project to help mitigate that. And I've discussed with the other team members how we can avoid the problem next time."

- **Forget winners and losers; stay in neutral.** Conversations that depend on one party admitting complete defeat—"You're right, I was totally wrong"—aren't likely to be successful. "People think difficult conversations have winners and losers, so they try to win," observes Holly Weeks, author of *Failure to Communicate: How Conversations Go Wrong and What You Can Do to Right Them.* But a better outcome is for both parties to win. To do this, set a neutral tone from the beginning. "I might say, 'Karen, I have something difficult to talk about. It's hard for me, and I think it's going to be hard for you because it's something we haven't talked about yet,'" suggests Weeks. This is a problem identifica-

tion and problem solving conversation, and not a battle. "Neutral is a nice, easy formula. Clear content, neutral tone, tempered phrasing." Your face, your body, and your voice should shift into (or stay in) neutral. Don't yield to the temptation to escalate, respond in anger, or give in to your colleague unnecessarily.

- **Take the temperature.** During your difficult conversation, pause for a moment to check your view of where things are. This isn't a time for sweeping characterizations: "I know we're really far apart on this." Rather, Weeks advises stopping to take stock in a sincere and collegial way: "Here's where I think we're more or less on the same page" and "Here's where I think we're not." Giving yourselves a moment to assess where your disagreement stands may well speed things along.

Explore organizational resources

You don't want to escalate a dispute too quickly, but sometimes people get so entrenched in their positions, or situations get so heated, that you can't work it out on your own. If that happens to you, don't give up hope just yet.

Consider recruiting a neutral third party—maybe a manager or a respected colleague. Explain the conflict, indicate the impact on your group or the organization, and ask whether your colleague is willing to get involved. You're not after that person to pick sides, but rather to provide a neutral space and time for the two of you to talk more rationally. Your neutral colleague could ap-

proach the other party, at your request, to organize a private sit-down: "Look, I know you and so-and-so have been wrestling with this issue. Can we sit down in my office and talk about it? It's starting to affect the entire department."

Your company may also provide low-key solutions for difficult conversations. Are there in-house mediators? Will HR staff act as sounding boards? What organizational rules or aspects of your company culture can help you work through your difficult conversation? If your company is mission driven, can "quality in everything you do" help you and your partner refocus your argument? Is there a company ombudsman who can listen and offer a neutral perspective without its becoming an official conversation?

Difficult Conversations in the Real World

It helps to have guiding principles to call on when you need to work through something difficult. But the context of your discussion also matters. Do you need to take a stand on something? Deliver bad news? Do you have time to prepare, or are you caught off guard? Here are some specific tips for navigating common scenarios.

If you have to deliver bad news . . .

No one likes to deliver bad news, especially to your boss. While your instinct might be to try to soft-pedal the news or hide it, experts say that's the worst possible thing you can do. Here we see the power of problem solving in defusing an unpleasant conversation.

The wrong way.

Avoid the conversation. Or e-mail the boss after work hours, when she can't come and find you: "I just wanted to update you that we made a mistake in the printed edition of the magazine. It's too late to fix it."

A better way.

Admit that there's a problem, figure out what went wrong, take responsibility, and propose a solution. "When I was editor of a prestigious trade magazine, I realized that we had stupidly published a provocative letter to the editor from a very famous person—that turned out to be a completely fake letter," recalls a journalist. "We only realized this when we got an angry call from that famous person. And my boss was a notorious hothead. This would be a major embarrassment for the magazine."

What did the editor do? Precisely what the experts suggest: "I figured out exactly how the mistake had happened. My assistant was supposed to confirm all the letters, but she was new and she didn't know how to contact the famous person. So she didn't." Then the editor designed a new procedure to guarantee that such a mistake wouldn't happen again. She went into her boss's office to tell him as quickly as she could so that he didn't hear about it from other channels. He blew his stack, but then they were able to have a good conversation. "I took complete responsibility—it was ultimately my fault. I let him blow steam at me. And then I presented him with a solution." The boss was mad, but the conversation ended in that one session.

If you're mad about a decision that affects you . . .

We've all had white-hot reactions to news that affects our jobs. But nothing good comes from launching from your chair to give your boss or colleague a piece of your mind: You'll lose the argument before you open your mouth. But waiting until you're calm, and framing how the decision is bad for the company—and not just you—will put you on a more productive path, says Brett.

The wrong way.

"I just found out that Peter got double the raise I got. Are you *kidding* me? I work three times as hard as he does! WTF?"

A better way.

Take a broader view of the issue. If you're unhappy about a decision, might others be, too? If so, why? What's the larger issue for your team or organization? Brett advises framing the conversation as, "I've observed something that's not good for the company, and I'd like to help address it" rather than "I'm really mad this decision has been made about me." After discovering that her peer received a much larger raise, a young partner in a law firm successfully employed Brett's approach of framing the problem as an organization-wide challenge. Although the young partner was upset, she recognized that it wouldn't be wise to complain about her colleague's raise or ruminate about the injustice. The firm hadn't deliberately set out to slight her; another partner had just made a more convincing case for raising her colleague's pay. So the ag-

grieved lawyer approached the senior partner, making clear that she didn't begrudge her colleague's raise, but framed the issue as one of lack of transparency: "We don't have a clear, fair system for raises in this firm." She volunteered to do some research on how other firms handled the same challenge so that her organization could create a better process. Eventually that research led to a new, fair, transparent system, one the partner was happy with. Although she didn't get a salary correction immediately, she improved her situation for the future—and created a better process for everyone.

If you need to make critical comments in a public forum . . .

Speaking up is challenging enough. But speaking out in front of everyone in your company? It's fodder for nightmares. Still, it doesn't have to be. Preparing thoroughly, framing the issue with a company focus, and positioning yourself as a problem solver will help make the daunting task of raising concerns at a large meeting, such as a board meeting or all-staff meeting, more palatable and productive.

The wrong way.

It's unwise to make a statement like this in front of everyone: "I think this is a stupid idea for the company. If we keep proceeding down this path, prepare for a death spiral!"

A better way.

Before you stand up, prepare to take some heat. Making a critical comment in a public forum is likely to generate

anger in people who don't agree with you. So say explicitly that you're trying to do what you think is best for the company. But also recognize, Brett says, that you're probably not alone: "In every case, you're not likely to be the only person who has these concerns." If possible, find a like-minded colleague before the meeting who might be prepared to back you up.

To start the conversation, say something like, "I know everyone thinks we can manage the potential conflict of interest between these clients, but I feel very strongly that if we start down this path, we'll find ourselves managing all kinds of conflicts that will be destructive to our customers down the line." But don't stop there. Identify potential solutions to the problem you're raising. "I know this will delay our work for the client, but I'm happy to spend the next few days discussing some alternative paths forward with other folks." Hopefully one or two of your colleagues will join you in voicing the importance of alternative paths and volunteer to study the issue with you.

If a colleague goes postal on you . . .

Do not respond to raw anger. Let your colleague's words wash over you. See whether the scene will wind down. Here's where managing your thoughts and emotions will help you navigate this challenge successfully. "Most people reciprocate other people's behavior," Brett says. "It takes discipline not to get angry in response. But it's effective."

The wrong way.

"What are you talking about?! You have no idea what work went into this project! Next time I'm not going to bother to ask your opinion!"

A better way.

You don't need to go all the way to the other extreme and cower, or apologize for something you didn't do, but you can simply choose not to engage in the battle. If your colleague is so emotional that you can't get a word in edgewise, sometimes merely labeling the situation helps deescalate the tension: "Listen, we can trade threats and insults here, but that's not going to solve our problem. We're not getting anywhere this way." You're much better off removing yourself from a situation than trying to fight back. Suggest you meet later to discuss the problem. Do whatever you need to do to stay calm and avoid having an emotional conversation.

But because you can't always dictate the timing—and trying to do so can make some people even angrier as they stew about the problem—it helps to respond in the most neutral way possible without conceding or escalating. Neutral in this case sounds like this: "I don't know what to say. This is unexpected. What shall we do next?" suggests Weeks. You haven't placated the person, you haven't conceded; instead, you have calmly acknowledged that your colleague is angry. The conversation may not be pleasant after that, but you haven't made anything worse for either of you. You're now thinking together, rather than just reacting.

On the other hand, if you *are* in the wrong, and you know it, apologize immediately, says Weeks. "I'm sorry. I meant that to be funny." That's it, you're done. Don't keep piling on the explanation. Just own it.

It's not (often) possible to magically make a difficult conversation fun and happy and easy. That's why they're challenging. But you can make them more productive by preparing yourself to get through them better. The only way you're going to get better at navigating difficult conversations, says Weeks, is to have them. "You're not going to get more skillful if what you do is step aside from the issue," she says. And worse, the issue that you think you're sidestepping isn't likely to go away, setting up you or your colleague for a disproportionate blowup. Difficult conversations are *difficult,* says Weeks. But that doesn't mean you can't get better at them by preparing, staying neutral, and focusing on a solution that's not only better for you but also better for the company.

Chapter 15
Working with People You Just Can't Stand

When you think of your dream team, you imagine the exact roster of people you'd like to work with—hand-picked for compatibility and talent. But unfortunately, that's not how the real world works. Instead, you're likely to be working alongside one or two people whom you just don't like. At all. Not even a little bit. Maybe your colleague simply rubs you the wrong way. He's loud. Or a suck-up. Or arrogant and entitled. Perhaps he's courteous and professional in front of the boss, but a nightmare to you and your colleagues when she's not around. Or maybe he has mannerisms that annoy you (relentless pen clicking!).

There's no shortage of good reasons you might genuinely dislike someone you need to work with. Sometimes they're legitimate (she avoids established protocols to get

"special" treatment for her work), and sometimes they're not (he's still clicking that pen!). But unless the person is crossing serious ethical or legal boundaries of what's acceptable at work—such as sexual harassment—you must find a way to coexist. If you don't, your own performance is likely to suffer. But wait, you're not the creep: How does his behavior have a negative effect on your work?

When you have unaddressed negative feelings for a colleague, it can cause all sorts of issues for you. It can consume you so that you neglect to focus on doing good work. You might decline signing on to an otherwise appealing project because you can't stand the thought of collaborating with him. Or you might suppress your annoyance for so long that it builds and bursts over a minor infraction—leaving you looking unstable. You could subconsciously mirror the attitude you sense from him, becoming a jerk yourself. In any case, getting swept up in power struggles can be a waste of time.

Anger, avoidance, and sabotage are all paths to failure. On the other hand, working with colleagues you like and respect is important for your job satisfaction—and for office morale. If you can't have office mates you like, you need to find a way to like the colleagues you have—or at least not *dislike* them. Learning to get along with everyone can have long-term benefits for your career; if the person you can't stand is in your industry, chances are you'll run into him again at events or through your network, even if your prayers are answered and he leaves your company. Maintaining a positive connection is much more beneficial than just breathing a sigh of relief.

But how can you learn to work effectively with someone you just can't stand? It's not always possible to make

the situation better, concedes Ben Dattner, author of *The Blame Game.* But it is possible to make things worse through a wrong-headed response. Our experts offer the following strategies to improve your chances of getting it right.

Examine and Adjust Your Perspective

Throughout this book, our experts have advised that a good first step for many political situations is to begin with self-reflection. How does this advice apply here? "You've got to start from a place where you understand that every person is different and everyone brings in different strengths," advises organizational development and HR expert Susan Heathfield. "So if you're seeing behaviors you can't stand in someone, ask yourself, 'What is *my* problem that I'm having such a hard time with this person?'" The easiest way to survive working with someone you really don't like is to choose not to let that person bother you. You have little control over someone else. The only thing you can control is your own response to whatever annoying behaviors she directs your way. Here's how.

Look in the mirror

"There's lots of evidence that we, as human beings, are incredibly blind to our own weakness," says Stanford professor Bob Sutton, author of *The No Asshole Rule.* So consider how you might be contributing to the problem. Try to objectively assess what you may have done to escalate tensions. Or ask a colleague for her perspective. The goal, says Sutton, is to test your assumptions. Sometimes what you're reacting to has little to do with the other person and more to do with your own history, says Dattner.

It's possible that the person reminds you of an obnoxious sibling or a high school rival. Or maybe you can be a bit of a control freak, and your frustration comes more from being unable to direct your colleague than from his actual actions.

Identifying your own emotional influences is important, Dattner says, because it means you can manage your impulses. When confronted by the prospect of working with someone you dislike, consider the history of your relationship. Did it start out good and get bad? Try to identify why exactly you don't like this person. Did she do something to trigger your reaction, or do you just somehow bring out the worst in each other? Work to isolate what's keeping you from being less than your best self. If you still can't see it, identify what your healthy professional relationships have in common—and work on trying to build that quality in this one.

Get to know the person you despise

Sometimes the root of the issue is that you just don't know or understand the other person. "You have to distinguish between people you don't know who you think are idiots—and people you are genuinely locked in conflict with," says Sutton. Give him the benefit of the doubt. Communication and branding expert Dorie Clark suggests finding ways to work with someone you don't like as a way of getting better insight into the person he is and what he has to offer. Give him a chance to excel at something he's good at. Clark once suggested that she and a disliked colleague go rock climbing as a way of improving their relationship. Clark was a novice, but her colleague

was an experienced climber. "Seeing him comfortable, more laid back, and responsible made me see a different side of him," she recalls. Although they didn't suddenly become best buddies, it was helpful for her to see him in a more positive light. People often complain that they don't like working or collaborating with a colleague, says Dattner, until they see him out of the office, at an off-site event. "This is eye-opening" for many people, he says. When we see our colleagues as three-dimensional—they have families and friends and interests outside work—it's often the opening to finding them more pleasant to work with.

Once you know a little bit more about who he is, it can be easier to imagine where he's coming from. "People also tend to like people better when they've actually collaborated with them on something," says Sutton. So don't shy away from working with someone you *think* you don't like. Sometimes being in the trenches on a difficult project can be a powerful bonding experience that just might change your opinion.

Cultivate empathy

Even if your colleague is doing something that genuinely annoys you, putting yourself in her shoes will help you comprehend what's behind her behavior. And if you can see that, you're more likely to find ways to work through your issues. For example, if you find that a coworker seems to be hostile in every meeting in which you're discussing future strategy for the company, consider why she might be acting that way. Is it possible she hasn't felt consulted about a decision? Were her ideas rejected

or ignored? Imagine if you had worked for months on a proposal of new markets for the company and no one had even bothered to acknowledge it. Empathy—understanding what's driving someone's feelings—gives you insight that can help you fix what's wrong.

Someone may bug you on a personal level, but that doesn't mean the person isn't an asset to the company. "Assume the best, focus on what they're good at, and how they can help your team," says Sutton. Take time to think about the value this person brings to your company. Sure, he guffaws at his own jokes, but maybe he's also great with spreadsheets. Perhaps his jokes have a way of easing your boss's tension and keeping him calm. Maybe his persnickety report-reviewing highlights your terrible typing skills, but it also brings to light a major accounting error that would have cost the company a significant loss of revenue. Actively search for what you can legitimately admire about him.

When a new colleague rubbed Akiko the wrong way, she found herself bristling at his arrogance. Colby was quick to get frustrated with others if they didn't immediately warm to his ideas. He'd aggressively declare that whatever he was proposing was brilliant, as if to suggest that Akiko and everyone else there was dumb for not seeing it. After finally snapping at Colby in a meeting, Akiko pulled him aside to apologize. "I said, 'When you push your ideas like that, it makes me feel stupid if I don't get it right away. Sometimes I just need to understand more about what you're suggesting.'" Colby was aghast that his arguments would be seen that way. It turned out, Colby's enthusiasm for his ideas often got in the way of his ability to communicate clearly, and then he got more frustrated

with himself when other people didn't quite follow. After their frank conversation, the problem disappeared. Akiko would say, "Let me ask you a few questions about that" as a way of signaling that she wasn't following, and Colby would realize that she was helping him articulate his ideas.

Deal Directly with a Jerk

If your attempts at getting to the root of your own feelings (as well as those of your colleague) haven't changed the game enough for you, you'll need a different strategy for dealing with someone you can't stand. Sutton suggests steeling yourself for two possible—and opposite—approaches.

Change the dynamic

If you've allowed yourself to get into a negative pattern with the person you just can't stand, "you need to disrupt the cycle," Clark says. Be conscious of how *you* treat her. Are you civil to her? Does your voice stay calm? Do you roll your eyes? Your behavior may have helped make the dislike mutual. "It's possible they're negative because they sense your hostility," Clark notes. "If you alter the dynamic by shifting from subtly hostile to actively positive, they may respond in kind."

How can you change seemingly unconscious negative reactions? Take the high road. It's hard for someone to be annoyed with someone who's being nice to them, Sutton says. So be helpful. When she sends out a proposal, be one of the first people to read and reply. Praise the person's ideas (when you *genuinely* think they're good). Mention to a colleague or your manager when the person

has done something notable, even if she never hears that you did so. Inviting a colleague to be part of the process, and then seeking her input, can dramatically change the dynamic of a tense relationship. For example, project manager Kate might accept a schedule change if she's part of the brainstorming meeting that decides the priorities for finishing the project.

Fight back

If you come to realize that you're never going to be able to stop the annoying behavior *or* your reaction to it, you don't have to just accept that's how it is, Sutton says. Ranting to other colleagues in search of sympathy and allies may earn *you* the title of difficult colleague. But you can take your issue directly to the colleague with whom you're not getting along.

Heathfield suggests giving your annoying colleague a heads-up that you have something to discuss with him. "I'd like to give you some feedback about how I think we can better work together. Would tomorrow at two o'clock be a good time?" Don't blindside him. Someone who gets on your nerves under the most benign circumstance is not likely to react well if you catch him off guard by sharing feedback or criticism in the hallway. As you've seen in dealing with bullies—and having difficult conversations—you'll want to focus your conversation on the problem and not the person. So think about the specific behaviors that are bothering you as you prepare for your meeting.

Begin the conversation by clarifying that your intention is to find a good way forward. Heathfield advises say-

ing something like, "I really want to work effectively with you—that's my goal. But I've felt that that isn't possible at the moment. Here are a few of the reasons that I'm feeling that way." Don't use labels: "I think you're being a jerk when . . ." or "You're so aggressive." Instead, stick to the facts: "Here are the behaviors that I'm observing." Now, Heathfield says, at least you've opened a discussion that might clear the air or bring you to a better place of mutual empathy. In many instances, the person knows he's been acting badly, but he didn't think anyone would notice. "Sometimes when you confront them, it's like, 'Oh my god, she caught me! I was doing these things, but I didn't think she knew.'" Other times, you'll discover there's a perfectly innocent explanation for your colleague's actions. "I've been hypercritical because I know that the C-level guys are going to run our department through intense scrutiny. I want to make sure we hold up well." Or, often, "I really had no idea. I didn't mean to be offensive."

Keep your cool throughout the conversation. Don't be snide or insulting or mean, even if your colleague isn't taking your feedback well. "Imagine in any given conversation that everyone else in the workplace is listening," advises Dattner. "Would I want this clip to be on YouTube?" Even if your conversation doesn't end in immediate resolution, it should at least serve as a warning to your colleague that you're aware of what he's doing and you're not afraid to confront him. His behavior isn't scaring you away. He's far less likely to be abusive to you if he knows he'll have to look you in the eye once a week at a project check-in.

When Your Colleague Is More Than a Jerk

Working through your challenges with someone you really don't like is important, says Dattner. But that's not the same thing as working through an issue with someone you don't trust. If you doubt someone's integrity, intentions, and ethics, it's time for a more formal approach. If you feel that her behavior crosses the line from annoying to offensive and your personal conversations have not been fruitful, make a case to your boss that the person is destructive to the organization. This is for behavior beyond interrupting colleagues in meetings. Someone who consistently takes credit for work she didn't do, fudges expenses, or never completes her part of projects on time may merit your documenting offenses before that conversation with your boss. You don't necessarily have to "out" your colleague in the first conversation with a boss or HR, says Dattner. You might start by saying, "I think it would be really helpful if you could review the hostile work environment policy with our entire group." Your boss will pick up that something is off, but you haven't pulled a fire alarm yet.

If you witness your colleague berating someone else or pick up on ill will in a meeting, other people may be struggling with that person, too. Work together to keep detailed notes of your colleague's offensive behavior, and go as a group to complain to your manager. "That's the long game," Sutton says. Such a backstage political mobilization takes time, patience, and a good eye for what offenses actually merit complaining to the boss—but it can

be effective. For example, Sutton recalls the story of a government worker who faced a nasty and racist coworker. But her complaints to her boss fell on deaf ears. So she gathered some coworkers who also found the woman's actions offensive, and together they assembled what they called "the Asshole Diaries," where they recorded the woman's behavior for a month. With the documentation and support of her peers, the woman was able to present her concerns to her boss more formally. "The woman was gone in two days," Sutton says.

Zen Out

Sometimes we all have to learn what Sutton calls "the fine art of emotional detachment." You don't have to *like* someone who rubs you the wrong way, but you don't have to go insane over it, either. Ask yourself, A year from now, will this still be important to me? If it's something that you can probably let run off your back this week and it will be forgotten the next, then that's what you should do. Don't decide that every annoyance is DEFCON 1. Let some of them go. When brokering a compromise between warring teammates, one manager used to tell her people, "You can only object to two things here. Decide which those two issues are. The rest you just have to live with." It forced her team to isolate what mattered most to them. And that focus helped them find a way to navigate the dispute. The same tactic could help you decide which, if any, battles to pick with your colleague.

Although the daily squabbles can wear on you, keep the long-term view in mind. You never know when your paths will cross with someone's again. "Years after I

stopped working with this guy I couldn't stand, I got a reference call for him out of the blue. He was applying for a job with someone I had worked for at a different company," recalls Gary, a senior manager in an investment bank. "It was kind of the revenge moment handed to me on a silver platter." He'd daydreamed of this opportunity in the years they'd worked together. So what did Gary do? "I told the guy who called me that I'd call him back. I thought about what I'd say for a long time. In the end, I gave him a fair review. I said I hadn't enjoyed working with him, but I knew lots of people who did. It was hard, but I decided a slamming review would reflect worse on me than the guy. I actually felt better about myself after that."

That, says Dattner, was the right thing to do. "Don't write anybody off. Don't succumb to negativity. Try to stay positive. Shifting alliances and relationships are what make human life interesting."

Chapter 16
Forging Alliances

The company you keep professionally has a big impact on how you're judged, how much you know about what's going on in your industry and organization, and how effective you can be in executing strategy and initiatives. You want professional relationships that will reflect well on you and will provide you with camaraderie, support, and opportunities.

You're already actively networking; isn't that enough? Real alliances go a step beyond trading favors. More than maintaining a career contact or finding a lunch buddy, making an alliance is a deliberate choice to find and nurture professional relationships with people you like, respect, and want to work beside. When you forge such partnerships, your allies will support your point of view, ask you to work with them on interesting projects, and, essentially, pick you for their team when they can. You've seen alliances at work in politics (consider the "special friendship" between the United States and the United Kingdom in times of world conflict) and in boardroom

battles—and even in reality television, where powerful alliances can eject or keep particular players in the game. But because alliances can be so powerful (see chapter 8, "The Clique"), you must proceed with caution in building and maintaining the right set of relationships for your career—and disengaging from them when the time is right. Here's what the experts have to say.

How to Form Alliances

Ideally, you'll build alliances based on supportive behavior, a perceived sense of shared values, and loyalty. "Alliances are really a sense of having a collective identity," observes communication and branding expert Dorie Clark. "We think of ourselves as a team that advances all its members." Most alliances start informally, but that's not to say you shouldn't proactively look for opportunities to form or build on natural affinity. For example, you might speak up in a meeting to back your colleague's idea. Several weeks later, she may offer to help with your project even though she wasn't formally assigned to it. You begin making a point of stopping by her desk to catch up on the redesign effort she's leading—and soon you become engaged and interested in keeping up. Often alliances are that obvious and natural. You like—and are like—certain colleagues, and you want to work with them and be around them. You develop true work friendships.

Other times you deliberately and strategically form alliances to fulfill a need. For example, if your company's hottest area of growth and development is outside your area of expertise, you might look for opportunities to

form alliances with people in that group who are involved in interesting projects as a way of orienting yourself with the work they're doing. Or perhaps you're the one in the hottest area of the company, but your work is so cutting edge that people don't understand it and therefore aren't inclined to support it. That's when you need people in your court. "Innovators cannot work in isolation if they want their concepts to catch on," explains Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter in her classic *Harvard Business Review* article "Innovation: The Classic Traps." Those innovators "must build coalitions of supporters who will provide air cover for the project, speak up for them in meetings they don't attend, or sponsor the embryonic innovation as it moves into the next stages of diffusion and use."

Meeting these kinds of specific needs calls for proactive alliance building on your part. Suppose you're shy on technology skills; you might look for someone in the tech group who could answer your questions, offer guidance, and suggest ways to keep up with advancing technology more easily. Set up a monthly lunch group with peers whom you consider high potential to informally network and discuss what's going on in the company. Volunteer to grab a sandwich for Marisol in finance at month end when you're running out for yourself. She'll likely return the favor by making sure your vendors are paid on time. You don't want to be phony or inauthentic, but building a genuine alliance requires getting to know and respect each other well enough that you're in frequent contact and you're willing to ask for—and return—favors.

To do this strategically, you must identify the right people to build connections with, ways to take your relationships beyond good will and intentions, and means to keep your alliances healthy and productive. Let's look at each step.

Pick the right people

Bosses are often natural allies, helping their direct reports quickly advance through the ranks. Whitney Johnson, author of *Dare, Dream, Do,* benefited from hitching her wagon to a high-achieving boss early in her career. "In that instance, having an alliance was a very good thing," Johnson remembers. "I was considered part of his inner circle—and he took me through three different career moves with him."

But a strong set of alliances should go up, down, and sideways across the organization, she advises. So consider alliances with people who are lower down in the organizational hierarchy—key gatekeepers to information and power, such as your boss's assistant or the person who staffs the tech help desk. Acknowledging the contributions of people who are often overlooked and making a connection with them can support their work—and yours. It could be as simple as passing along a sincere compliment on a tech's work to the support desk director. When it comes time for your department's software updates, you just might find that your IT ally schedules your group's work for a time that's actually convenient for them because of the connection you've made.

Your alliances are like your investment portfolio. You wouldn't put all your assets into one hot stock; you'd sensibly spread them out to ensure that you ride out any bumps in the economy. That same approach applies to your connections. Balance your relationships, forming unexpected and surprising alliances when possible, Clark says. "You don't want to be permanently pigeonholed. Make sure you're perceived as distinct from what may be seen as your natural group." For example, people might assume that all under-30s in the company gravitate toward each other because they're in the same generation. Make an effort to connect instead with people who come from various backgrounds, reflect different demographics, or have dissimilar skills from yours. Reaching out to people who aren't like you will strengthen your personal network and also expand your worldview and potential for diverse thinking, according to research from leadership and networking expert Brian Uzzi. And as with a stock investment, you shouldn't count on each alliance to pay immediate dividends. Some relationships develop and extend over many years. You never know where and when someone will be critical to your career.

If you're new to an organization, proceed slowly. You have to first figure out the political landscape before you choose allies so that you're certain they're well respected and have the potential to help you in your career. "You never want to align yourself too rapidly to any faction," cautions Clark. "If you're operating in a polarizing work environment—and you don't know it—you might find that you've unintentionally aligned yourself with the

Montagues or the Capulets." Be pleasant to everyone until you know the lay of the land.

Once you've identified the right people, how can you build, maintain, and deepen your relationships?

Be a good ally

You can start by looking for ways to connect with someone you think can help you advance your career. Be a go-to person for her. Volunteer to help with projects. Enthusiastically participate in programs, outings, or working lunches she organizes. Be engaged. Find opportunities to support her behind the scenes and make her look good in front of her peers or her boss.

Alliances, like friendships, need tending to stay healthy. You can't simply back someone a few times and then expect the relationship to be strong months and years down the line. Regular contact with your allies (from serendipitous run-ins to scheduled lunch dates) helps you stay in sync. And an important part of having a good ally is to *be* a good ally. How do you do that? "Effective communication forms the foundation for a positive work alliance," says organizational development and HR expert Susan Heathfield. "You need to tell your potential ally what you need and listen deeply to what she needs. Open lines of communication keep information, opinions, and support flowing." Support your colleague's goals. Give her credit when it's due. Be an early endorser; if you support your colleague's ideas and work, then speak up and say so before you see which direction the rest of the group is heading.

On the other hand, don't be afraid to be an honest sounding board. When you think your ally is making

a mistake or his position isn't right, say so—in private. "You can say 'George, as much as I like you and generally support your point of view, in this instance I'm in complete disagreement and won't be able to publicly support that direction,'" Heathfield says. Reassure him that this has nothing to do with your long-term support for him but is only a single area of disagreement. And emphasize that in fact it's probably a good thing that the two of you are seen to disagree from time to time. It establishes that you're not always simply singing in unison but rather bringing two distinct sets of skills and opinions to your workplace.

To keep your relationship with your current allies strong and continually grow new ones, you have to find ways to stay in regular contact. Ask whether you can occasionally attend standing meetings led by your ally as a way to keep up to speed with her department's issues. Add private calendar reminders to check in with people routinely or before or after something important you know is happening for them: "How did that presentation go?" or "Would you like to do a practice run with me before you meet with the department heads?"

Being a good ally, then, means looking for ways to involve yourself and support the work and growth of your colleague. If you want her to be interested in helping you, you need to be genuinely interested in helping her.

Know when to cut ties

Your pool of allies needs not only frequent tending but also regular assessment. And sometimes your review will indicate that it's time to rethink who's in your cabinet.

What happens when your ally begins acting in ways that you don't admire? Or when getting to know the person yields unflattering information? When an ally does questionable things, your career—and your reputation—can come into question, too. Dmitry, now a consultant and author, recalls the heady thrill of being singled out as an ally of a rising, powerful investment banker early in his career. But even though his boss provided him with wonderful career opportunities, he came to see that she also used him to push around other staff who got in her way. For example, she would convince him that certain people were problems in the workplace, so Dmitry would then complain to other peers and superiors about her targets—and in one case his words helped push someone out of a job. Once the junior banker realized how destructive his ally was, he looked for opportunities to get out of that work group. It was, in hindsight, an important lesson. "You're looking for that experience like high school or a college fraternity where you *belong,*" he says now. "But that fraternity comes with a price."

If your ally has done something you find distasteful or problematic, others' perception of your colleague's actions will reflect on you, too. People might assume that because you're so closely aligned you'll defend his mistakes and bad attitude. If a close association falls from grace, you could also find yourself tarnished. And when an ally leaves, your boss and peers may assume that you'll follow. If your ally fails to get a promotion, others may assume that your allegiance is so strong that you won't work with the person who was chosen instead.

When you find yourself faced with one of these scenarios, you have the opportunity to proactively manage people's perceptions of you and the situation. In the case of the ally who misses out on a promotion, for example, don't give anyone time to think you'll give the new person guff on your ally's behalf. Immediately go see the person who got the job, advises Heathfield, and make clear that you're looking forward to working with her and will support her in her new position. Act early, and control the message rather than leave it open to speculation and misinterpretation.

Even if your ally doesn't make a catastrophic mistake, most alliances won't be useful forever. "Don't align yourself too strongly or too permanently with anyone," suggests Johnson. It's like a Hollywood model of movie-making: Gather the best people around you to make something great. But when filming wraps, and the movie has been promoted and had its run, you can and should look for other groups to work with. It's beneficial to review and refresh—or prune—your alliances. Keep any that have immediate or foreseeable benefits for you, and let others fade. "Either politely distance yourself," Johnson advises, or find respectful ways to just do less and less work together.

Decades ago, when Susan Heathfield was first hired in a human resources position at General Motors, she knew she had been dropped into the deep end of the pool. Her previous experience had been in education, so entering

the siloed world of union/management politics required finesse. But she quickly identified a key union line manager. "I went directly to him and said, 'Ron, I'm completely out of my element. I want to add value, but I can't do it without knowing more than I do.'" Ron introduced her to skilled tradespeople and immersed her in the life of the plant in a way that earned her respect from the union workers, who otherwise might have been wary of her intentions. "He had the tool and die guys invite me to their meetings. And then each group invited me." Little by little, Heathfield earned not only Ron's respect but also the respect of all the union workers in the plant. She was eventually invited to attend *both* union and management strategy sessions in advance of difficult negotiations.

And Ron benefited from their alliance, too. "I always put him forth as someone to be depended on, someone to be consulted," Heathfield says. "I learned so much from Ron about creating relationships and adding value." When you're thoughtful about picking and maintaining the right set of allies, the relationships can pay dividends for years—for both of you.

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Amy Gallo

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What You'll Learn

While some of us enjoy a lively debate with colleagues and others prefer to suppress our feelings over disagreements, we all struggle with conflict at work. Every day we navigate an office full of competing interests, clashing personalities, limited time and resources, and fragile egos. Sure, we share the same goals as our colleagues, but we don't always agree on how to achieve them. We work differently. We rub each other the wrong way. We jockey for position. But disagreements don't have to be a source of unhealthy tension. So how can you deal with conflict in a way that is both professional and productive—where it improves both your work and your relationships? This guide lays out a straightforward process for addressing nebulous situations. You start by understanding whether you generally seek or avoid conflict, identifying the most frequent reasons for disagreement, and knowing what approaches work for what scenarios. Then, if you decide to address your situation, you use that information to plan and conduct a productive conversation. Knowing there is a process to follow can make

conflict more manageable. This guide will give you the advice you need to:

- Understand the most common sources of conflict
- Explore your options for addressing a disagreement
- Recognize whether you—and your counterpart—typically seek or avoid conflict
- Assess the situation that's making you feel uncomfortable
- Prepare for and engage in a difficult conversation
- Manage your and your counterpart's emotions
- Develop a resolution together
- Know when to walk away
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Preface

by Linda Hill

Years ago, a colleague and I got into a fight. I had been selected to lead a cross-functional task force to review a portion of our MBA curricula. This was a diverse group of people—a few fellow junior faculty, people from other departments, and professors who had been at the school for decades, including my senior colleague and friend, whom I'll call Elizabeth. I was a brand-new tenured professor, and although I was surprised that I'd been picked to lead the team, I was also honored. And I was glad that I would be able to rely on Elizabeth for her expertise. After all, she had much more experience than I did.

Yet each time the group met, Elizabeth wasn't participating. She sat silently and rarely, if ever, had anything positive to contribute. We'd be talking about a topic that I knew she had an opinion on, and still she didn't say anything.

When she did open her mouth, it was to disparage me. In front of the group, she picked on what I felt were trivial things, like the fact that I didn't have all the

supplemental materials in the same order as they were listed in the agenda. I could tell that something was wrong.

So could the rest of the team. People exchanged glances when Elizabeth openly criticized me for not being prepared. Some people tried to jump in and move things along when things got tense between us. But it was clear that the situation was making the whole team uncomfortable—me, Elizabeth, and everybody else.

I was confounded. Elizabeth and I had always gotten along, and whenever we'd collaborated in the past, it went well. After a few weeks of enduring her alternating silent treatment and carping, I decided to talk to her. I closed her office door behind me, sat down, and asked, "We aren't really working well together, are we?"

I wasn't prepared for what came next. She started yelling at me. She thought that I was doing a horrible job of running the group, that we weren't making progress on the evaluation, and that I was wasting her and everyone else's time. I felt backed into a corner, and as a result, I raised my voice, too, defending myself against her accusations.

This was not a smart way to handle the situation. It quickly became clear that neither of us wanted to be fighting. I didn't know what to do. I was concerned that without Elizabeth on board, the group would never be able to finish our work. And more importantly, I worried that Elizabeth's and my relationship, a relationship that I valued, was going to be irreparably damaged. And she didn't seem to be doing any better.

I'm not proud of what I did—you should never raise your voice at people at work. It felt horrible at the time; I was exasperated, angry, upset, questioning myself and Elizabeth. But our disagreement over who should be in charge of the group, how it should be run, and whose expertise needed to be tapped and in what way was not necessarily negative in and of itself. These questions needed to be addressed for the group to do its best work and for me to be effective as a leader.

During our heated exchange we got those issues out into the open. But how we handled that initial discussion was problematic—we weren't going to solve the issues we'd raised if we were both defensive. We needed to work together.

And that's just the thing—conflict at work is going to happen, no matter what you do. And it should. It can be good for you, your team, and your organization. But how you deal with it can make the difference between a negative interaction and a productive one.

That's why you've turned to this guide. We don't want to have screaming matches with colleagues. We don't want to feel as if our projects will fail unless we give in to what someone else wants. We don't want to lose sleep over an intense interaction. We *want* to better understand why conflict happens, our options for addressing it, and how to navigate these disagreements so that we end up with our dignity and relationships intact.

Imagine how things with Elizabeth would've gone if I hadn't just waltzed into her office and confronted her. What if I had thought through the discussion in

advance, considering what Elizabeth and I were actually disagreeing about, and thinking about our different personalities? What if I had chosen the right time and place for us to talk, framed my message carefully, heard her out, and explained my position? Or what if Elizabeth had come to me earlier and explained why she wasn't participating, made clear that her issues weren't personal but had to do with how I was running the group or what the team was trying to achieve? Instead of sitting there staring at each other, fuming, we might've been engaged in a thoughtful, productive discussion.

Learning to navigate conflicts such as the one I had with Elizabeth is not really a choice in today's organizations. There's always going to be diversity, interdependence, and competition over scarce resources. And that's not a bad thing. When passionate people with different perspectives collaborate to address a problem or an opportunity, there can be give-and-take and productive disagreement. That healthy competition helps create better products, features, and solutions. The research on innovation is clear: Without "creative abrasion" you won't have a robust marketplace of new ideas. The most effective people are those who can disagree constructively, not destructively, and keep difficult conversations substantive, not personal.

Thankfully, mercifully really, in the middle of our fight, Elizabeth paused and asked if I wanted to get coffee with her across campus. Not sure what else to do, I agreed.

The change of scenery was exactly what we needed. As we walked across campus, we both calmed down and Elizabeth opened up about the source of her frustrations. It turns out that I was driving her crazy. I'm not a linear thinker and she is. The process I was using was infuriating to her. She wanted to know how each step led to the next, and I was willing to let things evolve more organically. Plus she felt as if I wasn't using her expertise. I assumed people would speak up if they had ideas—that those with the most experience, such as Elizabeth, would chime in when they wanted to, so I didn't call on anyone in particular and never met with individual team members outside the group to get their perspective. By not calling on her, or openly acknowledging her expertise and asking for her opinion, I had upset her. She felt that I hadn't shown her enough respect. It's not that I didn't feel it (in fact, I assumed that she assumed that I respected her), but I didn't demonstrate it.

Perhaps what really got me in trouble was that I hadn't tried to see the situation from her perspective. I didn't think about how she might feel having someone with far less experience be in charge of something she cared about so much.

We didn't see eye to eye on how the committee should be managed—and she felt mistreated. We both were unafraid of conflict and typically approached it head-on, which is why we ended up in such a heated exchange in her office.

Her complaints made me realize that perhaps others in the group were having similar reactions. I wasn't

adapting my style for what worked best for the team—I was doing what was most comfortable to me. Also, I had assumed that by virtue of holding the leadership position, I had credibility. I didn't think I needed to earn everyone's trust, but I absolutely did.

Once we understood what exactly we were fighting about, and we had heard each other out, we were able to move toward a resolution. I asked for Elizabeth's advice. How would she run the group? I was a new leader, and I wanted to learn from her. We both wanted the same thing—to produce the best curricula for our students—and to get there, I vowed to be more respectful of the wisdom and experience she brought to the group and to be more explicit about the process I was using to run the meetings. I started to ask her opinion before the team met. If I thought there was something she wouldn't agree with, I gave her a heads-up. And I started regularly asking everyone to suggest options before we started evaluating them so that we could objectively look at the pros and cons.

Elizabeth made changes after our discussion, too. She stopped nitpicking. She backed off and gave me more space. Because everyone deeply respected her, the change in her attitude influenced the group positively. People were more at ease and offered ideas freely. Suggestions were no longer "Elizabeth's idea" or "Linda's idea"; they were all viable options we could evaluate based on their merits.

I was fortunate. I was able to preserve my relationship with Elizabeth, and the task force's work was better as a consequence of our fight.

Looking back, I wish I had had the advice in this book before I spoke to Elizabeth. I could've saved us both a lot of grief if I had better understood the common sources of conflict, how people approach it differently, and the various options and strategies for solving it.

That's what you'll get in the pages ahead. You'll learn how to effectively navigate conflicts with your boss, your peers, your direct reports, and partners outside your company. You'll do the foundational work of better understanding the different types of conflict, your own tendency toward approaching it, and your options for resolving it. Then you'll learn the process to follow when a specific conflict arises—from assessing what kind of conflict it is, to preparing for the conversation, to hearing your counterpart out, and to ultimately reaching a satisfying resolution and repairing your relationship, if necessary.

Mastering all of this will not absolve you from having fights at work. I still have them, for sure. We all do, and maybe on occasion you will lose your temper, say something ugly, and behave in a way that you regret. But by following the advice in this book, those occasions will be fewer and less painful—for you and your colleagues.

Introduction: A Practical Plan for Dealing with Conflict

Let's face it: There's no such thing as a conflict-free office. We fight at work. We disagree about how to implement a new IT system. We battle over which strategy to pursue. We engage in turf wars about who gets to lead the website redesign project. And sometimes, we just act like passive-aggressive jerks toward one another.

And as uncomfortable and draining as conflict can be, conflict in and of itself isn't really the problem. It's how we handle it that matters.

Consider these two fictional stories:

Celia and her colleague, Sara, disagreed about how to word an important provision in a client contract. As the legal expert, Celia felt Sara's suggestion was too vague and perhaps even intentionally deceptive to the customer—implying better payment terms than their company was willing to allow. When Celia pointed out how the language might be misinterpreted, Sara stood her ground. Celia knew that this was an important customer for the company, and the CEO was eagerly

awaiting news that the deal was closed, so she let it go. But she worried for several weeks whether she should've pushed harder. She lost sleep over it, avoided Sara at the office, and dreaded the date when the customer would receive its first invoice. And rightly so—when that time came, the customer was extremely unhappy and Celia ended up with Sara in the CEO's office having an all-out fight over whose fault it was. The two colleagues didn't speak for weeks afterward, and it took months for Celia's manager to regain trust that she could handle important contracts.

Now, let's take a look at what happened with a manager named Antonio.

Antonio had always had a positive relationship with his boss, Rebecca, but lately he noticed that she was frequently talking over him. As soon as Antonio started to say something, Rebecca would interrupt, often dismissing his view and presenting an opposing one. Antonio was annoyed. He wanted to pull Rebecca aside and tell her to quit it. But before doing that, he spent some time trying to understand what was going on and seeing things from Rebecca's perspective. He knew that she wasn't afraid of conflict and that she might not see her behavior as rudely as he did. He also remembered a conversation in which Rebecca revealed that she was under pressure from the company's senior team to demonstrate that she had fresh ideas. With these things in mind, he asked Rebecca out for coffee, explained that he wanted to maintain their relationship but that he was hurt by her behavior. At first, Rebecca was defen-

sive, claiming that it was all in Antonio's head, but when he gave a few examples, she conceded that she'd been stressed and was perhaps taking it out on him. He offered to support her in meetings, even brainstorming ideas with her beforehand, and she vowed to watch the interruptions. They continued to work together for five more years and relied on each other for candid feedback and advice.

You might be tempted to think that Celia was in a tougher situation than Antonio—she was dealing with a stubborn peer and an important client situation. She had the CEO breathing down her neck, too. But Celia's conflict wasn't any worse or more intense than Antonio's. He was dealing with his boss—the most influential person in his work life—and stood to lose a lot if things went south. Antonio simply handled the situation better. He took time to think through what was really happening, to see the conflict from Rebecca's perspective, and to prepare for his discussion with her.

Celia, of course, is not alone. When we perceive the risks of engaging in conflict to be greater than the potential upsides, many of us prefer to stifle our feelings and move on rather than speak up. And understandably so, as there are negative consequences to mishandling disagreements.

The Downsides of Conflict

Linda Hill's story in the preface and Celia's story here illustrate that when handled poorly—or avoided altogether—conflict can derail projects, damage client relationships, or lose company business. Initiatives slow to a standstill,

while warring factions sort out their differences or teams risk not meeting their goals at all. "Energy and creativity get siphoned off," explains Annie McKee, an expert in emotional intelligence, and rather than focusing on accomplishing their objectives, team members are absorbed by their differences. And people in organizations, says McKee, "often have a very long memory when it comes to fighting at work. It doesn't matter what the underlying cause was or who was right or wrong. All people remember is that it was a mess, and that you were involved."

Avoiding conflict (as Celia chose to do) can just make things worse. In fact, unspoken disagreements can have consequences that are as significant as a conference room shouting match. Jeanne Brett, a negotiations professor, warns, "Conflict that's not expressed can be worse than conflict that is." Sometimes we're upset with people and they have no idea we're struggling with them. This negativity can bleed into your interactions. Or worse, your feelings simmer underneath the surface until your coworker does something that makes you explode, blindsiding your unsuspecting colleague.

Conflict also takes an emotional toll. "When you're consumed with a fight, it's hard to draw the boundary and it often spills over into your life," says McKee. We shred our nails worrying about what to say to a colleague with whom we're fighting, or we waste hours agonizing over whether we could have better articulated our perspective on a contentious issue. Over time, persistent conflict causes health problems. A Duke University Medical Center study showed that an intensely angry episode can lead to an eightfold increase in risk of heart attack, and anger has been linked to strokes, irregular

heartbeat, sleep problems, excess eating, and insulin resistance, which can help cause diabetes.

The Benefits of Conflict

Luckily, however, when handled well, conflict can have positive outcomes: It can help you be more creative, spark new ideas, and even strengthen bonds with your coworkers, as it did between Antonio and Rebecca. You might dream of living in a peaceful utopia, but it wouldn't be good for your company, your work, or you. "Conflict allows the team to come to terms with difficult situations, to synthesize diverse perspectives, and to make sure solutions are well thought out. Conflict is uncomfortable, but it is the source of true innovation and also a critical process in identifying and mitigating risks," says Liane Davey, an expert in team dynamics.

Here are some of the specific benefits:

- **Better work outcomes:** When you and your coworkers push one another to continuously ask if there's a better approach, that creative friction is likely to lead to new solutions. And there's rarely a fixed amount of value to be gained in a disagreement. If you and your colleague are arguing about the best way to roll out a new initiative—he wants to launch in a single market first and you want to enter several at one time—you'll be forced to explore the pros and cons of each approach and ideally find the best solutions. It may be that you decide to run the pilot he wants but on a shorter time frame so that you get the revenue from reaching the other markets sooner.

- **Opportunity to learn and grow:** As uncomfortable as it may feel when someone challenges your ideas, it's an opportunity to learn. You gain experience from incorporating feedback, try new things, and evolve as a manager. When a peer chews you out after an important presentation because you didn't give her team credit for their work, the words may sting, but you're more likely to think through everyone's perspectives before preparing your next talk.

- **Improved relationships:** By working through conflict together, you'll feel closer to the people around you and gain a better understanding of what matters to them and how they prefer to work. You'll also set an important precedent: that it's possible to have "good" fights and then move on. Two regional managers who engage in a lengthy debate about who should be responsible for maintaining quality in their region have, at the end of the day, learned information about each other that will help them work better together in the future. And they've shown their teams that it's possible to move beyond conflict, to not get entrenched in a viewpoint but to make progress toward a resolution.

- **Job satisfaction:** When you're not afraid to constructively disagree, or even fight, about issues at work, you're likely to be happier to go to the office, be satisfied with what you accomplish, and enjoy interactions with your colleagues. Instead of

feeling as if you have to walk on eggshells, you can focus on getting your work done. A study in China showed a correlation between the use of certain approaches to conflict management—ones in which employees pursue a win-win situation, care for others, and focus on common interests—and an employee's happiness at work.

For conflict to have any of these benefits, you have to learn the skills to proactively address problems and engage in healthy discussions. Fortunately, you have ample opportunity to try. The average person spends nearly three hours each week dealing with conflict at work, according to a study by CPP Global. Another study by CPP showed that managers report spending 18% to 26% of their time dealing with conflicts. Since we spend so much time engaged in disagreements, it's worth our effort to get them right—to temper our reactions and manage the conflict so that it's more productive.

How do you do that? This book will help you break through the scary, emotional stuff and take a practical, ordered approach to dealing with conflict.

A Plan for Handling Conflict

I'll briefly outline here a better approach for handling conflict so that you get a sense of the whole process before delving into the individual steps and specific scenarios in later chapters.

You start by understanding conflict better. Before we engage in an unhealthy way, it helps to know what's at the root of the disagreement. First, you need to know the

various sources of conflict (see chapter 1, "Types of Conflict"). There are four main types: **relationship** (a personal disagreement), **task** (disagreement over what the goal is), **process** (disagreement over the means or process for achieving a goal), and **status** (disagreement over your standing in a group). These categories will help you figure out what's actually happening when you get into a conflict—even when your fight doesn't neatly fit into one bucket.

The second piece of information you need is to understand your options (see chapter 2, "Your Options for Handling Conflict"). In general, there are four from which to choose when confronting a conflict. The first, which is more common than you might think, is to **do nothing**. You don't say anything to your colleague, you let the comment go, or you simply walk away and go on as if the conflict hasn't happened. The second option is to address the conflict, but **indirectly**. Instead of talking through what's going on with your coworker, you might involve your boss or a third party, or hint at the conflict without ever candidly naming it. This option is more common in cultures such as East Asia, where saving face is important. The third option is to address the conflict **directly.** This is where the rest of the book focuses—on preparing for and having a direct conversation with your counterpart. The final option—and typically your last resort—is to **exit** the relationship.

The third and final aspect to having a more productive conflict is to know what people's natural tendencies are when it comes to conflict. There are generally two types of people: those who gravitate toward conflict and those

who want to take cover under their desks whenever tensions rise. **Avoiders** tend to shy away or even hide from disagreements. **Seekers** are more eager to engage in conflict when it arises (or even find ways to create it). In chapter 3 ("Recognize Your Natural Tendency"), you'll get to know which style you gravitate toward (and tips for sussing out your counterpart's tendency) so that you can make a conscious choice about how to address a disagreement.

Table I-1 gives you an overview of this foundational work.

Once you've completed this groundwork, it's time to put your knowledge into practice. When faced with a specific situation—your colleague raises his voice, you're battling with your finance counterpart over next year's budget, your boss is acting like a jerk—start by quickly taking stock of what you know about your counterpart

TABLE I-1

Conflict at a glance

Types of conflict (conflict is over . . .)	Options for handling	Natural tendencies
1. Relationship (personal issues, such as how you're being treated)	**1. Do nothing.**	**1. Conflict avoider** • Shies away from disagreements • Cares most about harmony
2. Task (the goal, *what* you're trying to achieve)	**2. Address indirectly.**	
3. Process (the process, *how* work gets done)	**3. Address directly.**	**2. Conflict seeker** • Eager to engage in disagreements • Cares most about directness and honesty
4. Status (your standing in a group or who's in charge)	**4. Exit the relationship.**	

(is she a seeker like you, or are you both avoiders?) and the type of conflict you're having (see chapter 4, "Assess the Situation"). This will give you a better picture of what you're up against.

You'll also need to sort out what your goal is: Do you want to move your stalled project forward? Preserve the relationship? Just move on? That will help you make a smart choice about which of your four options to exercise. If you choose to do nothing or exit the relationship, this is where your journey ends. You can skip to chapter 8 ("Repair the Relationship") and focus on how to rebuild trust and move on. If you prefer to address the conflict indirectly, you'll choose one of the tactics laid out in chapter 4. If you decide to address the conflict directly, then you'll start to prepare for the conversation (see chapter 5, "Get Ready for the Conversation"). This involves the following eight steps:

1. Check your mindset.
2. See the situation from your counterpart's perspective.
3. Consider the larger organizational context.
4. Plan your message.
5. Prepare for multiple scenarios.
6. Pick the right time.
7. Choose the right place.
8. Vent.

Then you're ready to sit down with your colleague and talk through what's happening (see chapter 6, "Have a Productive Conversation"). You'll start by framing the conversation so that you get off on the right foot. You want to form a bond with your counterpart by focusing on where you agree. Then you'll do three things simultaneously: Manage your and your counterpart's emotions, listen to your colleague's perspective, and make your viewpoint heard. These are all toward the goal of trying to find a solution to the underlying conflict.

Ideally in that conversation, or in subsequent ones, you'll find a resolution that meets both of your needs (see chapter 7, "Get to a Resolution and Make a Plan"). And if you aren't able to reach a conclusion, you'll at least agree on how to move forward.

No matter what sort of end your conflict comes to, you'll need to figure out how to repair the relationship and move on (see chapter 8). Conflict can bring up lots of negative emotions—anger, frustration, annoyance, resentment—and it's important to clear the air and lay the groundwork for a strong relationship going forward.

Conflict can feel less scary and more manageable when you approach it methodically. You'll need to be flexible and adapt as the situation takes unexpected turns, but this book will help you develop the basic skills and strategies you need. There are many examples throughout (real stories disguised and combined) to show you how others have tackled similar challenges. Of course, nothing ever goes exactly as planned, so the final chapter addresses specific scenarios, such as what to do when

you're dealing with a bully or how to navigate a disagreement with a vendor (see chapter 9, "Navigate Common Situations"). When you learn to manage conflict, it has fewer downsides and more benefits, and it boosts your overall productivity. "If you're going to be a truly effective manager, you're going to have to deal with conflict. Otherwise you're going to end up fighting with everyone or simply giving them what they want," says John Ratey, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. By following the process in this guide, you can reap the benefits of conflict while mitigating its risks. You will also become more confident in proactively addressing disagreements and engaging in difficult discussions.

SECTION ONE

Preparing for Conflict Before It Happens

CHAPTER 1

Types of Conflict

In the middle of a dispute, when your brain kicks into overdrive, you might be stuck wondering, Where did this conversation go wrong? or Why is my coworker so mad? It might feel as if your colleague is being unreasonable, that the situation is intractable, or that your relationship will never recover.

Uncovering what's truly going on—what's at the root of the disagreement—will help you set aside your emotional reaction and begin to solve the problem.

There are generally four types of conflict: relationship, task, process, and status (see table 1-1).

The common sources of conflict are neatly delineated here, but in reality, disagreements rarely fall into just one of these categories. More often, there are multiple things going on and a conflict may start as one type and expand into another. We'll follow the story of a cross-functional team at TechCorp, a fictional tech company, to illustrate what these categories look like in the real world.

TABLE 1-1

Types of conflict

Type of conflict	What it is	For example . . .	Outcomes if you get it right
Relationship	A clash of personalities	Your counterpart interrupts and talks over you in a meeting.	• Better understanding of your counterpart • Improved relationship
Task	A disagreement over the intended goal of a task or project	You and your colleague in the legal department don't agree on how much risk the company should assume in a partnership agreement.	• Clearer understanding of the trade-offs to be made • Better results • Innovation
Process	A disagreement over how to carry out a project or task	You think it's important to roll out a new initiative quickly, even if it means sacrificing some quality, while your counterpart believes it needs to be perfect before it hits the market.	• Process innovation • More potential solutions to the problem
Status	A disagreement over who's in charge or gets credit for the work	You and your peer are competing to run a high-profile project.	• Clear hierarchy • Easier coordination of the work

Relationship

This is what we most often assume is happening when we get into a conflict—a clash of personalities.

What it is

A personal disagreement. Sometimes called an interpersonal or emotional conflict, it's when one or both of you feel disrespected or hurt. It includes:

- Snapping at each other in meetings
- Exchanging snarky emails
- Avoiding eye contact in the hallway
- Interrupting, or talking over, a colleague in a meeting
- Using a condescending tone to indicate your disagreement
- Arguing over who's right and who's wrong

Quite often a relationship conflict starts as something else. A disagreement over a project schedule escalates to bickering that disrupts a team meeting. Or a difference of opinion on the company's strategy devolves into a heated debate about who's right and who's wrong. You may both have valid points, and good intentions, but some disagreements turn ugly. Annie McKee describes it this way: "In a perfect world, we follow the textbook advice, treat conflict logically, behave like adults, and get on with it. The problem is, we're not working in a perfect

world, and none of us is perfect. We each bring our own baggage to work every day. And some of our issues—insecurity, the desire for power and control, habitual victimhood—rear their heads again and again."

Example

A team of functional leaders at TechCorp all agree that one of their best-performing products needs a new feature, but the SVP of product development and the SVP of engineering can't agree on the ultimate goal. Their differing views gradually escalated from lively debate to a public blowout. Now they trade passive-aggressive barbs over group emails and interrupt each other in meetings. Some teammates have become so uncomfortable witnessing the interactions that they've started declining meetings in which they know both will be present. Not only do the SVPs disagree, they can't believe that the other person doesn't see it the same way. It's no longer about what's best for TechCorp and the customer. For both of them, it's about being right.

The benefits of managing it well

There are typically few benefits to relationship conflict, says Jeanne Brett. When our egos and sense of pride get involved, it's painful, and challenging to manage effectively.

But even uncomfortable interpersonal conflict can have positive outcomes. Jonathan Hughes, an expert on corporate negotiations and relationship management, points out that these types of disputes give us the opportunity to learn more about ourselves and our colleagues. We better

understand each other's values, working styles, and personalities and therefore build better relationships, "which creates a virtuous cycle," he says. If you've established that you can successfully navigate conflict, you're more likely to give honest feedback and challenge each other when necessary.

Task

The most common source of disagreement at work is task conflict.

What it is

A dispute over the goal of a task or project or what you're trying to achieve. This includes disagreements about:

- The agenda for a staff meeting
- How the success of a new initiative should be defined or measured
- Whether the customers or the employees should come first
- How much risk a company should assume when partnering with other organizations
- Whether to prioritize revenue or customer satisfaction

"The most common form of task conflict in organizations is functional," explains Brett. Marketing, legal, and finance may look at the same problem and see it completely differently. For example, marketing may lobby to put the customer first, while legal's aim is to protect

the company from risk, and finance is trying to cut costs. Each may argue that their perspective on how to solve the problem is more important. "In reality, all those viewpoints and each functional way of addressing the problem are relevant and should be integrated into the solution," says Brett.

Example

The functional leaders at TechCorp all agree that they want the new feature, but they can't agree on the objective. Marketing sees it as an opportunity to expand the company's market share. Finance is focused on improving the business's margins. And the engineers on the team care about developing something cool that integrates the latest technology. If they can't agree on what success means for the new feature, they won't be able to move the project forward—or even worse, they'll each take it in a separate direction, wasting time and the company's resources. The engineers spent all weekend developing a prototype of the new feature, but the finance managers are worried that it will be too expensive to produce and the marketing lead isn't sure users will appreciate the added functionality.

The benefits of managing it well

When we have productive discussions about our different views of project goals or how we should define success, we gain valuable insights, says Hughes. "We live in a world of finite resources, and this type of conversation is helpful in terms of coming to smart decisions about which trade-offs to make." Should the new feature have

less functionality and be more affordable to make? Or is it important to delight customers so that they stay with the company longer? At TechCorp, the new feature is likely to be more robust and useful to the customer precisely because each of the functions is pushing its own agenda. The new feature won't satisfy everyone, but airing each group's goals is likely to serve up new ideas and generate productive conversations about what will make the feature successful—more so than if the team had just driven toward one person's objective.

Process

Another common type of conflict is not about *what* you're doing but *how* you're doing it.

What it is

A disagreement over how to carry out a project or task, the means or process you use to reach your goal. This includes differences on:

- The best tactic for reaching a quarterly target
- How to implement a new HR policy
- How decisions should be made in a meeting
- How quickly a project should be completed
- Who should be consulted and included as the project is carried out

Process disagreements are easily confused with task conflicts. You think you're arguing over the outcome when really you can't agree on how to make a decision.

For example, you might get locked into a battle with a coworker over the right strategy for a new project when what you need to settle is not the specific tactic but who gets to make the final call. Or you think the company should do customer research first and a coworker thinks it should get a good-enough product out in the market and see what happens.

Example

At TechCorp, finance thinks that the group should come up with a proposal for the new feature that everyone can agree on, but marketing is lobbying to take a vote and let the majority rule. Marketing is also at odds with the engineers because they think they should conduct customer focus groups throughout the course of development, starting as soon as possible, while the engineers think they should wait until they have an internally approved prototype. None of the three functions agrees on the timeline for completing the project—in time for an important trade show or within the fiscal year.

The benefits of managing it well

Disagreements over how to get something done can help bring about process improvements or unearth hidden benefits. A good way to come up with several viable options, Hughes suggests, is to ask, "What other ways can we imagine meeting our goals?" and then allow your team to offer answers. "People tend to frame things in an unnecessary binary fashion: should we do this or that, but there's almost always a third or fourth way as well," he says. It's natural for finance to lobby for production

schedules that align with fiscal year milestones. But discussing the timing with the entire group reveals a critical trade show date, reminds the group of key fiscal-year dates, and allows everyone to share their own team's schedule and resource constraints. As with task conflict, process conflict can improve results by drawing on the expertise of the whole group.

Status

A less common—but still problematic—source of conflict is when people disagree over their standing within a group.

What it is

A disagreement over who's in charge or who deserves credit for the work. For example, you think you should be leading an initiative, while your worker thinks he should. It can also include:

- Jockeying for leadership, especially in a team without a formal or designated leader
- Competing to run a high-profile project
- Arguing over or dominating shared resources
- Competing for status symbols, such as the corner office, the latest technology, or having an administrative assistant

Example

The SVP of engineering at TechCorp and the SVP of new product development are going head to head over which

one of them should lead the group that's designing the new feature. In an effort to gain an advantage in this horse race, when the senior leaders congratulate the team on the work so far, the SVP of engineering credits the long hours his group put in, while the SVP of new product development claims it was her team's brainstorming sessions and market research that led to the concept for the snazzy new feature.

The benefits of managing it well

When a status conflict is resolved, there's clarity for the team and anyone working with them. "A clear status hierarchy is efficient in that everyone knows his or her role and responsibility," says Brett. This makes it easier to coordinate work and get things done smoothly. "In stable social hierarchies, lower-status individuals defer to those with higher status, and higher-status individuals look out for the welfare of lower-status ones. At least that is how it is supposed to work," she says.

It bears repeating that it's rare to have a conflict that fits neatly into just one of these categories. Often, as the TechCorp example shows, disagreements have elements of all four, and many that start as another type end up as relationship conflicts. Separating out each type cuts through the noise of the conflict to what's really at hand. Instead of a morass of disagreements, you have an organized list of issues to resolve. "Finding the root causes helps you get into problem-solving mode," says Hughes. "It doesn't automatically solve everything. It's not like

the heavens open and the angels sing and the conflict is over. But it does make it easier to resolve."

No matter what kind of conflict you're having—or if your conflict is a mess of all four types—you aren't stuck. You have options for moving forward.

CHAPTER 2

Your Options for Handling Conflict

Some people might tell you that the only way to manage work disagreements is to dive right in and straighten things out. This isn't true. While dealing with the conflict directly can be the most effective route, it isn't the only one.

In this chapter I explain your four options: Do nothing, address it indirectly, address it directly, and exit the relationship (see table 4-2 in chapter 4, "Assess the Situation," for an overview of these options).

Do Nothing

When you choose to do nothing, you don't say anything to your colleague, you let the comment go, or you simply walk away and carry on as if the conflict didn't happen. Instead of acting on any feelings or impulses you have about a disagreement, you swallow them and move on. This isn't a cop-out—it's a seemingly easy and low-effort

option for managing conflict. "Most people tend toward loyalty," says Brian Uzzi, a leadership professor. "That's because it's easier to lower your expectations than deal with the real issues at hand." To be clear, this isn't taking your bat and ball and going home or storming off. This is simply keeping an issue to yourself rather than raising it.

We do this all the time, often without realizing it. "We put up with an awful lot on a day-to-day basis. We lump conflict all the time without consciously making a decision to do so," says Jeanne Brett. For many conflicts, it's a perfectly good approach. It can be a smart move, especially if the risks of addressing the issue feel greater than the potential rewards. "There are certain discussions you're just better off not having at all, and knowing when to let it go is just as critical as knowing when to engage," she says. (For more on making that call, see chapter 4, "Assess the Situation.")

It may not be worth having the conversation if you don't think it's going to go anywhere. "If your colleague is stuck in her ways and has never demonstrated a willingness to concede, what do you gain by pushing her yet again? If the damage is already done—say the project was defunded last week and you're just finding out about it—it's probably better to forget about it and move on," says Brett.

The risk in selecting this option is that your resolve may not stick. The issue may not go away, so your feelings about it may come out sideways as you blow up at your colleague about an unrelated matter. Or your colleague's behavior may continue or worsen because he is unaware of the problem.

Note that this option and the "address it indirectly" option are different than avoiding conflict altogether. Conflict avoidance is a natural tendency to steer away from conflict whenever possible (see chapter 3, "Recognize Your Natural Tendency"). These are active, conscious decisions you make to handle a situation. If you tend to avoid conflict, check yourself if you find that you gravitate toward these two options.

Use when . . .

- You don't have the energy or time to invest in preparing for and having a conversation
- You suspect the other person is unwilling to have a constructive conversation
- You have little or no power, particularly in conflicts with people above you
- You won't beat yourself up or stew about it

Keep in mind that this option . . .

- Requires little work on your part, but it can be frustrating to dismiss your feelings
- Keeps the relationship stable, assuming you can both truly move on
- Won't work if you're unable to put it behind you and you risk having an outburst later or acting passive-aggressively toward your counterpart
- May cause your work to suffer if you continue to feel bad

- Can reinforce bad behavior—if your counterpart got away with it once, she might try again

What it looks like in practice

Clara, a project manager, was helping Lisa, a product manager, develop a launch schedule for testing a new product line, and she thought that Lisa was being overly optimistic. She tried to point out that Lisa's dates weren't realistic, but Lisa wouldn't listen. "I was new, and while her time frame seemed aggressive to me, I couldn't be sure," Clara says. "Plus she isn't the warmest person, and she made it clear she wasn't really open to my feedback." When the plan went to the wider team, things blew up. The production manager couldn't believe that Clara thought her team would drop everything to meet her dates. But Lisa had already shared the schedule with the head of marketing, who had announced the launch date in the market. When the team discussed the schedule, Lisa never once explained that Clara had a difference of opinion and, in fact, implied that the dates were Clara's work.

"I was livid," explains Clara, "but I didn't want to get into a fight in front of our bosses." She later explained the situation to her manager but decided not to talk with Lisa about it. "She didn't strike me as the kind of person who would be interested in hashing it out, and this wasn't the last time we'd have to work together," she says. "I didn't see what good would come of it, other than creating more tension." Instead, she put it behind her and continued to work with Lisa. Though they never directly

discussed the issue, Clara says that Lisa was more open to her input on schedules in the future.

Address It Indirectly: Skirt the Issue

If you decide to try to change the situation by addressing it, there are two ways to do that. The first is to confront someone indirectly.

Indirect confrontation is when you choose to circle around an issue rather than naming it and addressing it together. Maybe you appeal to someone else who can talk to your counterpart (say, your boss or a coworker who knows the person better), or you talk about the situation without ever naming the issue. To those in certain cultures that tend to address conflict directly, this may sound backhanded and completely ineffective. But in some places, particularly those where saving face is important, this is the approach of choice. "In many Asian cultures, group harmony is incredibly important. It's not appropriate to say, 'We have a disagreement,'" says Erin Meyer, author of *The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business*. "If you have a conflict with someone on a Japanese team, for example, you would not sit down and talk it through."

Brett explains that one tactic is to use a story or a metaphor. For example, if you're upset about a colleague who is constantly interrupting you, you might tell a story about an employee you previously managed who struggled to listen. The moral of the story—that listening is a valuable but tough-to-learn skill—may prompt your counterpart to reflect on her own behavior. "You see this

all the time in China and other Asian countries. They are respecting the other party to understand the problem and do something about it rather than telling them what to do," says Brett.

Another way to indirectly address a conflict is to get a third party involved. "In some African cultures, when you have a conflict, you work through a friend. That person works it out for you so that you never have a direct confrontation," says Meyer. You might go to your boss and explain that your interrupting colleague is preventing you from conducting a successful meeting. In some cultures it may be clear that you expect that she will talk to your coworker. In others, you may need to ask. Similarly, if you and another team member don't agree on how to spend money in your shared budget, you might ask your boss to make the decision so that neither of you is seen as losing. Instead, you're just carrying out your manager's orders. Again, in Western cultures, this might be frowned upon because you may be seen as giving away your power or failing to step up to the plate, but in other places, this is an effective way to handle the disagreement.

This option has several risks. If your indirect approach is too indirect, your counterpart may completely miss the message you're trying to send and may not change, or he may just think that "someone else" really messed up. Another risk is that your counterpart hears that you were reaching out to other people about his behavior and may resent that you went around him rather than speaking with him about it first. Lastly, if your counterpart is from a more direct culture, he may not respect what he perceives to be a passive approach.

Remember that this option and the "do nothing" option are different than avoiding conflict altogether. Steering away from conflict is not the same as making a conscious choice to address it indirectly. Watch out if you tend to avoid conflict and find yourself exercising this option regularly.

Use when . . .

- It's important in your culture to save face and not embarrass people
- You work in a place (office or country) where direct confrontation is inappropriate
- You think the other person will be more willing to take feedback from someone else—either someone more powerful than you, such as a boss, or someone he trusts, such as a close confidant

Keep in mind that this option . . .

- May not work in Western cultures, where the expectation is generally to speak directly with someone when you have a problem
- Can backfire if your counterpart finds out about your behind-the-scenes work and is unhappy about it
- May fail if your counterpart doesn't understand your story or metaphor

What it looks like in practice

Carlos worked as an estimator for a large contractor company, and his new boss, Peter, was a classic micromanager.

"He was very operations focused and wanted to know what I was doing all the time," says Carlos. "I was constantly getting emails from him asking about details on my projects that he didn't need to know." Carlos was afraid that if he told Peter he was micromanaging him, Peter would get worse, not trusting that Carlos would do the work the way Peter wanted. "I was good at my job. I just needed him to back off some," explains Carlos.

He decided to approach the conversation by talking to Peter about one of his own direct reports, Vince. "I told him that since Vince was new, he probably needed some closer managing, but that I really saw our job as helping these younger people to learn the job on their own and empower them as much as possible," he says. Peter was a bit hesitant and tried to argue that some people needed to be micromanaged. The two then got into a discussion about who needed closer supervision and who didn't. Without addressing the issue directly, Carlos was able to make the case that he didn't need Peter always looking over his shoulder. And it worked. Peter still managed Carlos more closely than Carlos preferred, but the conversation seemed to encourage Peter to give Carlos a longer leash.

Address It Directly: Confront the Issue

You can also try to change the situation by explicitly addressing it. A direct confrontation is when you talk to the other person—either in the moment the conflict arises or at a later time. Generally this involves explaining your

side of the conflict, listening to the other person's perspective, and then, ideally, agreeing on a resolution.

For those in more assertive cultures such as the United States, this can be an effective option, and it's the one I focus on for most of this book. Meyer also points to other countries, such as France, Russia, and Spain, where it's acceptable to have "open, vigorous, strong" disagreements. Some organizational cultures are also more prone to addressing conflict directly, says Brett. The financial industry, for example, has a reputation for people openly disagreeing, sometimes in seemingly harsh ways.

This can be a risky option if it's not handled well because it might heighten the conflict rather than defuse it. That's why the majority of this book is dedicated to showing you how to prepare for the conversation, engage productively, and reach a resolution.

Use when . . .

- You worry that there will be lingering resentment if you don't clear the air
- You've tried to do nothing or indirectly address it and the problem persists
- You previously had a positive relationship with the person and you want to get it back on track

Keep in mind that this option . . .

- Can be good for a relationship—going through difficult experiences together can make your connection stronger and your relationship more resilient

- Allows you to voice your opinion or feelings, if that's important to you
- Helps you develop a better understanding of yourself and your counterpart
- Can improve your work if you can incorporate others' views and opinions
- Could earn you a reputation as aggressive or combative if you do it too often (or not well)

What it looks like in practice

A close work friend of Aparna's pulled her aside to tell her that another coworker of theirs, Zia, had been spreading rumors that Aparna was looking for a new job. Aparna knew that Zia was competitive with her—their jobs were closely related—and that in Zia's ideal world, she would take over several of Aparna's projects. But Aparna was not on the job market. "It was absurd. I hadn't had one networking conversation, and I'd barely updated my résumé in years," she says. She and Zia had small disagreements in the past over what direction to take particular projects, but they'd always been able to move past them. "I always thought we were healthy competitors. We made each other work harder."

Worried that Zia's rumors would put her position at risk, especially if her boss heard them, she decided to talk with Zia directly. She asked Zia out for coffee and explained what she heard and asked for her perspective on it. At first Zia denied that she had said anything to anyone, but she eventually conceded that she'd heard

something about Aparna talking with a competitor and she may have mentioned it to a few people. Aparna explained that that was not the case and asked Zia to stop. She agreed, and while they continued to compete on occasion, Aparna didn't hear news of Zia talking behind her back again.

Exit: Get Out of the Situation Entirely

Your final option is to extricate yourself from the situation by either getting reassigned to another project, finding a new boss, or leaving the company. This is usually a last resort. "You can't always leave a relationship, especially at work," Uzzi says. When you're disagreeing with a boss or someone on your team, you may just be stuck with that person, unless you're willing to find another job. But if the conflict is with someone in another department or a person outside your company, such as a vendor, you may be able to reduce your contact.

Exiting doesn't mean that you end the relationship by making a dramatic scene. Instead, look for a way to stop interacting with that person. If it's a client with whom you have an ongoing conflict, you may explain the situation to your supervisor and propose that one of your equally qualified colleagues replaces you on the account. If it's someone you work with in the finance department, you can begin to build a relationship with someone else on that team so that you have an alternative contact. If your boss is the problem, you might apply to jobs in other departments; you can start by building a broader network in the organization or connecting with people on teams you may want to join.

This sounds easier said than done, and often it is. Exiting is a risky option because it's not something you can typically do overnight or even in a week's time. More likely it's something you'll build toward slowly, while you dust off your résumé, expand your network, and have conversations with people who may be able to support you in making the move.

Brett says that it's usually worth trying the other three options before ending things completely. But there are situations in which the conflict is so bad and seemingly intractable that severing the relationship is the best option.

Use when . . .

- You're dealing with someone from another department or outside your company where your jobs aren't interdependent
- You can easily find another job somewhere else
- You've tried other options and nothing has worked

Keep in mind that this option . . .

- May give you a sense of relief because it gives you a clean break
- Can protect you from further time wasted, stress, and discomfort
- Is likely to take a lot of work from you (including potentially difficult conversations) to change departments, get reassigned, or leave your job

- May hurt other relationships as you sever ties with this person
- Can have negative repercussions if you leave a project and then you're later blamed for its failure because you abandoned the team or client
- May make *you* seem as though you're difficult to work with

What it looks like in practice

When the 50-person department that Monique worked in was restructured, she wasn't happy with her new direct supervisor, Samir. "He didn't know how to manage. He was patronizing. He didn't seem interested in my contributions. And it wasn't clear what he wanted me to be doing," she explains. To make matters worse, she didn't believe in the direction Samir was taking the department, a unit that she had spent years helping to build. She repeatedly tried to get clearer directions from him, but the conversations quickly disintegrated, leaving Monique frustrated and Samir confused. "It felt near impossible to have a constructive conversation with him," she says.

After six months of pulling her hair out, Monique went to the head of HR, with whom she had a positive relationship. She didn't want to complain openly for fear that it would get back to her boss. "That would've felt like tattle telling. Instead, I explained to her that as Samir's responsibilities were expanding, he probably had more than enough to do," she says. She suggested that maybe

she could report to a different manager. "She thought it was an interesting idea," she says. A couple of weeks went by, and during one of her one-on-one meetings with Samir, he proposed the new reporting structure and asked how she felt about it. Her response, "Whatever's best for the team, I'm willing to do." Monique was very happy with her new manager and felt she had done the best she could do under the circumstances. "If things hadn't changed, I would've left the company," she says.

When Your Counterpart Takes the Lead

Sometimes you're not the one who gets to decide which option to pursue. Your counterpart may ask to be taken off your project. Or a colleague may start yelling at you in the hallway after a meeting. "If it's the other party who's having the problem, you may not be able to completely avoid having the conversation," says Brett. If you're put on the spot, try to delay the conversation for when you're in a better frame of mind so that you can make a smart choice about the option that will work best. (See chapter 4 for more on walking away from a conflict.)

Here are a few examples of language you could use to put off a fight with someone who's upset:

- "I understand you want to discuss this, but now isn't the best time. Can we schedule something at a later date so that we can talk it through?"
- "I can see you're really upset about this. Can we talk about this when we're both calmer?"

- "I'm not ready to have this conversation right now. I'm going to step outside to clear my head, and then perhaps we can meet tomorrow to talk about this."

If your counterpart makes the first move, then you must choose how to react. Your options are the same, but it would be hard for you to do nothing, for example, if he's requested that you sit down and talk about an issue. And you certainly won't need to exercise your right to exit if he's already done so.

Whether you're choosing an approach or whether your counterpart initiates a difficult conversation, there's work for you to do. You'll have to deal with your anger or hurt if you elect to do nothing, finagle a new position or job if you decide to exit the relationship, make a careful plan if you decide to address it indirectly, or prepare for a difficult conversation if you decide to address it directly. That work will be easier if you understand the two general approaches to conflict and which one you tend to favor.

CHAPTER 3

Recognize Your Natural Tendency

There are generally two types of people: those who avoid conflict and those who seek it. Neither style is better or worse, so instead of beating yourself up for being resistant to conflict or being drawn to it, accept that you have a default approach, says Amy Jen Su, an executive coach. Knowing which style is your (and eventually your counterpart's) natural tendency allows you to make smart choices about how to address the conflict and, if you decide to confront it, have a constructive conversation.

Of course, it's rare for a person to avoid conflict or seek it out all of the time. It's more likely that you adjust your style based on the context (are you at home or at work?); whom you're having the conflict with (your boss or your direct report?); and other things going on (is the organization under extensive scrutiny from investors; are you feeling particularly stressed-out, or did you just return

TABLE 3-1

Conflict styles at a glance

Avoiders	Seekers
• Shy away from disagreements. • Value harmony and positive relationships. • Often try to placate people or change the topic. • Don't want to hurt others' feelings. • Don't want to disrupt team dynamics.	• Are eager to engage in disagreements. • Care most about directness and honesty. • Strongly advocate for their own perspective. • Lose patience when people aren't being direct or honest. • Don't mind ruffling feathers.

from a rejuvenating vacation?). You might be willing to tell your sister that she's out of line, but you'd probably tone down a similar comment when you're directing it at a colleague. "This may be because we're more mindful with some audiences than others. With a customer you're trying to sell to, you might be more avoidant [of conflict]. With a peer you've worked with for years, you might be a seeker," says Jen Su.

Still, knowing which style you gravitate toward will help you make a conscious choice about how to address a disagreement. If you're an avoider, for example, your instinct may be to do nothing. But knowing that's your natural tendency can help you overcome your resistance to addressing issues. See table 3-1 for an overview of the characteristics of each. The following sections offer more detail to help you identify your most common approach.

Conflict Avoiders

Conflict avoiders are generally people who value harmony in the workplace. When they sense a disagree-

ment brewing, they will often try to placate the other person or change the topic. These aren't passive behaviors, but active things they do to prevent conflict from becoming an issue. They believe having positive relationships with their colleagues is extremely important and are often seen as easy to get along with. Liane Davey describes these people this way: "They worry that disagreeing might hurt someone's feelings or disrupt harmonious team dynamics. They fret that their perspective isn't as valid as someone else's, so they hold back."

This strategy is meant to make things easier, but it can take a toll. Conflict avoiders try to be nice and often avoid contentious topics. But "[these people] end up spending an inordinate amount of time talking to themselves or others—complaining, feeling frustrated, ruminating on something that already happened, or anticipating something that might happen," says Jen Su. This avoidance can have physical manifestations as well. Some of Jen Su's more conflict-avoidant clients have experienced headaches, back pain, and weight gain.

If you're a conflict avoider, here are some examples of how you might think:

> "My colleague interrupted me again. We're supposed to be leading this effort together, and this is his way of showing he's the boss. He just makes me look bad in front of the team. I've been replaying it in my mind over and over again."

> "Someone has to tell my direct report that her bad attitude is affecting the rest of the team, but I'm

dreading it. I've been thinking about it all day and haven't been able to get anything done."

"I know what they're going to say—that we can't have more resources due to budget constraints. This gives me such a knot in my stomach. I'll probably just give up on asking for this investment."

"If I can just keep a smile on my face at the meeting, people will understand that I don't want to talk about the bugs that came up last week."

Conflict Seekers

Conversely, conflict seekers will seize on brewing disputes and amplify them, often strongly advocating for their perspective. They don't have patience when they think people aren't being direct or honest, and they're willing to ruffle a few feathers. The tendency to dive into conflict may feed upon itself because of a neurochemical process, as Judith E. Glaser, a communications expert, explains: "When you argue and win, your brain floods with different hormones—adrenaline and dopamine—which make you feel good, dominant, even invincible. It's a feeling any of us would want to replicate. So the next time we're in a tense situation, we fight again."

This attraction to conflict also takes a toll, but often on others. "Seekers are extremely good at fighting for their point of view (which may or may not be right), yet they are completely unaware of the dampening effect their behavior has on the people around them. If one person is getting high off his dominance, others are being drummed into submission," says Glaser.

Although it may not negatively affect them in the moment, their effectiveness as leaders and colleagues suffers. Though they "win" the argument, conflict seekers may earn the reputation of being difficult to work with, quick to snap, or even mean. People may avoid working with them or even describe them as bullies.

If you're a conflict seeker, here are some examples of how you might think:

> "I can tell that many of them don't agree that we need to go with this vendor. But I know this is the right choice, even if they don't realize it yet."

> "Why can't we get into this right now? Everyone should just lay out what they think the new strategy should be, and then we'll choose the best option. Why are we being so nice?"

> "I couldn't believe my direct report had the nerve to question the deadline I laid out for the team. I was sure to shut her down and copied the others so that they all know in the future not to cross that line."

> "Sal's recommendation on this hiring issue is just plain stupid. I owed it to him to tell him when he tried to get me on board with the new policy."

Identify Yourself

After reading the descriptions above, you may immediately recognize yourself as an avoider or a seeker. If it's not clear to you, taking the time to get to know yourself

better is worthwhile. If a conflict erupts with your boss, you're not going to run home to take a personality test or soul search about your personal relationship to conflict. You won't have time for that. Knowing your preferred approach before you get into a heated debate can help you be better prepared for a discussion when the time comes.

To better understand what your natural tendency is, look at the many factors that contribute to your default approach:

- **Past experience:** "Our relationship to conflict is anchored in a history of habit," says Jen Su. If you were shamed or criticized during a conflict early in your career, you might choose safety and harmony over speaking up, she says. Or perhaps your first mentor enjoyed sparring with coworkers, demonstrating that there was nothing to fear. Maybe you're from a large family, who thrived on lively dinner table debates, so you frequently adopt the role of devil's advocate to spark heated team discussions.
- **Cultural norms:** Brett makes it clear: "You confront based on the norm in your culture." As discussed in the previous chapter, in East Asian cultures, for example, it's common to use an indirect approach. Others are typically more direct, such as Latin American cultures. This doesn't mean that every Chinese manager is a conflict avoider or that every Mexican manager is a conflict seeker; it's just another factor.

- **Office context:** Every workplace has its own set of norms, and some teams have their own separate set of rules as well. In some offices, it's frowned upon to disagree openly; you're expected to resolve disagreements in private meetings or through email. In other offices, it's common to have a more open airing of conflict.

- **Gender norms:** There's a stereotype that most women are conflict avoiders and most men are conflict seekers, which stems from the view that women are more nurturing and care more about what others think, say Amy Jen Su and her coauthor Muriel Maignan Wilkins in their book, *Own the Room: Discover Your Signature Voice to Master Your Leadership Presence.* But in practice this isn't necessarily true. Some women may opt to take less direct approaches to conflict because they know they will be penalized for being assertive. In fact, researchers at Harvard Business School and Babson College have shown that when women negotiate, people (both men and women) are less likely to want to work with them. So some women may lean toward being avoiders not because it's their natural tendency but because they know the social costs of being a conflict seeker are higher for them.

If you're still not sure which camp you fall into, here are several tips for unearthing your preference.

Develop healthy self-awareness

Ask yourself some of the following questions about your current and previous relationship with conflict.

- Were you always more of a fighter? Or did you tend to accommodate others?
- Look back over particular moments of conflict early in your life or career—were you rewarded or punished for your approach?
- When you think about conflict now, do you get a pit in your stomach and feel like fleeing?
- Or does your heart race and you feel the urge to jump in?
- The last time tensions got high with someone at work or at home, how did you react?
- When you were growing up, how was conflict handled in your family?
- Do you come from a culture where conflict is handled more directly or one where it's frowned upon?
- What is the norm in your organization? In your unit? On your team? Do you adopt the typical approach or play against type?

Look for patterns in your answers. Perhaps you had always been a seeker until you were criticized as being "too aggressive" in an early performance review. Or

maybe you notice that you tend to avoid conflict unless the issue is something you really care about, such as your team. You may be able to understand your tendency just by answering these questions. But it's also helpful to get more input.

Ask for feedback

It's tough to see ourselves for who we really are, so ask others to reality check your observations. Get feedback from trusted colleagues, a caring mentor, or even your spouse. Inquire specifically about conflict situations: "Do you see me as someone who backs away from disagreement? Or do I enjoy digging into an argument?" Jen Su warns that conflict seekers need to say explicitly that they want genuine and honest input. "More-aggressive people tend not to get the tough feedback they need because their colleagues are often afraid of them and don't want to trigger them." It's important, therefore, to ask someone who you know will be candid with you, perhaps someone who has little to lose in telling you the truth.

Take an assessment

Many of the psychometric tests that people use in the workplace, such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), help you better understand how you handle conflict. However, there's one tool that's focused specifically on understanding your conflict style: the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). The tool categorizes you as having one of five conflict-handling styles—avoiding, accommodating, compromising, collaborating,

or competing—based on your answers to several questions. It's not time intensive (it usually takes about 15 minutes to complete), but there is a fee.

Reflecting on your approach is only half the battle; you also need to get a sense of how your counterpart prefers to approach disagreements before you can have a productive conflict.

SECTION TWO

Managing a Conflict

CHAPTER 4

Assess the Situation

When you're faced with a specific situation, there are five things to do to assess the scenario at hand before taking action—understand your counterpart; identify the type of conflict you're facing; consider the organizational context; determine your goal; and, finally, pick one of the four options you'll take to deal with this particular situation.

The first time you analyze a conflict using these five steps it will take some time, but eventually the analysis will get easier. The goal is to be able to quickly do these steps in your head whenever a disagreement arises.

Understand Your Counterpart

First, consider whom you're dealing with. Is he a conflict seeker or avoider? How does he typically communicate and how does he prefer to be communicated with? Is

he more of a straight shooter who says things like they are or does he tend to beat around the bush? If you frequently work with the person you're in conflict with, you may already be familiar with his style. If you rarely interact with the person, you'll have to do some digging. "More and more we're working with people whom we don't have the luxury of getting that kind of intelligence on," says Amy Jen Su. It may be that you're fighting with an overseas colleague whom you see in person only at annual meetings, or your conflict is with a manager in a different department who sits in another building. "It's better to know something about the person rather than fighting in a vacuum," Jen Su says. She suggests that you get whatever information is available. Here's how.

Look for patterns

Whether or not you know your counterpart well, play the role of observer. How does she handle a tense discussion in a meeting? What's the look on her face when other people are disagreeing? Does she like people to cut to the chase and lay out just the facts or does she want the complete picture with every gory detail? What have you observed about her communication style? Look for patterns in how she communicates and clues in her behavior. "People who are volatile and confrontational, for example, tend to be that way in a lot of different situations," says Brett. Ideally you'll observe the person over time in multiple scenarios. That may not be possible, so take what you can get. Just keep in mind that the fewer instances you see, the less likely you'll be able to deduce an accurate pattern.

Get input from others

In addition to examining your counterpart's behavior, you might ask a colleague or two for input. Don't go around grilling others about him, but ask people to confirm or deny your observations. Say something like, "I noticed Jim flew off the handle in that meeting. Is that typical?" or "I saw Katerina avoid engaging with Tomas when he questioned whether her figures were right. Did you see the same thing?" You can also ask more direct questions: "Can you tell me how this person typically navigates conflict?" Obviously, you have to trust the person you're asking—you don't want your colleague to find out you're snooping on him.

Use this same approach to figure out cultural and office norms. If you're dealing with a vendor based in a different country, for example, or a colleague who's located halfway around the world, ask someone who knows that person or is familiar with the culture or office environment how conflict is typically handled. Erin Meyer suggests saying something along these lines: "Here's how I would deal with this in my culture. How would you typically approach it?" She also recommends that you seek out "cultural bridges," people who work in your culture and in your counterpart's. These are often ex-pats who've relocated to another office or people based out of headquarters who have to work across multiple locations.

Ask directly

It's not always advisable to come out and ask: "How do you like to address conflict?" That can be awkward—few

people will be prepared to answer this question. Instead, share your own preferences as a way to start the conversation: "You might have noticed that I am more of a conflict seeker. I don't shy away from arguments, and I tend to get worked up quickly." You could also share tactful observations about what you've noticed about your counterpart. "Based on how you responded to Corinne's questioning in this morning's meeting, it seems as if you prefer to steer away from conflict. Is that right?"

You're trying to learn what someone's style is, not judge it. Instead of saying "We've got a problem here because it seems as if you don't know how to discuss conflict," you might ask, "What do you do in your culture when people disagree?" It's better to ask questions than make statements, and use phrases that ask for confirmation, such as "Correct me if I'm wrong . . ." or "Do I have this right?" Meyer points out that there's nothing wrong with showing curiosity. "People always like to be asked about themselves," she says.

Once you learn more about the culture, use that knowledge to help you understand your situation better. Why did he speak to me like that? What did he mean? "If you're dealing with someone from the Netherlands and he speaks to you in a really direct way," says Meyer, "you can interpret that behavior differently than if someone from China was short with you." Was the person really being rude? Was he intentionally being vague and trying to hide something? Or is there a cultural reason for him to speak or behave like that?

If you come up empty-handed

If your digging doesn't turn up adequate information, all is not lost. Although it helps, having this information is not a prerequisite to a productive conversation. Instead, prepare by playing out a few scenarios. What if she's a conflict seeker and gets mad at me? What if he yells? What if she's an avoider and gets upset? Or tries to leave the room?

You may even want to role-play with another coworker. If you do, Jen Su suggests you play your counterpart and your coworker acts as you. That will help you take your counterpart's perspective and ask yourself, How would I want that person to interact with me? This will also allow you to better understand how your counterpart sees you.

How Your Styles Work Together

Now that you have a sense of your approach to conflict and have gleaned some insights into your counterpart's preferences, how will your styles interact? If you're both seekers, can you expect an all-out brawl? If you're both avoiders, should you forget the idea of directly addressing the conflict? See table 4-1 to get a sense of what typically happens between each of the types and how you might manage it.

Identify the Type of Conflict

Next, think about what's causing the conflict. Review the four types of conflict I identified in chapter 1, "Types

TABLE 4-1

How conflict approaches work together

	You are an *avoider*	**You are a *seeker***
Your counterpart is an *avoider*	**What happens:** • Both of you lean toward doing nothing. • You may tamp down feelings that could explode later on. **How to manage:** • One of you needs to take the lead. • Say directly, "I know we both don't like conflict, but instead of doing nothing, should we consider other options?" • Do your best to draw the person out in a sensitive, thoughtful way. • If things get tough, don't shy away. Fight your natural instinct.	**What happens:** • You tend to bulldoze your counterpart into agreeing with you. • Your counterpart may act passive-aggressively to get his point across. **How to manage:** • Ask the person to participate actively in the conversation—not hide her opinions. • Don't be a bully. • Be patient with the pacing of the conversation.
Your counterpart is a *seeker*	**What happens:** • You are tempted to play the role of "good guy" and go along with what your counterpart wants. • You might get trampled by your counterpart's requests. **How to manage:** • Explicitly ask for what you need: "To have a productive conversation, I need you to be patient with me and watch the tone and volume of your voice." • Earn the seeker's respect by being direct and to the point. • Don't signal disrespect, which is likely to set the seeker off.	**What happens:** • Neither of you is afraid to say what's on your mind. • The discussion turns contentious. • You might end up saying things you don't believe. • You both feel disrespected. **How to manage:** • Since you'll both be eager to address the situation, take extra time to prepare for the conversation. • Know that you're likely to feel impatient and schedule your discussion in a way that allows you both to take breaks. • Be ready—things may get heated. Suggest a coffee break or a walk or a change of scenery to help even out emotions.

Source: Adapted from an interview with Amy Jen Su, coauthor with Muriel Maignan Wilkins of *Own the Room*: *Discover Your Signature Voice to Master Your Leadership Presence* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013).

of Conflict," and suss out whether your disagreement is over issues related to relationship, task, process, or status (see table 1-1).

Go over what's happened so far with your counterpart—what she's said and done, who else has been involved, where the disagreement started, and what it's related to. With all that information, ask yourself: Are we disagreeing about the goal of a project, or how to achieve it? Does my counterpart think she should be leading the initiative? Have we exchanged barbs? Or all of the above?

Rarely do conflicts fall into just one of these categories, so try to identify each type of conflict that's occurring. Doing this helps you to:

- **Organize your own thoughts.** In the midst of a conflict, rational thinking often goes out the window. Considering what type of conflict you're having will help you set aside your emotional reactions and structure your thinking. If you decide to directly address the situation, parsing the conflict into categories will set you up for a successful conversation (see chapter 5, "Get Ready for the Conversation").

- **Identify common ground.** By labeling your differences of opinion, you'll also see where you and your counterpart concur. If you disagree on how exactly to compensate a customer who received bad service (process), you may note that you agree on the need to make the customer happy (task).

This shared goal becomes a foundation for reaching a resolution (see chapter 6, "Have a Productive Conversation").

- **Structure the conversation.** Before you begin your discussion with your counterpart, create a list of the types of conflict you're experiencing and the specific issues you disagree on. This will help guide your conversation and keep you focused on the issue at hand.

Be particularly careful when labeling a disagreement a "relationship conflict." Many disagreements do end up here, but personalities are not always to blame, says Ben Dattner, author of *The Blame Game: How the Hidden Rules of Credit and Blame Determine Our Success or Failure.* "More often than not, the real underlying cause of workplace strife is the situation itself rather than the people involved." What people *think* they're fighting about isn't actually what they *are* fighting about. For example, they might perceive the root cause of the struggle to be a personality clash when in fact it's a process conflict.

Dattner explains: "Perhaps the conflict is due to someone on the team simply not doing her job, in which case talking about personality as being the cause of conflict is a dangerous distraction from the real issue . . . Focusing too much on either hypothetical or irrelevant causes of conflict may work in the short term, but it creates the risk over the long term that the underlying causes will never be addressed or fixed."

Determine Your Goal

Before you decide which approach to take, determine what you hope to accomplish. Keeping in mind the personalities of the people involved, their communication styles, and the type of conflict you're having, reflect on your ultimate goal: Do you want to complete the project quickly? To deliver the best results you can? Does your relationship with this person matter more than the outcome of the work? Figure out what you need to get done. If you're under pressure to complete a presentation by a certain date and your counterpart in sales is complaining about how much data you need from him, you might consider doing nothing so that you can get the numbers you need and hit your deadline. Later you could explain to the sales guy how his griping impacted you and ask what would work better for him for future requests.

If you're having more than one type of conflict, you might set more than one goal. For example, if you're fighting with your conflict-seeking boss about which metrics to report to the senior leadership team (task conflict) and you and your boss have exchanged heated emails that challenge each other's understanding of web analytics (relationship conflict), your goal may be to come up with a set of stats that you can both live with *and* to make sure that your boss understands that you respect her and her expertise.

Make sure your goal is reasonable, suggests IMD's Jean-François Manzoni, who has conducted extensive research on conflict management. Ask yourself: Does

what I want make sense? Is it realistic? If not, set your sights a little lower. Come up with a small, manageable goal, such as "agreeing on which of us will own the redesign project" or "creating a six-week plan for how our team will collaborate." If you're disagreeing over how to proceed on an important project, your goal might be to end the conversation by simply agreeing on the next step rather than cementing a full implementation plan.

It's not uncommon, particularly with relationship conflict, to want to set a goal that's about changing the other person. Perhaps you'd like to show your colleague that her passive-aggressive behavior doesn't work or make sure your boss knows what a jerk he's been for the past week. But these kinds of agendas are better dropped before they lead to full-on fights.

"It's easy to become aggravated by other people's actions and forget what you were trying to achieve in the first place," says Jeffrey Pfeffer, of Stanford's Graduate School of Business. But it's not likely you're going to change the other person, so focus on your goal. If the conflict were over and you found that you had won, what would that look like?

Pick Your Option

Now it's time to decide what to do. Taking into account your goal, and the other person's natural tendency and communication style, which of the four options discussed in chapter 2 is best for handling the specific situation you're in (see table 4-2)?

There is no magic formula that tells you which approach to take. It's not like two conflict seekers having a

TABLE 4-2

The four options for addressing conflict

The option	What it is	Use it when . . .
Do nothing	Ignoring and swallowing the conflict	• You don't have the energy or time. • You suspect the other person is unwilling to have a constructive conversation. • You have little or no power. • You won't beat yourself up or stew about it.
Address indirectly	Skirting the issue instead of naming it	• It's important in your culture to save face. • You work in a place where direct confrontation is inappropriate. • You think the other person will be more willing to take feedback from someone else.
Address directly	Actively trying to change the situation by talking to the other person	• You worry that there will be lingering resentment if you don't clear the air. • You've tried other options and the problem persists. • You want to get your relationship with your counterpart back on track.
Exit	Getting out of the situation entirely by being reassigned to another project, finding a new boss, or leaving the company	• You're dealing with someone from another department or outside your company where your jobs aren't interdependent. • You can easily find a job somewhere else. • You've tried other options and nothing has worked.

relationship conflict who want to restore a friendly rapport should always use the "address directly" approach. The reality is that the option you choose depends on all of the above factors as well as other circumstances, such as your office norms or the amount of time pressure you're under. Play out each option in your head and

assess the pros and cons for your specific situation. If you do nothing, will you be able to let go of the conflict? If you directly confront, will your counterpart be able to engage constructively? There is no one right answer; there's just the one that's right for you and the circumstances you're in. (See also the sidebar "Know When to Walk Away.")

Be mindful of your natural tendency

Because the conflict may have triggered a fight-or-flight response in your brain, your immediate response—"We need to address this right away" or "I'm going to find a new job"—may not be the best one. Conflict avoiders often gravitate toward the first two options (doing nothing or addressing the conflict indirectly), while seekers prefer the latter two (addressing directly or exiting). Keep this in mind when you're choosing your option. Ask yourself whether you're doing what's best for the situation—and will most likely help you achieve your goal—or if you're opting for an approach that's most comfortable for you.

Cool down before deciding

Brett says that it's wise to take a breather before choosing an approach. "Weighing whether to bring up and try to resolve a conflict should be a rational decision. The first question to ask yourself: Am I too emotional right now?" she says. If so, take a step back from the conflict. Return to your desk and take a few deep breaths. Go for a walk outside. Or sleep on it. You want to be sure whatever route you choose is based on a lucid decision, not a rash one.

KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY

It's not an easy decision to walk away from a conflict—temporarily or permanently. But it's important to recognize when the situation calls for it. "If you're angry or upset—or your colleague is—it's not a good time to engage. It won't help if either of you is yelling or pounding the table," says Jeanne Brett. She explains that there's a lot of research that shows people are unable to be rational when their emotions are high (see more on managing your emotions in chapter 6).

Judith White, a leadership professor at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth, says there are several signs that you need to walk away—at least temporarily:

- Your counterpart is yelling or is otherwise out of control.
- You feel as if you're going to lose control in any way that might be dangerous to you, your counterpart, or your relationship.
- The fight is happening in a public setting where others can see or hear you.
- It becomes obvious that the discussion can't be resolved through the current conversation. You or your counterpart repeating the same argument over and over is the telltale sign here.
- Your colleague has never demonstrated a willingness to concede.

(*continued*)

KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY

(*continued*)

- The damage is already done. For example, maybe the project you're fighting over ended last week and the decision can't be reversed.

Once you've made the tough decision to walk away, how do you actually do it? Here are some tips:

- If the situation feels overly heated or dangerous, simply walk away. Leave the room, go to the bathroom, or take a walk outside the building.
- If you can, explain that you need some time to think through the conflict before coming back to it. "Don't ever tell someone he or she needs to calm down, because the person will lose face or only become more upset," advises White. (For more sample language examples, see chapter 2, "Your Options for Handling Conflict.")
- Take the time you need to cool down (or let your counterpart cool down). When you feel ready to make a smart and thoughtful choice about how to address the conflict, you can return to it.

Here's an example. Jonathan was meeting with his project manager, Rebecca, about why they were falling behind in their deadlines. As a conflict seeker, he was

asking pointed questions to get at the root of what was behind the delays. Rebecca was getting more and more agitated as Jonathan went line by line through the plan. Soon Rebecca snapped. She stood up and pointed her finger at Jonathan, accusing him of badgering her. "This is your fault, not mine," she said. Jonathan quickly apologized for pushing so hard, but Rebecca wouldn't hear it. She yelled, "I don't need your apologies. I need you to stop %^@# harassing me." Jonathan realized he was stuck. Rebecca had lost control, and he didn't feel like anything he said would help. He stood up and said, "I'm sorry that this conversation has taken this turn. I'm going to go back to my desk to think through how we might resolve this. It'd be great if we could regroup tomorrow." Rebecca sent him an apology later that night, and when they had both calmed down the next day, they were able to have a more rational conversation about how to get the project back on track.

Sometimes delaying a tense conversation by a day helps, as it did with Rebecca and Jonathan. But sometimes, a day is not enough. You may be faced with a situation in which you decide to permanently walk away—by either doing nothing or exiting the relationship entirely. Whether or not you do this, says White, depends on two questions: How important is this relationship? How potentially valuable is this deal? As

(*continued*)

KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY

(*continued*)
Deepak Malhotra and Max H. Bazerman point out in *Negotiation Genius: How to Overcome Obstacles and Achieve Brilliant Results at the Bargaining Table and Beyond*, you shouldn't negotiate when the costs of negotiation exceed the potential gains.

Exiting the relationship is particularly advisable when the situation is causing you extreme discomfort—your health is suffering, for example. If you can't concentrate on anything else or are having panic attacks, there's no sense enduring more torture. Also, if your counterpart is singling you out and trying to prevent you from doing your job, it's time to take extreme measures. Speak to someone else, such as your boss or an HR representative, to see what support is available to you.

In a highly emotional conflict—in which one or both parties are extremely angry or upset—it can be tempting to exercise the exit option. But even situations in which feelings are running high can benefit from you opting to address it, or even doing nothing. Judith White says: "It's natural for people to feel strong emotion in a conflict situation. Once the conflict is identified and addressed, and parties are allowed to vent, emotion usually dissipates . . . Recognize the emotion, but don't let it stop you from negotiating."

Adapt Your Approach

Managing conflict is a fluid process. You may start with one approach and then find you need to switch to another if your selected approach is no longer working or the conflict grows or changes. For example, you may decide to directly address the situation by talking with your colleague about why you're disagreeing over the targets each of your teams should be hitting, but then find that you're getting nowhere: Your coworker is unresponsive or, worse, frustrated that you don't agree with her and just gets angrier. Then you may decide to do nothing and move on. You could also start with the do-nothing option and realize that the problem is getting worse, so you need to address it directly, by talking with your colleague, or indirectly, by going to your boss. As you weigh the options for your specific situation, you don't have to make a choice and stick to it no matter what. You can always change tactics as your conflict plays out.

Consider this example. Amara and Vivek work closely in a small design group. Amara has to complete her initial designs before Vivek can take over the presentations and do the formatting that is his responsibility. In a team meeting, Vivek made an offhand comment about Amara "taking her time" with the latest batch of presentations. Amara thought about the statement, and even talked about it with another colleague, and she concluded that it could be interpreted in several ways, but the implication was that Amara's speed was impacting Vivek's work. Amara tends to avoid conflict, so she didn't like the idea

of bringing it up with Vivek. Plus they had worked well together for so long. She didn't see the point.

She thought she could let it go. And for a few weeks, she did. But soon she realized that it was still bothering her. Every time she handed something off to Vivek, she mentally replayed his saying "She's taking her time," so she decided to address the situation directly. She scheduled an appointment with Vivek to ask what he had meant and to find a way to move forward.

The fluidity of the process can work the other way, too. Take Marie's story. She called one of her long-time vendors to directly address and explain that her company's payment terms had changed. In the middle of the conversation, Claude, the finance manager at the vendor, hung up on her. She emailed him and said that she'd like to set up a time to talk. But when they got on the phone again, Claude wouldn't say anything other than "This doesn't work for us." Marie was offended and frustrated. Recognizing that the direct approach wasn't working, she decided to go to Claude's boss and appeal to him. She didn't want to get Claude in trouble, but they clearly weren't able to resolve the conflict on their own. Soon after she spoke with Claude's manager and explained the situation, Claude called her and offered to negotiate the terms.

The next two chapters talk about preparing for and conducting a conversation if you've decided to address the conflict directly. Even if you've chosen one of the other options, your approach may change, so it's best to be prepared.

CHAPTER 5

Get Ready for the Conversation

Once you've resolved to directly address the conflict, it's tempting to have the conversation immediately. But taking time to prepare will help you remain calm and increase the chances that you and your counterpart will come away with a better solution than either of you could have predicted.

Below are several guidelines to help you prepare for a productive discussion.

Check Your Mindset

If you're getting yourself ready for a conversation that you've labeled "difficult," you're more likely to feel nervous, stressed, angry, or upset. To minimize those negative emotions, try to think about it as a non-charged conversation, suggests Jean-François Manzoni. For example, instead of giving negative feedback, you're having

a constructive conversation about development. Or you're not saying "no" to your boss; you're offering up an alternative solution.

"A difficult conversation tends to go best when you think about it as just a normal conversation," says Holly Weeks, a communications expert. This isn't sugarcoating. Be honest with yourself about how hard the conversation might be, but also put as constructive a frame on it as possible. You might tell yourself: We may have to talk about difficult things, but we'll work through them together because Carol and I have always respected each other.

And focus on what you stand to gain from the conversation. "Assume you have something to learn; assume there is a more creative solution than you've thought of," says Jeff Weiss, author of the *HBR Guide to Negotiating*. By entering the discussion with an open mind, regardless of your coworker's stance, you're more likely to find common ground.

Take Your Counterpart's Perspective

Try to get a sense of what your colleague might be thinking. Ideally you already did some thinking about this when you analyzed the conflict, but go a little deeper. She had a rationale for the way she's behaved so far (even if you don't agree with it). What might that reason be? "Try to imagine your way into their shoes as best you can. You can learn a lot by doing that simple mental exercise," says Jonathan Hughes. Think about what's going on for them. Ask yourself: What would I do if I were her, or if I were in R&D instead of marketing? What if I were

someone reporting to me? What if I were my boss? Also ask yourself: What is she trying to achieve in the conflict? You'll need a sense of what her goal is if you want to resolve it. Identify places where you see eye to eye on the issues. This common ground will give you a foundation to joint problem-solve.

Ask a colleague what he thinks is going on in your counterpart's mind. Make sure it's someone you trust, says Hughes. You might say something like, "I'd love some advice and coaching. I haven't worked much with Akiko before, but I know you have. Can you help me understand how she might be seeing this situation?" Don't use the conversation to vent and seek validation. "Paint the situation for him as neutrally as you can," says Karen Dillon, author of the *HBR Guide to Office Politics*. "Cataloging every fault and misstep will probably get you sympathy but not constructive feedback, so focus on the problem."

It's unlikely that you'll be able to gather all the information you want about your colleague and her interests before you sit down together. Weiss says, "Craft a set of questions to ask in the room to uncover critical information and test any hypotheses you made." This will help you, once you're face-to-face, to show that you care enough about her perspective to think it through beforehand and to discover more about how she views the situation.

In addition to thinking about your counterpart's take on the situation, remember the work you did in the previous chapter to consider his natural tendency for handling conflict and his communication style.

Consider the Larger Organizational Context

While the conflict may revolve around you and your counterpart, the reality is that you're both part of a broader context—that of your organization or your industry. Consider how the larger playing field you're operating in might be affecting the conflict.

First, determine the culture of your organization or team. Do people in your unit generally try to avoid conflict? Or is it acceptable to have heated debates? Are you at odds with an external vendor and feeling less invested in working things out because you have several other partners who are courting your business? How might the larger culture be shaping the current conflict you're having? Is it making it worse than it needs to be?

Hughes points out that quite a few years ago Microsoft had a reputation for having an aggressive culture. "During your first few presentations their people would just tear into you. The culture was one that valued conflict. 'We're going to use rigorous, fiery debate to separate good from bad ideas,'" he says. In a company like this, which places a premium on being direct, you'd need to be prepared for a lively debate and know not to take criticism personally. On the other hand, there are companies where consensus is the norm. "In these places, you're going to take a slower, more iterative approach to conflict," says Hughes.

Second, reflect on the current circumstances surrounding your organization. Are there potential layoffs

looming? Have budgets been cut? Is your industry on a downward trend? Your conflict may be intensified when tensions are high in the company, or it might take on a more severe or vicious tone. The answers to these questions may not change the approach you choose, but you should consider them as you get ready for the discussion. Also find out who else in the organization can help you both reach a resolution. Are there colleagues who need to be involved in the discussions? Should you consult your boss or HR?

Plan Your Message

Think about what you'll say when you get in the room *before* you get in the room, incorporating your goal and your colleague's perspective, interests, and style. What do you want your counterpart to take away from the conversation? "You'll have a better chance of being heard if you define your message and decide how you'll convey it," says Dillon. Plan how you'll approach the conversation—literally what you will and won't say. "View it as a presentation," suggests Dillon. "What information does your counterpart need to hear? Identify the key points you'd like to make, highlighting mutual benefits when possible." When you frame the conversation as trying to achieve a shared goal—such as meeting a deadline, coming in under budget, or having a positive work relationship—the conversation will go better.

But don't script the entire conversation. That's a waste of time. "It's very unlikely that it will go according to your plan," says Weeks. Your counterpart doesn't know

"his lines," so when he "goes off script, you have no forward motion" and the exchange "becomes weirdly artificial." Your strategy for the conversation should be "flexible" and contain "a repertoire of possible responses," says Weeks. Jot down notes and key points before your conversation. Even with thoughtful planning, it's not uncommon for there to be misalignment between what you mean when you say something (your intention) and what the other person hears (your impact). "It doesn't matter if your intent is honorable if your impact is not," says Linda Hill, a leadership professor at Harvard Business School. Most people are very aware of what they meant to say but are less tuned in to what the other person heard or how they interpreted it. So choose your words wisely, and try to anticipate and address anything that might be misinterpreted (see chapter 6, "Have a Productive Conversation," for more discussion tips).

Prepare for Multiple Scenarios

Since you can't know how the conversation is going to go, you may want to play out a few scenarios, suggests Amy Jen Su. Find a trusted colleague with whom you can do a few role-plays. What if your counterpart gets upset and cries? What if she gets angry? Try responding using different approaches and test out phrases you might use for various possibilities. And ask your role-play partner to give you feedback.

Pick the Right Time

Knowing exactly when to have the conversation can be challenging. On the one hand, it might be easiest to get

it over with quickly, when all the details are fresh in your mind. On the other hand, as discussed in the previous chapter, it's often a good idea for everyone to cool down before trying to get into problem-solving mode. Here are some tips on picking the right time:

- **Consider your tendency.** Check yourself before you decide to delay or get into the conversation. If you're a seeker, you're likely to want to get going and have the conversation. But if your counterpart is an avoider, he may need more time. And if you're an avoider, you may want to put the conversation off, but watch that you're not using that tactic as an "out" so that you don't have to face the issue at all.

- **Take into account any outside deadlines.** Sometimes you don't have the luxury of several days or weeks to work out your disagreement. If the budget you're fighting over is due to the executive committee by the end of the month and it's the 28th, you need to have the conversation sooner rather than later.

- **Check the emotions.** As discussed in the previous chapter, it's better to have the conversation when you and your counterpart can be level-headed. Ask yourself: Am I too emotional right now? If so, you may say the wrong thing, embarrass yourself or your colleague, or create awkward scenes for others. In those instances, take a walk around the building, or change your surroundings

by working in a small conference room or heading home to work in peace.

"Occasionally, you need to let it go and come back to it another time when you can both have the conversation," says Hill. It's OK to walk away and return to the discussion later. But if you decide to put off the conversation, make a plan for when you will have it so that you don't keep delaying it.

When you're ready, set up a meeting. Look for a time when you'll both be in a good frame of mind. "Not first thing on Monday when you're both coming in to a full inbox. Not last thing on Friday when you're eager for the weekend to begin," says Dillon. Be sure to schedule enough time so that you'll be able to reach a conclusion, or at least end in a constructive place where you can agree to meet again. In fact, you may want to have an initial meeting to hear each other out and then schedule a follow-up time when you can dig in to how to solve the disagreement after you've both had time to reflect on what the other person said.

Choose the Right Place

The venue will have an effect on whether you both feel able to speak freely, express any emotions, and ultimately reach a resolution, so select a location where you'll both be comfortable. "Right after lunch in a neutral conference room? Over coffee at the local greasy spoon?" suggests Dillon. You might take a walk outside together for a change of scenery. Avoid choosing a place that gives you or your counterpart an advantage. Inviting

someone into your office puts you in a power position, for example, because it's your space and you're the one sitting behind a desk. And when choosing a conference room, think about who's in adjacent rooms. Sometimes walls are thinner than you think.

Ideally you want the conversation to happen face-to-face in private. "Don't try to solve differences using email, which does not do a good job of conveying tone or nuance," says Dillon. If the issue starts on email, send a gentle request such as "Could we continue this discussion in person?" or just call the person.

If you have a conflict with one person during a meeting, don't attempt to work it out in front of the group, even if others in the room have a stake in the outcome. It's better to take the conversation off-line and then report back to the group. For example, if you and a colleague start to debate the specific marketing language that will accompany the rollout of a new product and the conversation gets heated, you might say, "Tom and I seem to have the strongest viewpoints on this. Would it be OK with you, Tom, if we paused here and continued the discussion after the meeting? Then we can come back to the group with our recommendation." This will give you and Tom time to cool down, make sure you don't embarrass yourselves in front of everyone, and allow you to have a more candid and fruitful discussion later.

Vent

Before you get into the room, find a trusted colleague or a spouse or friend who can listen to you complain. Say

everything you feel about the situation—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Don't hold back. Susan David, a psychologist and coauthor of the *Harvard Business Review* article "Emotional Agility," says that "suppressing your emotions—deciding not to say something when you're upset—can lead to bad results." She explains that if you don't express your emotions, they're likely to show up elsewhere.

Psychologists call this *emotional leakage*. "Have you ever yelled at your spouse or child after a frustrating day at work—a frustration that had nothing to do with him or her? When you bottle up your feelings, you're likely to express your emotions in unintended ways instead, either sarcastically or in a completely different context. Suppressing your emotions is associated with poor memory, difficulties in relationships, and physiological costs (such as cardiovascular health problems)," David explains. Prevent your emotions from seeping out—in the conversation or at home—by getting your feelings out ahead of time. You'll be more centered and calm when you're having the discussion.

Table 5-1 summarizes the guidelines. Use this checklist to prepare mentally, strategically, and logistically for your discussion.

When You Have No Time to Prepare

Sometimes there's no time to do this advance work. A decision needs to be made immediately, or your colleague catches you off guard, or your boss storms into

TABLE 5-1

Your pre-conversation checklist

MENTALLY

	Do	Don't
☐ CHECK YOUR MINDSET Be positive, but also honest with yourself about how difficult the conversation may be. ☐ CONSIDER THE OTHER POSITIONS Look at the situation from your counterpart's perspective: What does she want? ☐ VENT Get your emotions out beforehand so you can be calm during the conversation.	• Focus on what you stand to gain from the discussion and assume you have something to learn. • Ask a trusted coworker for input if you're at a loss about what your counterpart is thinking. • Identify places where you see eye to eye. • Get your feelings out ahead of time so you'll be more centered and calm. • Come up with a list of questions you want to ask when you sit down together.	• Label the conversation as "difficult." • Sugarcoat what's going to happen. • Assume you can know everything your counterpart is thinking ahead of time. • Vent to a friend who typically riles you up.

STRATEGICALLY

	Do	Don't
☐ PLAN YOUR MESSAGE Think about what you'll say ahead of time. ☐ PREPARE FOR MULTIPLE SCENARIOS Play out various ways the conversation might go.	• Plan how you'll approach the conversation—literally what you will and won't say. • Focus on a shared goal. • Find a trusted colleague with whom you can do a few role-plays. • Test out phrases you might say.	• Script the entire conversation—just jot down notes and key points. • Assume you know how the conversation is going to go.

(*continued*)

TABLE 5-1 (*continued*)

LOGISTICALLY		
	Do	**Don't**
☐ PICK THE RIGHT TIME Choose a time when you and your counterpart can be unrushed and calm. ☐ SELECT THE RIGHT PLACE Look for somewhere you can meet in private.	• Pick a time when you and your counterpart won't be rushed. • Consider an initial meeting to hear each other out, and then schedule a follow-up time when you can focus on problem-solving. • Talk in person, or at least on the phone. • Try a change of scenery—going to a coffee shop or taking a walk.	• Have the conversation over email • Try to talk to your colleague when emotions are high. • Have a fight in a group setting (such as in a team meeting). • Choose a "turf" setting where you or your counterpart has a power advantage.

your office. Jeanne Brett suggests you try to put off the conversation if at all feasible. You might say, "I see that this is a problem, and I'd like to take some time to think about ways to resolve it. I promise I'll come by your office tomorrow to discuss it." It's important to not be dismissive and to acknowledge your colleague's feelings—"I can see you're really upset about this"—and then ask whether you can set a time to talk when you're both calmer. If your counterpart insists that you have the discussion right then, you might have to go ahead. "The best you can do in these situations is to remain calm and stop yourself from getting into a negative emotional spiral," says Brett. (See chapter 6 for more on how to maintain your composure and manage your emotions.)

You may be wondering, Do I really need to do all of this for one 10-minute conversation? The answer is yes. While it takes time (though it will get easier the more you do it), there is a huge payoff. You'll go into the conversation with the right mindset, feeling confident, knowing what you want to achieve. This foundation is the key to a productive discussion.

CHAPTER 6

Have a Productive Conversation

You're now ready to have a constructive discussion. Your goal is to work with your counterpart to better understand "the underlying causes of the problem and what you can do to solve it together," says Jeanne Brett.

First, frame the discussion so that you and your counterpart start off on the right foot. Then there are three things you'll do simultaneously as the conversation flows: Manage your emotions, listen well, and be heard.

When you sit down with your counterpart, don't be overly wedded to the information you've gathered in advance. Be flexible. "You don't want to be so prepared that you anticipate a particular reaction and you're not able to take in what's actually happening," says Amy Jen Su. If you see the behavior you expected, then label it (in your head) and continue to observe. But allow yourself to be surprised, too. The same goes for cultural norms.

"Knowing something about your colleague's culture gives you hypotheses to test. But just because you have an East Asian at the table doesn't mean he will be indirect," says Brett.

Frame the Conversation

Your first few sentences can make or break the rest of the discussion. Set the conversation up for success by establishing common ground between you and your counterpart, labeling the type of conflict you're having, asking your counterpart for advice, laying out ground rules, and focusing on the future. Here's more on how to do that.

Focus on common ground

"Too often we end up framing a conflict as who's right or who's wrong," Linda Hill says. Instead of trying to understand what's really happening in a disagreement, we advocate for our position. Hill admits that it's normal to be defensive and even to blame the other person, but implying "You're wrong" will make matters worse. Instead, state what you agree on. In chapter 4, when you identified the type of conflict you're having, you noted where there was common ground, and in chapter 5, you identified where your goals might overlap. Put those commonalities out there as a way to connect. "We both want to make sure our patients get the best care possible" or "We agree that the new email system should integrate with our existing IT systems" or "We both want our department to get adequate funding."

If you weren't able to pinpoint something that you both agreed on beforehand or you're not sure you know

what your counterpart's goal is, the easiest way to find out is to ask, says Jonathan Hughes, "although sometimes people need help crystallizing their goals." Explain what's important to you and then ask, "Is there any overlap with what you care about? Or do you have another goal?" Asking questions like these sets a collaborative tone.

Label the type of conflict

Acknowledge the type of conflict you're having—relationship, task, process, or status—and check with your counterpart that he sees it the same way. "It seems as if the crux of our disagreement is about where to launch the product first. Do you agree?" You may also want to reassure him that you value your relationship. This will convey to him that your point of contention is not a personal one. Say something like, "I really respect you and how you run your department. This is not about our relationship, but about how our two teams will work together on this project."

If your conflict covers several different types, as many do, name each one in turn so that they're all out on the table. Hughes suggests you say something along these lines: *It feels like we agree on the same goal here—to bring in revenue from this new product as soon as possible.* [Establishing common ground on task] *Our conflict seems to be more about how we do it—the timing of how quickly we roll out this product and whether we roll it out in target markets first.* [Labeling the process conflict] *In addition to that disagreement over the means, it seems—and I could be wrong about this—you feel some*

frustration with me about how I've approached this. [Naming the relationship conflict] *I want to put that all on the table because success is going to depend on us working together.*

Ask for advice

Research by Katie Liljenquist at Brigham Young University's Department of Organizational Leadership and Strategy and Adam Galinsky, the chair of the Management Department at the Columbia Business School, has shown that asking for advice makes you appear more warm, humble, and cooperative—all of which can go a long way in resolving a conflict. "Being asked for advice is inherently flattering because it's an implicit endorsement of our opinions, values, and expertise. Furthermore, it works equally well up and down the hierarchy—subordinates are delighted and empowered by requests for their insights, and superiors appreciate the deference to their authority and experience," say Liljenquist and Galinsky. Of course, any goodwill garnered by this tactic will swiftly be undone if you ignore your counterpart's suggestions. Incorporate at least some small part of what she advises into your approach.

There are two other benefits to framing a conflict as a request for advice, according to Liljenquist and Galinsky. First, you nudge your counterpart to see things from your perspective. "The last time someone came to you for advice, most likely, you engaged in an instinctive mental exercise: You tried to put yourself in the other person's shoes and imagine the world through his eyes," they explain. The second benefit is that an adversary-

turned-advisor may well become a champion for your cause. "When someone offers you advice, it represents an investment of his time and energy. Your request empowers your advisor to make good on his recommendations and become an advocate," they say.

Set up ground rules

The conversation will go more smoothly if you agree on a code of conduct. At a minimum, suggest no interrupting, no yelling, and no personal attacks. This is especially important for conflict seekers, who may see no problem in raising their voices. Acknowledge that you both may need to take a break at some point. Then ask what other rules are important to your counterpart. If you're concerned your colleague won't abide by the rules, write them down on a piece of paper to keep in front of you or on a whiteboard if you're in a conference room. If your counterpart begins to raise his voice, for example, you can nod toward the written rules and offer a gentle reminder. "We said we weren't going to yell. Can you lower your voice?" These rules may also be helpful if you need to change the tone of the conversation later on (see "Change the tenor of the conversation" later in the chapter).

Focus on the future

It's tempting to rehash everything that's happened up to this point. But it's generally not helpful to go over every detail or to focus too heavily on the past. "You can't resolve a battle over a problem that has already happened, but you can set a course going forward," says Judith White. Focus the discussion on solving the problem and

moving on. You can start by saying "I know a lot has gone on between us. If it's OK with you, I'd like to talk about what we both might do to make sure this project gets completed on budget and how we can better work together in the future." If your counterpart starts to harp on the past, don't chastise her for it. Instead, refocus the conversation by saying something like "I hear you. How can we make sure that doesn't happen again?"

Each of these steps will establish the right tone for your conversation: that you and your counterpart are in it together and you need to reach a resolution that works for both of you.

Manage Your Emotions—and Theirs

Conflict can bring up all sorts of negative emotions for seekers and avoiders alike. Recognize the emotion, but don't let it stop you from having the conversation. To watch your own reaction while also recognizing your counterpart's feelings, understand why conflict can feel so bad. Remain calm, acknowledge and label your feelings, and allow for venting. Let's take a closer look at how to manage emotions and clear the way for a productive discussion.

Understand why you're so uncomfortable

In the middle of a tough conversation, it can be difficult to take a deep breath and think rationally about what to do next. This is because you're fighting your body's natural reaction, says psychiatry professor John Ratey. Your brain experiences conflict, particularly relationship conflict, as a threat: *I disagree with you. You haven't done*

your job. I don't like what you just said. You're wrong. I hate you.

Leadership expert Annie McKee suggests that conflict makes us feel bad because it means we're going to have to give something up—our point of view, the way we're used to doing something, or maybe even power. That threat triggers your sympathetic nervous system. As a result, your heart rate and breathing rate spike, your muscles tighten, the blood in your body moves away from your organs. "Some people feel their stomach tense as acid moves into it," says Ratey.

Depending on the perceived size and intensity of the threat, you may then move into fight-or-flight mode. "When you're panicking, feeling crushed or overwhelmed, the body's response is to be aggressive—punch or push back—or to run away and hide," says Ratey. "This is when you're in it full-time and the discomfort goes all over your body. It's like seeing a bunch of snakes or spiders in front of you." When your brain perceives danger like this, it can be difficult to make rational decisions, which is precisely what you need to do in a difficult conversation. Luckily, it's possible to interrupt this physical response and restore calm in your body.

Remain calm

There are several things you can do to keep your cool during a conversation or to calm yourself down if you've gotten worked up. For conflict seekers, it's especially important to keep your temper in check. For avoiders, these tactics will help keep you from retreating from the conversation.

- **Take a deep breath.** Notice the sensation of air coming in and out of your lungs. Feel it pass through your nostrils or down the back of your throat. This will take your attention off the physical signs of panic and keep you centered.

- **Focus on your body.** "Standing up and walking around may activate the thinking part of your brain," says Ratey, and keep you from exploding. If you and your counterpart are seated at a table, instead of leaping to your feet, you can say, "I feel like I need to stretch some. Mind if I walk around a bit?" If that doesn't feel comfortable, do small things like crossing two fingers or placing your feet firmly on the ground and noticing what the floor feels like on the bottom of your shoes.

- **Look around the room.** Become more aware of the space between you and your counterpart, suggests Jen Su. Notice the color of the walls or any artwork hanging there. Watch the hands of the clock move. "Pay attention to the whole room," she says. "This will help you realize that there's more space in the room than you're currently allowing."

- **Say a mantra.** Jen Su also recommends repeating a phrase to yourself to remind you to stay calm. Some of her clients have found "Go to neutral" to be a helpful prompt. You can also try "This isn't about me," "This will pass," or "This is about the business."

- **Take a break.** You may need to excuse yourself for a moment—get a cup of coffee or a glass of water, go to the bathroom, or take a brief stroll around the office. If you agreed up front that this might happen, you can say, "I think I need that break now. OK if we come back in five minutes?" If pushing pause wasn't on your list of ground rules, you can still make the request: "I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I'd love to get a cup of coffee before we continue. Can I get you something while I'm up?"

Acknowledge and label your feelings

When you're feeling emotional, "the attention you give your thoughts and feelings crowds your mind; there's no room to examine them," says Susan David. To get distance from the feeling, label it. "Just as you call a spade a spade, call a thought a thought and an emotion an emotion," says David. *He is so wrong about that and it's making me mad* becomes *I'm having the thought that my coworker is wrong, and I'm feeling anger.* Labeling like this allows you to see your thoughts and feelings for what they are: "transient sources of data that may or may not prove helpful." When you put that space between these emotions and you, it's easier to let them go—and not bury them or let them explode.

Allow for venting

You're probably not the only one who's upset. When your counterpart expresses anger or frustration, don't stop him. Let him vent as much as possible and remain calm

while this is happening. Seekers may naturally do this, while you may have to draw an avoider out. If you took the time to air your own feelings with someone else (as discussed at the end of the previous chapter), you'll understand the importance of giving your counterpart this space. That's not to say it's easy. Brett explains:

> *It's hard not to yell back when you're being attacked, but that's not going to help. To remain calm while your colleague is venting and perhaps even hurling a few insults, visualize your coworker's words going over your shoulder, not hitting you in the chest. Don't act aloof; it's important to indicate that you're listening. But if you don't feed your counterpart's negative emotion with your own, it's likely he or she will wind down. Without the fuel of your equally strong reaction, he or she will run out of steam.*

Don't interrupt the venting or interject your own commentary. "Hold back and let your counterpart say his or her piece. You don't have to agree with it, but listen," Hill says. While you're doing this, you might be completely quiet or you might indicate you're listening by using phrases such as "I get that" or "I understand." Avoid saying anything that assigns feeling or blame, such as "Calm down" or "What you need to understand is . . ." This can be an explosive trigger for a conflict seeker. If you can tolerate the venting, without judging, you'll soon be able to guide the conversation to a more productive place. Refocus the conversation on the substance of the conflict

by saying "I'm glad I got to hear how this has affected you. What do you think we should do next?" This will begin to draw out potential solutions so that you can move toward a resolution.

Listen Well

"If you listen to what the other person is saying, you're more likely to address the right issues and the conversation always ends up being better," says Jean-François Manzoni. Hear your counterpart out and ask questions. Here are tips for doing that.

Hear your coworker out

Even if you think you already understand your coworker's point of view—and you've put yourself in her shoes ahead of time—hear what she has to say. This is especially important if you aren't sure of what the other person sees as the root of the conflict. Acknowledge that you don't know, and ask. This shows your counterpart "that you care," Manzoni says. "Express your interest in understanding how the other person feels" and "take time to process the other person's words and tone," he adds. Be considerate and show compassion by validating what she's saying with phrases such as "I get it" or "I hear you." According to Jeff Weiss, this requires that you "stop figuring out your next line" and actively listen. Your coworker's explanation of his side may uncover an important piece of information that leads to a resolution. For example, if he says he's just trying to keep his boss happy, you can help him craft a resolution that addresses his boss's concerns.

Ask thoughtful questions

It's better to ask questions than to make statements; questions demonstrate your receptiveness to a genuine dialogue. This is when you bring in the questions you crafted in the previous chapter to unearth your counterpart's viewpoint and test your hypotheses (see the sidebar "Questions to Draw Out Your Counterpart's Perspective"). Once you've had a chance to hear her thoughts, Hill suggests you paraphrase and ask, "I think you said X. Did I get that right?"

Don't just take what she says at face value. This is especially important for a conflict avoider, who may not tell you all that she's thinking. Ask what her viewpoint looks like in action. For example, says team expert Liane Davey, "If you are concerned about a proposed course of action, ask your teammates to think through the impact of implementing their plan. 'OK, we're contemplating launching this product only to our U.S. customers. How is that going to land with our two big customers in Latin America?' This is less aggressive than saying 'Our Latin American customers will be angry.'" She adds: "Anytime you can demonstrate that you're open to ideas and curious about the right approach, it will open up the discussion."

Hill suggests you also get to the underlying reason for the initiative, policy, or approach that you're disagreeing with. You've already labeled the conflict as relationship, task, process, and/or status, but return to those categories in your questions to give your counterpart the opportunity to share her view. How do you see the goal

QUESTIONS TO DRAW OUT YOUR COUNTERPART'S PERSPECTIVE

- What about this situation is most troubling to you?
- What's most important to you?
- Can you tell me about the assumptions you've made here?
- Can you help me understand your thinking here?
- What makes you say that?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- What leads you to believe that?
- How does this relate to your other concerns?
- What would it take for us to be able to move forward? How do we get there?
- What would you like to see happen?
- What does a resolution look like for you?
- What ideas do you have that would meet both our needs?
- If this was completely in your control, how would you handle it?

differently? Why do you think you're the best person to lead the team?

Figure out why your counterpart thinks his idea is a reasonable proposal. Say something like, "Sam, I want to understand what we're trying to accomplish with this initiative. Can you go back and explain the reasoning behind it?" Get Sam to talk more about what he wants to achieve and why. It's not enough to know that he wants the project to be done in six months. You need to know why that's important to him. Is it because he made a promise to his boss? Is it because the team that's dedicated to the project needs to be freed up to take on an important client initiative? These are his underlying interests, and they'll help you later when you're trying to craft a resolution that incorporates his viewpoint (see chapter 7, "Get to a Resolution and Make a Plan").

You can return to the notion of asking for advice here. Perhaps you genuinely don't understand something, or you're shocked by something your counterpart has said. Davey suggests that you be mildly self-deprecating and own the misunderstanding. "If something is really surprising to you (you can't believe anyone would propose anything so crazy), say so. 'I think I'm missing something here. Tell me how this will address our sales gap for Q1.' This will encourage the person to restate his perspective and give you time to understand it."

Respectfully listening to and acknowledging your counterpart's viewpoint sets the stage for you to share your side of the conflict. If he feels heard, he's more likely to hear you out as well.

Be Heard

When it's time to share your story, allow your counterpart to understand your perspective in a genuine way. "Letting down your guard and letting the other person in may help her understand your point of view," says Mark Gerzon, author of *Leading Through Conflict: How Successful Leaders Transform Differences into Opportunities*. Help your coworker see where you're coming from by speaking from your own perspective, thinking before you talk, and watching body language (yours and hers) for clues that the conversation may be going off the rails.

Own your perspective

If you feel mistreated, you may be tempted to launch into your account of the events: "I want to talk about how horribly you treated me in that meeting." But that's unlikely to go over well.

Instead, treat your opinion like what it is: your opinion. Start sentences with "I," not "you." Say "I'm annoyed that this project is six months behind schedule," rather than "You've missed every deadline we've set." This will help the other person see your perspective and understand that you're not trying to blame him.

With a relationship conflict, explain exactly what is bothering you and follow up by identifying what you hope will happen. You might say, "I appreciate your ideas, but I'm finding it hard to hear them because throughout this process, I've felt as if you didn't respect my ideas. That's my perception. I'm not saying that it's

your intention. I'd like to clear the air so that we can continue to work together to make the project a success."

Dorie Clark, author of *Reinventing You: Define Your Brand, Imagine Your Future,* says that you should admit blame when appropriate. "It's easy to demonize your colleague. But you're almost certainly contributing to the dynamic in some way, as well," Clark says. To get anywhere, you have to understand—and acknowledge—your role in the situation. Admitting your faults will help set a tone of accountability for both of you, and your counterpart is more likely to own up to her missteps as well. If she doesn't, and instead seizes on your confession and harps on it—"That's exactly why we're in this mess"—let it go. See it as part of the venting process described earlier.

Pay attention to your words

Sometimes, regardless of your good intentions, what you say can further upset your counterpart and make the issue worse. Other times you might say the exact thing that helps the person go from boiling mad to cool as a cucumber. See the sidebar "Phrases to Make Sure You've Heard." There are some basic rules you can follow to keep from pushing your counterpart's buttons. Of course you should avoid name-calling and finger-pointing. Focus on your perspective, as discussed above, avoiding sentences that start with "you" and could be misinterpreted as accusations. Your language should be "simple, clear, direct, and neutral," says Holly Weeks. Don't apologize for your feelings, either. The worst thing you can do "is to ask your counterpart to have sympathy for you,"

PHRASES TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE HEARD

- "Here's what I'm thinking."
- "My perspective is based on the following assumptions . . ."
- "I came to this conclusion because . . ."
- "I'd love to hear your reaction to what I just said."
- "Do you see any flaws in my reasoning?"
- "Do you see the situation differently?"

she says. Don't say things like "I feel so bad about saying this" or "This is really hard for me to do," because it takes the focus away from the problem and toward your own neediness. While this can be hard, especially for conflict avoiders, this language can make your counterpart feel obligated to focus on making you feel better before moving on.

Davey provides two additional rules when it comes to what you say:

- **Say "and," not "but."** "When you need to disagree with someone, express your contrary opinion as an 'and.' It's not necessary for someone else to be wrong for you to be right," she says. When you're surprised to hear something your counterpart has said, don't interject with a "But that's not right!" Just add your perspective. Davey suggests

something like this: "You think we need to leave room in the budget for a customer event, and I'm concerned that we need that money for employee training. What are our options?" This will engage your colleague in problem solving, which is inherently collaborative instead of combative.

- **Use hypotheticals.** Being contradicted doesn't feel very good, so don't try to tit-for-tat your counterpart, countering each of his arguments. Instead, says Davey, use hypothetical situations to get him imagining. "Imagining is the opposite of defending, so it gets the brain out of a rut," she says. She offers this example: "I hear your concern about getting the right salespeople to pull off this campaign. If we could get the right people . . . what could the campaign look like?"

Watch your body language—and your counterpart's

The words coming out of your mouth should match what you're saying with your body. Watch your facial expression and what you do with your arms, legs, and entire body. A lot of people unconsciously convey nonverbal messages. Are you slumping your shoulders? Rolling your eyes? Fidgeting with your pen?

Increase your awareness of the energy you give off. In Amy Jen Su and Muriel Maignan Wilkins's book, *Own the Room,* they offer six places where nonverbal messages are communicated through body language: your posture; eye contact; the natural gestures you make typi-

cally with your hands; the tone, tempo, and timing of your voice; your facial expressions; and how you occupy the space around you (see table 6-1).

Through each of those points, you signal to others what you're thinking and feeling. Jen Su and Maignan Wilkins use the acronym CENTER to help people remember these six cue points. Table 6-1 shows different signals you might be sending depending on whether you're in an aggressive, conflict-seeking mode or a more passive, conflict-avoidant mode. Reviewing the table and considering the questions will help you maintain body language that's as open as the language you're using.

During your conversation, pay attention to each of these areas and take stock of the overall impression you're giving. Do the same for your counterpart. Watch what she's conveying through her body language. Again, her nonverbal cues may be sending a different message than what she's articulating. If that's the case, or if you're noticing any body language, ask about it. For example, you might say, "I hear you saying that you're fine with this approach, but it looks as if maybe you still have some concerns. Is that right? Should we talk those through?"

Change the tenor of the conversation

Sometimes, despite your best intentions and all of the time you put into preparing for the conversation, things veer off course. You can't demand that your counterpart hold the discussion exactly the way you want.

If things get heated, don't panic. Take a deep breath, mentally pop out of the conversation as if you're a fly on the wall, and objectively look at what's happening.

TABLE 6-1

Manage your body language during a conflict

	What others see when you're avoiding conflict	What others see when you're being aggressive	Questions to ask yourself to keep your body language open
Core posture	• Slouched, loose posture	• Propped, tense, wound-up posture	• What happens to your core posture? Are you standing tall? Slouching?
Eye contact	• Not holding eye contact	• Intense eye contact	• Do you hold eye contact or lose it?
Natural gestures	• Nervous gestures, fidgeting	• Using aggressive gestures like finger-pointing	• What gestures do you start to make? What do you do with your shoulders, hands, and feet?
Tone, tempo, timing	• High pitch or soft volume • Use of filler words such as um, ahs, or stutters	• Fast pace or loud volume • Judgmental or condescending tone	• How does the tone, tempo, and timing of your speech change?
Expressions of the face	• Wide, deer-in-headlights eyes	• Furrowed brows	• What expressions do you make with your face?
Regions and territory	• Shrinks down, doesn't take up space or fill the room	• Takes up too much space at the table or in the room	• How do you take up space in the room?

Source: Adapted from Amy Jen Su and Muriel Maignan Wilkins, *Own the Room: Discover Your Signature Voice to Master Your Leadership Presence* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013).

You might even describe to yourself (in your head) what's happening: "He keeps returning to the fact that I yelled at his team yesterday." "When I try to move the conversation away from what's gone wrong to what we can do going forward, he keeps shifting it back." "Every time I bring up the sales numbers, he raises his voice."

Then state what you're observing in a calm tone. "It looks as if whenever the sale numbers come up, you raise your voice." Suggest a different approach: "If we put our heads together, we could probably come up with a way to move past this. Do you have any ideas?"

"Stepping back and explicitly negotiating over the process itself can be a powerful game-changing move," says Weiss. If it seems as if you've entered into a power struggle in which you're no longer discussing the substance of your conflict but battling over who is right, step back and either return to your questions above or talk about what's not working. Say, "We seem to be getting locked into our positions. Could we return to our goals and see if we can brainstorm together some new ideas that might meet both our objectives?" See the sidebar "Phrases That Productively Move the Conversation Along." Returning your counterpart to his original goal may be enough to get the conversation back on track.

When to Bring in a Third Party

There are times, however, when you're getting nowhere with your counterpart and, even when you follow the principles above, you're still not able to have a productive discussion. Some problems are too entrenched, complicated, or emotional to sort out between two people. Or

PHRASES THAT PRODUCTIVELY MOVE THE CONVERSATION ALONG

- "You may be right, but I'd like to understand more."
- "I have a completely different perspective, but clearly you think this is unfair, so how can we fix this?"
- "Can you help me make the connection between this and the other issues we're talking about?"
- "I'd like to give my reaction to what you've said so far and see what you think."
- "I'm sensing there are some intense emotions about this. When you said 'X,' I had the impression you were feeling 'Y.' If so, I'd like to understand what upset you. Is there something I've said or done?"
- "This may be more my perception than yours, but when you said 'X,' I felt . . ."
- "Is there anything I can say or do that might convince you to consider other options here?"

your counterpart is too inflexible or unable to hear your side, insisting that it's her way or the highway.

The main indicator you may need outside help, says White, is when it seems as if your counterpart is perpetuating the conflict rather than trying to solve it. "She

may be alternatively conciliatory and antagonistic. Every time you seem to be making progress, she walks back from the tentative agreement and accuses you of not negotiating in good faith," she explains.

This is not a failure. "Someone who is not involved in the conflict may be able to provide vital perspective for both parties," says Gerzon. Ideally, you'll both agree that a third party is necessary before going with this option. But if you can't reach agreement on anything else, this might be difficult. In these cases, you may have to ask someone else to get involved without your counterpart's permission.

Who you bring in will depend on the nature of the conflict. Choose someone whom you both trust and can rely on to understand the issues but also brings an outside perspective. It might be one or both of your bosses. "For example," says Ben Dattner, "if roles are poorly defined, a boss might help clarify who is responsible for what." If the conflict is over how people are rewarded, you might turn to HR or a union representative. Dattner shares another example: "If incentives reward individual rather than team performance, HR can be called in to help better align incentives with organizational goals."

When you've exhausted all your internal options, or if there is no one to appeal to, you might need a trained mediator to help.

In the process of having a productive discussion with your counterpart—expressing your point of view and listening to hers—a resolution may naturally arise. It

may be that there was a misunderstanding and now it's cleared up. Or perhaps after hearing your colleague out, you realize you do agree with how she's approaching the project. Or as you talk through what her goals are, you stumble upon a solution that would work well for both of you.

If this doesn't happen organically, you'll have to more consciously work toward a resolution that meets both your and your counterpart's goals.

SECTION THREE

Resolving a Conflict

CHAPTER 7

Get to a Resolution and Make a Plan

When addressing the conflict directly, the final step is to broker a resolution between you and your counterpart. Start by understanding what a resolution looks like. Then with that goal in mind, take steps to narrow down the options and make the final call.

What a Resolution Looks Like

The details of each specific resolution will vary depending on the type of conflict you were having. With task conflict, the resolution is likely to be an agreement about what it is you want to accomplish—the stated objective for the project you're coleading or an agenda for the next managers' meeting. It will be something concrete that you can write down. The same goes for a process conflict.

Ideally you'll be able to document the process you'll use going forward—how to reach consensus before approving new projects or the sequencing for rolling out the IT initiative. With status conflict, the resolution may be reaching an understanding about who will lead a project or whose team is ultimately responsible for the success of the product launch.

Resolutions in a relationship conflict can be the most difficult to broker and recognize, especially because there are usually bruised feelings that take a while to heal. Often you might agree to each do something differently in the future—he will not raise his voice when he disagrees with you, and you will not run to your boss until you've talked with your counterpart first.

But no matter what type of conflict you were engaged in—relationship, task, process, or status—a resolution needs to meet the same three criteria.

It satisfies as many interests as possible

During your conversation, you spent a lot of time and energy explaining your perspective and goals. You also learned about your counterpart's underlying interests. Perhaps she wanted to be sure that her team was well represented at an important presentation so that they had an opportunity to show off their work, while you wanted the presentation to go quickly and smoothly so that there was plenty of time at the end for questions. It's possible—and preferable—that an agreement meets each of those interests reasonably well. "The essence of a resolution is that you get to what the underlying inter-

ests are and try to satisfy as many of them as possible," says Jonathan Hughes.

It's fair and reasonable

"We all want a resolution that feels fair and reasonable to everyone involved—and is defensible to others on the outside looking in," says Hughes. You should be able to answer yes to the following questions: "Do I think this is a reasonable solution?" "Does my counterpart?" "Can I defend it to my boss or anyone else who cares about the outcome?" We also want to feel as though we came to the agreement by ourselves and weren't pressured into conceding or giving in. So both the final arrangement and the process you used to reach it need to be fair.

The relationship is intact

If you reach a resolution that meets the business needs and is fair and reasonable, but you end up hating each other, then it's hard to call that a success. You want to be able to say that you maintained your relationship, or that you even improved it. "The icing on the cake is if you can honestly say to each other that you learned something about each other in the process," says Hughes, "and thus that the next disagreement or conflict will be that much easier to resolve together."

How You Reach a Resolution

Arriving at a resolution that meets those three criteria requires additional conversation, and it's up to you and your counterpart to come up with options. Be creative

and collaborative as you do that. Then evaluate the options you generated and make the final call together.

Be creative

Keep in mind your goal, and that of your counterpart, and when all the data is on the table, offer different options that ideally meet both of your needs. Are there ways to satisfy both of your interests and build on that to discover new benefits neither one of you envisioned on your own? Consider a salary increase. You may be fighting for a 10% raise, while your boss thinks you deserve 7%. Instead of just duking it out over the exact percentage, find a way to include something in the raise that's valuable to both of you. Perhaps you can take on a new project for your region that allows you to travel and get exposure to more senior leaders. Taking a creative approach to the conflict, instead of focusing on and nitpicking over a number, increases what you can both get out of it.

Don't get locked into your answer and his answer. Proposing several alternatives helps the other person see a way out, and it also signals humility, that you don't believe there's just one way to resolve this dispute: your way. Don't offer what you originally came to the table with, but use the information you gathered during your conversation to come up with a better solution. There are always additional ways of solving a problem. "When you're creative about how to meet your interests, you can begin to imagine a third way that might meet your needs well and work for both of you," says Hughes.

Be collaborative

Brainstorm possibilities together. If you propose a potential solution, ask for your counterpart's input. Ask, "What other ideas might you have?" and let him build on your ideas or offer others. When you suggest a potential resolution, don't just say, "Do you like it?" but invite criticism. Weiss suggests you ask "What would be wrong with this solution?" That better helps you understand his viewpoint and encourages him to also be creative.

Consider what you can offer

If you've proposed a solution that potentially puts the other person in a difficult spot or takes something away from her, ask yourself: Is there something I can give back? says Holly Weeks. If, for instance, you're telling your boss that you can't take on a particular assignment, propose a viable alternative, such as someone else who can fill the role equally well. "Be constructive," says Jean-François Manzoni. Or if you're laying off someone you've worked with for a long time, "you could say, 'I have written what I think is a strong recommendation for you; would you like to see it?'"

Decide how to evaluate the possibilities

With several options on the table, begin evaluating them. Agree on the criteria you'll use to select the best option. Perhaps you'll ask a disinterested third party to weigh in on your resolution and see if it looks fair. Or maybe you'll agree on certain requirements that the resolution

must meet, such as mitigating the risk of a lawsuit or being cost-effective. "It's often easier to agree on the criteria than the solution," says Hughes. These can be hard to establish in a relationship conflict, however. In those situations, fairness is usually the standard against which to evaluate possibilities.

This may all sound rational and reasonable, and maybe collaborating on a resolution will be exactly that. But just as emotions were a key element of the conflict up to this point, they're likely to be present in this part of the conversation as well. Continue to remain calm, acknowledge and label your feelings, and allow for venting when necessary. All the tips you learned for having a productive conversation in the previous chapter will continue to be useful here.

Make the final call

Often with task, process, and status conflict, there is a tangible decision to make. Are we going to finish this project in six months or one year? Can we fund this project and at the same time put a small amount of money toward another one that we'll plan to fully fund next year? Using the criteria you've laid out and the options you've developed, you and your counterpart must agree on which path to pursue and under which arrangements. Other times there is no decision to make, especially with relationship conflict. In those cases, "sometimes just talking it through will resolve it," says Hughes. Once you understand your counterpart's perspective, you may not feel so bad about the way he spoke to you in that meeting. And once he sees that you

misinterpreted his reaction, he may be more forgiving of the fact that you left the room before the meeting was over. "No one's at fault," says Hughes. "No one's the bad guy. And accepting that can take the sting out of the fight."

Document the agreement

This doesn't have to be formal, such as a contract. Capture your discussion in an email and send it with a quick note that asks, "Did I get this right?" Confirming what you've agreed to ensures you're on the same page and gives you both something to refer to should any similar issues arise again. You want to do this as soon after your conversation as possible—definitely within a day or two. Leaving it any longer risks that you'll misremember what you both agreed to.

When to Accept That There Won't Be a Resolution

There are some situations in which, try as you might, you won't reach a resolution. You've engaged in a constructive discussion and come up with alternatives for resolving the particular conflict you're having, but you can't make the final call on which option to go with. It may be that your counterpart insists on one solution and you're unwilling to go with that one. Perhaps you have your heart set on a particular option, but it doesn't meet your counterpart's interests. Be realistic with yourself about what's possible so that you don't bang your head against the wall trying to force a solution when there isn't one.

If you can't reach a resolution, there are three things you can do:

- **Take a break.** Sometimes, if you step away from the conversation, let the emotions cool down a little, and return to it later, you might see a different option neither of you thought of before or an existing possibility may look more appealing to one or both of you. This is an especially good tactic if you feel bullied into accepting an outcome. "When someone threatens us, we tend to make irrational decisions, so we need time to figure out whether this is, in fact, something we are willing to accept, or whether it's worse than no agreement," says Judith White. "This will give you the time to consider the offer and save you from one of three mistakes: accepting something you should have rejected; rejecting something you should have accepted, or blowing up at the other person and thereby blowing up any hope of a mutually agreeable solution."

- **Appeal to someone more senior.** You can escalate the situation to a person in a higher position. You might say to your boss or your counterpart's boss, "We're in this fix and we need your help to make the decision." You might ask that person to "decide for the two of you, to intervene and offer another solution, or to change one of the constraints, such as giving you more resources or extending a deadline," explains Hughes.

- **Get your needs met another way.** In lieu of settling your conflict, what can you do instead? If you and a supplier disagree on the terms of your contract renewal, can you find another supplier? Or stay with this supplier, but escalate the conflict to his boss? Or you could hold out for a few months and see if the deal gets better with time. If you're in a dispute about how much of a raise you'll get, and it doesn't look as if HR is going to give you what you asked for, can you look for a different job or go freelance?

Learn from Your Experience

Once you've reached a successful conclusion, it's worthwhile to reflect and consider what went well and what didn't, says Manzoni. "Why did you have certain reactions, and what might you have said differently?" Weeks also recommends observing how others successfully cope with these situations and emulating their tactics. The goal is to constantly improve your approach to conflict by integrating new tactics and strategies. Talk with your boss, a mentor, or a trusted colleague about what you've learned and ask them to remind you and hold you accountable so that you don't repeat the same mistakes.

It's also a good time to talk with your counterpart about what you'll do if you enter into a conflict again. What do each of you want to do differently? How can you make sure that future disagreements don't turn ugly? Document these ideas (again an email is fine) so that you can both refer back to them if you need to.

Once the content of the disagreement has been solved, think about what other reparations you might need to make. Even if your dispute was purely task related or process related, be mindful that your relationship may have suffered. Restoring trust and accepting the situation are critical parts of moving on.

CHAPTER 8

Repair the Relationship

Whether you're shaking hands after a productive conversation, carrying on business as usual, returning to your desk knowing someone intervened on your behalf, trying to accept that there will be no resolution, or plotting how to find an entirely new job, it's important to put the conflict behind you and move on. And even if you've come to an agreeable resolution, sometimes the relationship needs to be mended. There may be some lingering resentment or you or your counterpart may be anxious that the situation will happen again.

If you opted to do nothing, you still need to think about the relationship. You don't want to harbor negative feelings toward the person, especially if you were the one who decided against other options for addressing the disagreement. "You need to tell yourself: 'I chose to let this go. I'm not going to ruminate or retaliate because

it was my decision to let go,'" says Jeanne Brett. Even if you didn't make the decision about how to handle the situation, it's still in your best interest to move past it.

Putting your relationship back on track requires addressing your needs, those of your counterpart, and those of the people who may have been party to the conflict.

Pause and Reflect

You might feel amped from the tension even after it's been resolved, or plain exhausted from the mental gymnastics of trying to remain calm, listen, and balance your goals with your counterpart's all at the same time. Or perhaps you're worn out from working hard to let the conflict go. No matter what you're feeling, take a moment to consider what you've accomplished: Not only did you make it through the conflict in one piece, but you made smart choices about how to handle it, remained flexible, and pushed yourself to stay present. Well done. Now consider taking a break from work. After a heated discussion, you may want to take a walk outside, go to the gym, or meet up with a friend. Or you may just want to go home and get a good night's sleep. Chances are that with a little time and space, any lingering negative energy will dissipate and you'll return to work feeling clearer and more focused.

Look Forward

Although you'll want to reflect and learn from what happened, resist the tendency to analyze every detail of the conflict. Who said what? Why did they say it? That isn't productive. "Lots of people think that it's only by under-

standing the past that we get beyond it. But what you focus on is what grows," Susan David says. So contemplate what's worked well previously, what you like about the person, and what you want from the relationship. "Take a solution-focused approach, not a diagnostic one," she says. (See the sidebar "A Success Story" for one example of how a common purpose helped two people move beyond their conflict.)

Rebuild Rapport

If the relationship has suffered some damage, don't expect it to change overnight. "The real shifts in relationships happen less in those watershed moments and more in your everyday actions," David explains. Sitting down and talking is helpful, "but that's not where the work really happens. It's more subtle than that." Make an effort to change the tone of your everyday interactions. Say hello before you sit down at your desk in the morning. Offer to buy him a coffee. Small gestures of civility go a long way.

Reconnect Through Questions

One way to rebuild rapport is to ask questions, says Caroline Webb, author of *How to Have a Good Day: Harness the Power of Behavioral Science to Transform Your Working Life*. "It's inherently rewarding to people to get to talk about themselves or share their opinions." The trick is to move beyond more typical, factual questions like "When's the presentation due?" to what Webb calls "quality questions" that go beyond exchanging basic information. Instead of asking "How was your weekend?"

A SUCCESS STORY

Rachel had an ongoing conflict with her coworker, Pia. At the consultancy where they worked, it was Rachel's job to sell projects to clients, but it was Pia's role as the business director to vet the sales proposals and pricing. Whenever Rachel sent Pia a draft for review, Pia would increase the prices that Rachel was pitching. She'd send back a curt email that explained the prices were too low and told Rachel to fix them, which Rachel did. As a result, Rachel lost potential sales.

Because she didn't know Pia personally (she had met her only once at a team retreat), Rachel went to her boss, the regional manager, to explain that Pia was being unreasonable about the prices and rude to her. "I had targets I was supposed to meet, and every time Pia caused me to lose a sale, I was getting angrier and angrier," Rachel says. But Rachel's boss was not receptive to her appeals. "She told me that she trusted Pia's judgment implicitly and that I just had to find clients who were willing to pay the premium price," she says.

The circumstances were starting to affect Rachel's morale, not to mention her sales performance. She didn't enjoy going to work anymore because she wasn't making progress toward her goals. She cringed every

time she got an email from Pia. One day, after learning that she'd lost yet another potential sale, she called Pia.

Rather than criticize her, though, Rachel explained how upset she was and the impact the situation was having on her: "I wanted to let her know that I really couldn't keep working like this, having strained relationships with my colleagues, bringing in clients and losing them again and again."

Pia was receptive to what she had to say. "She heard me out and said she wasn't aware of how she was coming across." It turned out that Pia was also frustrated by the lack of sales and her performance was also being affected. "This gave us a common purpose to address," Rachel says. So the two of them switched into problem-solving mode. How could they both do their jobs and close the deals together? "She taught me how she did the pricing, and we reached a compromise on what could be quoted," Rachel says.

Pia and Rachel ended up closing several big deals together. "We weren't best buds, but we didn't have any further disagreements either," she says. Both women eventually left the company, but they still keep in touch.

ask what your counterpart did specifically and follow up with something like, "That's interesting. What led you to do that?" If you don't have a personal relationship, ask questions that signal you value his opinion: "How did you think that meeting went?" "What are you working on at the moment?" The goal with these questions is to create what Susan David calls "a shared psychological space." Make it less about you and more about "creating a connection," she advises.

Reestablish Reciprocity

You'll also want to restore trust if it was broken. One smart way to do that, Brian Uzzi says, is to "offer things to the other person without asking for anything in return." Propose taking on a small project she hasn't been able to get to. Or bring her lunch one day. This will activate the law of reciprocity and restore the give-and-take of your previous relationship. But don't verbalize what's taking place. "That will get you into the tight accounting system of who's doing what for whom," warns Uzzi. Keep your word, too. "Being true to the things you've offered will continue to deepen the relationship and make sure it doesn't slip back into mistrust," says Uzzi.

Apologize

"You don't have to be completely at fault to say you're sorry or show some penance," says Adam Galinsky. It's rare that a conflict is completely one-sided, so chances are that you contributed to the situation in some way. Apologize for your part and express genuine regret that the situation occurred (only if you feel it). Doing this will

often elicit a similar expression from your counterpart. But don't expect that. You don't want to resent the person if she doesn't apologize, too.

Focus on Commonalities

During the course of your conflict, you likely had disagreements that emphasized how different you were from one another. This can push you apart. Webb says that "if we see someone as part of our in-group, we're more likely to feel empathy for them and not see them as a threat." And fortunately, "it takes very, very little to perceive someone is like you." Find something you agree on. Perhaps it's the common ground you identified before your discussion or something as simple as a shared dislike of the new printer. If this is someone you've had a long-standing relationship with, talk about projects you've worked on together that went well. Reminisce about things you've done in the past. Consider paying the person a compliment or asking about his pet. "Flattery—no matter how ludicrous it is—always works," says Webb.

Spend More Time Together

"One of the best ways to repair a relationship is to work on a project that requires coordination," says Bob Sutton, a Stanford University management professor. This seems counterintuitive, since you may be sick of each other at this point. "Over time, if you work together closely, you may come to appreciate your colleague more and perhaps even develop some empathy," he says. You may discover there are reasons for your counterpart's

actions: stress at home, pressure from his boss, or maybe he's tried to do what you're asking for and failed. Spending more time with him will also grant you the opportunity to have more-positive experiences.

Involve Other People

It's likely that throughout the conflict, you turned to other people for advice and commiseration. Your attempts to repair the relationship won't be successful if those people aren't included. "You need to get any involved third parties on board to fix it and keep it healthy," says Uzzi. Explain to your confidants that you're working on the relationship and that you'd appreciate their support in making it work. You might say: "I know Howard and I have been at odds over the past few weeks, and you've heard an earful from me. I want to let you know that we've sorted through our problems, and I'm determined to make our relationship work. It'd be great if you could help by calling me out if I start to complain again." This helps not only you but those around you as well. You're contributing to an office or team culture that allows for conflict to happen. "You're showing that it's safe to disagree," says Annie McKee. "It's not enough to deal with conflict well; you have to make sure everyone knows it was dealt with well."

Consider Providing Feedback

This isn't always possible, but if you've directly addressed the conflict and you've reached a resolution, you might want to give your colleague some feedback about the process. You can share observations with the intention of

improving how you interact in the future. It may be that how your counterpart behaved with you is something that regularly gets in her way as a professional. "Don't assume the person knows how she is coming across," says Sutton. This isn't a diatribe about everything she did to annoy you—that will just pull you back into the fray. Focus on behaviors that she can control. Describe how they affected you and your work together with the aim of supporting change. Your carefully framed feedback can help her develop greater self-awareness and increase her effectiveness. And of course, you also need to be open to hearing feedback yourself. If you're seeing some things that your counterpart might change, she's liable to have her own observations to share with you.

However, weigh this option carefully. Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, says whether you give feedback "depends on how artful you are as a communicator and how receptive they are as a person." If you feel your counterpart might be open and you can have a civilized conversation, then go ahead. But if this is a person you suspect will be vindictive or mad, or will turn it into a personal conflict, don't risk it. You'll be back to where you started.

For most of us, the word *conflict* conjures up a difficult struggle: We want people to like us, but we also want to get our way. It would be ideal if our colleagues always saw the brilliance in our ideas, gave us the resources we asked for, completely agreed with us on the best way to run the business, *and* still adored us at the end

of the day. But work is not a perfect place. Fortunately, it doesn't have to be. And when we fight with people at work, it doesn't have to be scary or threatening. "Going through difficult experiences can be the makings of the strongest, most resilient relationships," says David. We make it through, and in the process, we learn about each other, and ourselves, as we make the next conflict less likely to occur or at least easier to manage.

CHAPTER 9

Navigate Common Situations

For every conflict you encounter, you'll tweak your approach depending on the circumstances. But there are some specific situations that commonly occur.

This chapter will walk you through the following challenges:

- You're fighting from afar
- Your counterpart is passive-aggressive
- Your colleague goes over your head
- You're caught in the middle of two warring colleagues
- You're mad at your boss
- You're dealing with a bully

- Your counterpart is suffering from a mental illness
- You manage two people who hate each other
- Your team turns on you
- You're fighting with someone outside the office

Knowing a bit more about why these situations happen can help you to better tackle them.

You're Fighting from Afar

The situation

You're coleading an important project with your London-based colleague, and his emails have turned snarky. You were initially debating when the project should launch, but now he's sending you emails with just a "?" in them if you don't respond within the hour. Since you're based in Hong Kong, that means you'd have to be up at midnight to receive his "urgent" 5 p.m. emails. He seems really mad, but who can tell, since you're just reading his words on a screen.

Why it happens

"Task-related disputes can more quickly devolve into relationship conflicts when there's no face-to-face contact, which helps to accelerate empathy," says Keith Ferrazzi, who studies virtual teams. A study by Syracuse's Kristin Byron showed that using email generally increases the likelihood of conflict and miscommunication. Cultural differences may also be contributing to

the problem if you and your colleague are from different countries.

What to do about it

"The good news is that bad relationship conflicts don't occur as often because virtual team members are typically focused more on their work and less on interpersonal issues and office politics. Hence, bad blood is less likely to develop between coworkers," explains Ferrazzi. Still, it can be harder to solve these conflicts when they do arise because you don't know how the other person is reacting. Is he opting to do nothing and set aside his feelings, or is he actually stewing?

Assess your options

The approaches you might use for navigating conflict take on a different flavor when you work far apart. The do-nothing option can work well when you don't have to see your colleague every day; you may be able to get over the conflict more easily by not addressing it. Or you can indirectly address it by asking someone at your colleague's location to talk with her. Also, exiting the relationship can be easier in these situations because you can ask to work with someone else on the team, or you may be able to go around the person and work with her boss.

Move the conversation to a better medium

As discussed in chapter 5, "Get Ready for the Conversation," arguing through email can be tough, but sometimes that's your only form of communication. "People

often behave with far less restraint in a virtual environment than in the physical world—a phenomenon that psychologists call the 'online disinhibition effect,'" says Ferrazzi. And it's just too difficult to interpret what's really going on. If you're arguing via email, stop. Pick up the phone and call your colleague, or schedule a time to do a video call.

Get to know how your counterpart works

Understanding your counterpart—his approach to conflict, his goal in the conversation, and so forth—is central to successfully navigating a conflict. But when you work in different offices, you need to take this task a step further. Do you know how the other person works? Are the tools and processes you use compatible? Pamela Hinds, who studies dispersed teams, says that when people share these kinds of details, or at least an understanding of their contextual differences, there is less conflict. "The challenge on global teams is that the contexts *are* different—that's unavoidable. But we found that as long as team members understand what is different, they're less likely to blame one another for incompatibilities," she says. If possible, visit your colleague's office, and vice versa, to get a sense of how he works. If you can't do that, spend extra time explaining your systems and processes, noting similarities and differences.

Increase informal communication

Research by Mark Mortensen of INSEAD and Hinds also showed that casual, unplanned communication dramatically reduces conflict when you're not in the same

location. Take advantage of opportunities for informal interactions. Keep your messaging app open to share personal snippets or jokes throughout the day. Take virtual breaks together, chatting on the phone while you both sip tea. Or you might leave your computer cameras on so that you can see each other throughout the day. "These video links between offices create a shared space and provide more opportunities for these spontaneous—but often very productive—workplace conversations," says Mortensen.

Diane's story

Diane started a new job in the US office of an international NGO. After several weeks of building a rapport over email with Brigitte, a German colleague—and believing that they had started a friendship—Diane got an email from Brigitte that said, "People here in Europe are saying that you're not right for your job." Diane was hurt and assumed that her colleague didn't like her. Why else would she say something so mean and in such an abrupt way? But she didn't want to jump to conclusions, especially since she'd never met Brigitte in person. Diane didn't know anyone in Brigitte's office to turn to for advice or insights into Brigitte's style or personality. She opted to do nothing, ignore the email, and move on, but after a few days, it was still bothering her. She set up a Skype video call with Brigitte.

When the two connected, Diane was surprised to see Brigitte smiling at her. Diane carefully broached the subject of the email. "I told her I was taken aback by it because I thought we had been getting along well," she

says. Brigitte explained that it was precisely because they were establishing a relationship that she'd told Diane about what others were thinking. "She thought she was helping me, giving me information that would be useful as I tried to prove myself in the new role. She did it so directly because that was an appropriate way to communicate in her culture, but I just misinterpreted her intentions," Diane says. The two women started turning on Skype when they got to the office and would chat throughout the day. It also gave others in the European office a way to get to know Diane better as they'd stop by Brigitte's desk to wave or say hello to Diane.

Your Counterpart Is Passive-Aggressive

The situation

Your colleague says one thing in a meeting but then does another. She passes you in the hallway without saying hello and talks over you in meetings, but when you ask to speak with her about it, she insists that everything's fine and the problem is all in your head.

Why it happens

It's not uncommon for colleagues to make a passive-aggressive remark once in a while over a particularly sensitive issue or when they're not sure how to directly address an issue. But persistent passive-aggressive behavior that manifests itself in a variety of situations is a different ball game. These individuals can be self-centered at best and narcissistic at worst, says Annie McKee. "These

are people who will often do anything to get what they need, including lie." But it may not be all her fault, either. In many organizations, direct, overt disagreement is not allowed, so "some people have been trained to be passive-aggressive by their cultures," she explains.

What to do about it

Passive-aggressive people are not necessarily more engaged in conflict than most, but they're doing it in a way that's tough to deal with. It's not as clean as the indirect approach described in chapter 2, "Your Options for Handling Conflict," because they're not being honest about their intentions. "Fighting with these people is like shadowboxing," says McKee. It's best to do nothing and work around them or to distance yourself (exit), if possible. Also, try the following suggestions.

Accept that your counterpart's behavior likely has nothing to do with you

It's not in your head; it's in hers. Recognize the behavior for what it is, says McKee, but don't spend too much time psychoanalyzing her. Amy Jen Su and Muriel Maignan Wilkins say, "You need all the energy you can muster as a leader, so don't waste an ounce of it trying to figure out why she acts this way with you."

See through the behavior to the source of the conflict

Instead of harping on how much she bothers you, focus on what's causing the disagreement. Does she think that the way you're running the project isn't working

(process conflict), but she hasn't directly said that? Or do you disagree about whether your team's ultimate goal is to increase revenue or boost brand recognition (task conflict)? As discussed in chapter 1, "Types of Conflict," knowing what's underneath the disagreement can help to depersonalize it, and when passive-aggressive behavior makes everything feel like a relationship conflict, understanding and labeling the real source can help you move forward.

Focus on a common goal

You've thought about what your goal is and what you suspect hers to be, but her behavior may prevent you from establishing common ground. Instead, focus on the objective you share with others, suggests McKee. If your project is at risk of not getting completed on time, that's the problem you need to deal with, not her infuriating conduct. Sure, you may be tempted to vent with others who also work with her, but limit those conversations. They aren't professional or productive. After a few minutes of complaining, redirect the discussion to your work. You might say: "Enough about her. Let's talk about how we can get this project done."

Enlist help from others

Amy Jen Su and Muriel Maignan Wilkins suggest you enroll your team in keeping your passive-aggressive colleague accountable. Have others confirm expectations that you agreed on. "For example," they explain, "if you're in a meeting discussing next steps, make sure everyone articulates what they heard and verbally communicates what they commit to in specific terms (not just head

nodding)." Or you can send a follow-up email documenting who's going to do what. "Form an esprit de corps with your other colleagues," suggests McKee. And since your colleague is passive-aggressive with everyone, politely ask others what coping mechanisms or tactics work for them.

Darrell's story

Darrell's new coworker, Raquel, was turning out to be a nightmare. Their boss had asked Darrell to show Raquel how to complete several reports that she'd eventually be responsible for, and when he sat down with her, she acted like she already knew how to do them. "It was impossible since the reports were specific to our organization, but when I tried to point that out, she told me to not get so worked up," he says. "That was the first sign that something was wrong."

One day, Darrell overheard her telling their boss that she was still waiting for him to train her on the reports. He didn't want to get defensive in front of his manager, so instead he went to Raquel and tried to appeal to their shared goal. "I told her that we both wanted her to be able to take over the reports," he says. He again offered to show her, but she told him that she had it under control. Since the direct approach wasn't working, he decided to go to their boss. "It wasn't what I wanted. I really hoped I could work it out with her, but she acted like nothing was wrong every time I tried to address it," he says. Darrell explained his side to the boss. "I didn't ask him to talk to her because I thought that would make matters worse, but I wanted him to know that what she was saying wasn't true."

Darrell was extremely frustrated, but he didn't see a way out of the situation. He had to work with Raquel, and she wasn't changing her behavior. So he took the do-nothing option and didn't address it further, except to calmly explain his side of the story whenever Raquel told their boss a lie about him. "Luckily for me, I wasn't the only one whom she treated poorly. Two other people in our department noticed the same kind of thing, so we were able to commiserate," he says. None of them figured out a way to get Raquel to stop lying, but they all learned to laugh at the absurdity of her behavior. "I had a choice to be angry at work every day or to shrug her off." Happily for Darrell, Raquel stayed at the company for only a year.

Your Colleague Goes over Your Head

The situation

Your coworker comes to you with a new initiative and asks for your help. You agree that his idea is worthwhile but explain that you just don't have the time or resources to tackle it this quarter. After your conversation, he goes behind your back to share his brilliant idea with your boss. When your manager comes to you to ask why you're not helping your coworker, you're embarrassed and infuriated. Not only has your coworker undermined your authority, now your boss is questioning your decisions.

Why it happens

There are both practical and psychological reasons why a colleague might try to sidestep you. Practically speaking,

he may want a different answer or outcome than you've given him. Psychologically, it's possible that he wants to show that he has more clout or authority than you do.

What to do about it

You may be tempted to stomp over to the person's desk and read him the riot act. "You have to be a saint to not be annoyed or stressed or nervous about something like this happening," says Caroline Webb. But, as with any conflict, even one where you feel you've been slighted, it's better to take a more measured approach. Keep in mind that some people don't know that going over your head may be frowned upon. In some cultures, it's not. So don't make assumptions about the person's intentions. Instead, try the following approaches.

Question your assumptions

To help you keep your cool, Webb suggests you start by sorting through what you actually know. You may think your coworker went over your head but that's not necessarily true. Ask yourself what the facts of the situation are and try to strip your explanation of emotional language. Rather than thinking, "He completely disregarded my authority to get a different answer from my boss," tell yourself, "He had a conversation with my boss about his initiative." Focus on what you know. And then ask yourself: What would be different ways to explain this situation? One might be that your coworker is just out for himself, but another could be that your boss asked him what exciting projects he was working on next quarter. "Work out three or four different scenarios,"

suggests Webb, "that broaden your aperture and help you question the assumption that they've been dastardly or ill-intended."

Find out more

As you think about what you know, also consider what you don't know. If you just heard about the conversation through the rumor mill, find out what really happened. You might go to your boss and ask in a neutral way about what transpired: "Hey, I heard you and Carlos were talking about his new idea." Take care to maintain a casual, nonaccusatory tone so that your boss doesn't think you're trying to start a feud.

Approach your colleague

If after gathering additional facts, you decide to directly address the issue, start with your coworker. You'll likely need to have a conversation with your boss, too (more on that later), but that discussion will go better if you can report on how you handled things with your colleague. Ask your coworker if you can talk—preferably in a private room. Keep an open mind as you enter the conversation, says Adam Galinsky. This is true anytime you directly address a conflict, but especially in a situation like this when you likely feel put upon or upset. Remember your goal, whether it's to have a strong working relationship, to restore trust, or to protect your time. Don't go into the conversation with the intention of sticking it to your coworker. That's just going to set you up for a battle. Instead, be open to hearing what he has to say about the situation and why he did what he did.

State what you know and how you feel

Begin by saying what you know and how it made you feel. "Make it a straightforward discussion," says Galinsky. Let the person know that you're disappointed by what he did but stay away from words like "angry" or "betrayed." That may be how you feel, but it's going to put your coworker on the defensive, advises Webb. Instead say: "I heard you talked to Roger about your initiative after we discussed it and that made me feel a bit concerned that we're not communicating well."

Problem-solve, together

Once you've shared what you know and heard his perspective, decide together how to remedy the situation. "Try asking them for their thoughts first, before building on their suggestions. Research shows that people feel far more attachment to any idea that they've had a hand in shaping," explains Webb. So instead of saying, "Here's how we should handle this situation," ask, "What do you think would be the best way to address this, given where we are now?" Once you've agreed on how to rectify the current issue, discuss how you'll handle similar situations in the future.

Clarify the lines of communication

Ideally, you'll both agree that your coworker should come directly to you next time and then actually follow through on that. But if he's not on board with that plan, prevent this situation from recurring by showing him that going over your head won't be effective. Make clear that you and your boss are in regular contact and if he

goes to your manager, you're going to find out. You might say something along the lines of, "I meet with Roger regularly to discuss our group's priorities and he usually lets me know if he gets requests from other teams." You don't need to say this in a threatening way; think about it as educating him on the lines of communication.

Repair your relationship with your boss

You may be ticked off that your boss didn't redirect your colleague to you and wonder if he has faith in your judgment. And this breach in the chain of command may have also annoyed your boss or caused him to question your ability to do your job. So once you've settled things with your colleague, talk with your boss about what happened, why it happened, and how to avoid similar situations in the future. Start by considering what you want to get out of the conversation. Webb suggests you may "want to come off as wise, thoughtful, and in control." Your goal here may be to restore your reputation or to reestablish ground rules for communication. Then lay out what you know (for a fact) and how it made you feel: "I heard that Carlos talked to you about his initiative and that made me concerned that I might be out of the loop. Can I ask what happened or how you saw it from your perspective?" Then it's your job to listen. Once you've heard his side of things, you might ask, "What can we do differently when this happens in the future?" You can gently suggest that next time your colleague goes to him, he redirect him to you: "If Carlos comes to you again, would you mind sending him to me so we can address the issue without having to take up your time?"

Gina's story

Gina was responsible for helping new employees get up to speed on current processes and best practices for initiating sales with customers. She was training Dante, who had been hired to work with their biggest customer. Dante was more senior than Gina. "I could tell that he wasn't necessarily pleased to be taking direction from me and had a general air about him that told me that he didn't think I could really teach him anything," she says. Dante wasn't happy with the process and timeline that Gina explained the company typically used with customers. He thought it was too strict and wanted to bypass particular parts of the process, such as getting customer signoff before sending initial samples, in order to speed up the sale. So he went to Gina's manager to get approval to ship the samples.

Luckily, Gina's manager reiterated the company's standard process and the reasons behind it. "If he had said yes, it could have completely thrown off our timeline and been a disaster," Gina says. Then the manager had a conversation with Gina about what had happened with Dante.

Gina decided to talk with Dante directly, but she wanted to be careful. "I knew that if I approached him in a certain way, he could easily become defensive and maybe even combative. I didn't want to make any snap judgments about why he did what he did." While she appreciated his desire to move things along more quickly, she also knew that she had insight on why things were done the way they were.

She asked Dante to sit down with her to review the account once more. "I explained the processes thoroughly and stressed how important it was to follow the guidelines—and included the reasoning behind each step," she says. She casually mentioned that their manager had explained what he had tried to do and thanked him for "trying to think outside of the box and see how we could potentially get samples to the customer even faster." She was careful not to make it a huge deal and to focus on the process conflict they were having. "I didn't make it personal," she says. She ended the conversation on a positive note too, offering to help Dante in any way she could. Gina says this approach worked: The two had a great working relationship after that point, and Dante came to her—not their manager—with questions or concerns.

You're Caught in the Middle of Two Warring Colleagues

The situation

Two of your coworkers just don't get along. They exchange mean looks in meetings, and they both come to you to complain about each other. You want to be supportive, but you also don't want to be seen as taking sides.

Why it happens

We all want to have alliances at work—so when two people are having a conflict, it's not uncommon for them to drag other people in. They may want validation of their

viewpoint or to demonstrate to the other person that they have more allies. Conflict avoiders often tend to get put in the middle because they generally don't push back when one coworker gossips about another.

What to do about it

When stuck between two adversaries, "people often find themselves in over their head," says Roderick Kramer, of Stanford Graduate School of Business. "They think they can intervene, make suggestions, feel good about themselves, and move the conflict forward in a constructive way. But that's not always possible."

Stay out of it

Whether or not you engage will depend on how enmeshed you already are in the situation. If you feel as if you're being used as a pawn in their war, draw the line and choose to do nothing. This is particularly tough for conflict avoiders to do, but try saying something such as "I'm sorry that you two aren't getting along, but I'd really prefer to stay out of it." If that feels too difficult to do, try to find ways to spend less time with each of them. After you've turned down a coffee break several times, they may get the hint. "Remember that you aren't a psychologist or a mediator," says Kramer. If the situation is outside your comfort zone or you think the disagreement is juvenile, there's nothing wrong with staying out of it. But always give one or both of your coworkers a next step to take. Say, "I'm not sure I'm the right person to help you with this, but you might want to sit down together or with HR."

On the other hand, if you want to lend a sympathetic ear and think you can help them work through it, take the next few steps.

Allow them to vent

It can be hard to listen to people complain about each other, but sometimes that's exactly what they need. By allowing each of them to process the situation with you, they may figure out on their own what the source of their conflict is and how they can sort it out between them. If you're worried that by hearing one person out, you'll upset the other, make an effort to get both sides of the story. Go to the other person and ask, "What's your take on what's going on between you and Harry?" This will give you a fuller picture of the conflict without earning you a reputation as a meddler. It will also equip you to help them solve it.

Empathize

While listening to each colleague, show that you understand how hard the situation is. You can say, "I'm sorry this is happening" or "It's tough when two people can't agree." Stay neutral and speak from your own experience. Offer observations such as, "It seemed as if Jane was stressed out and didn't mean what she said" or "I know that Joe is a direct person and can sometimes come off as harsh." If you're being pushed to choose a perspective, make it clear that you won't: "You seem hurt, but I can't take sides because I have to work with both of you."

Offer advice—cautiously

Before you give your two cents, ask your coworkers if they want your help. "We tend to offer unsolicited advice because we think we know better," says Anna Ranieri, a career counselor and executive coach. But people might not want your opinion, so start by saying something like, "I've observed what's happening between you two. Would it be helpful to hear my take?"

Explain the impact of their fighting

After you've demonstrated your concern, describe how the conflict is affecting the team. Say something like, "You two not getting along is distracting. We've got a lot on our plates right now with the quarter closing soon, so it'd be better if we were focused on getting the reports done." Or "I'm concerned that you're setting a bad example for the younger people on our team. They look up to both of you, and when they see you treating each other this way, they may think it's OK to do the same to others."

Problem-solve together

Just as you would focus on the future if this were your own conflict, help them do the same. Instead of offering concrete suggestions, help them find their own solutions. Ask open-ended questions as discussed in chapter 6, "Have a Productive Conversation." In this situation, those questions might sound more like "How do you hope this will be resolved?" or "What do you want out of

your relationship with Greg?" Kramer says, "You should be more in problem-solving mode than gossip mode."

Gary's story

Gary was planning a partner meeting to make decisions about compensation. As the senior partner, it was his job to set the ground rules for the sensitive discussion. Each partner presented his or her accomplishments and progress against goals, then the other partners asked questions, typically polite requests for clarification, before deciding on that partner's bonus for the year. If there was a more serious issue, the partners usually brought it up before the meeting so that it could be addressed outside of this formal setting.

Everyone knew that two partners, Susan and Robert, had been at odds for some time, and each of them came to Gary ahead of time to complain about the other. Susan felt as if Robert wasn't pulling his weight at the firm and his compensation should reflect that. Robert said that Susan was mistreating her team members, especially junior analysts whom she often had stay late at the office for no reason. He wanted her compensation to be affected as well.

Gary heard them both out. He asked that they sort it out between them in advance of the meeting. When they came back a week later even more upset, he suggested that the three of them sit down together and talk about what could be done. He explained that if the two of them couldn't figure out how to stop fighting, they would have to postpone the compensation discussion, which would affect when the bonuses would get paid out. "But I didn't

want—and I know they didn't want—to air all of this in front of the larger group," Gary says. He then asked if they wanted to know his opinion. They both said yes. He suggested they should recuse themselves in the discussion of each other's compensation. "That way it was basically a wash for them," he says.

At first, Susan was game and Robert pushed back. "He wanted to say his piece in front of the group," Gary says. But Gary explained to him that the goal of getting the discussion done was more important than his beef with Susan. So when the group met, Susan and Robert sat out for the discussion of each other's performance and compensation. "It was obvious to everyone in the room what was happening and why, but we accepted that because it let us get through the discussion with everyone saving face," he says. Susan and Robert never got along much better, but because they saw that Gary was unwilling to take sides, they stopped appealing to him.

You're Mad at Your Boss

The situation

You did all the work on the unit's big project, but your boss took all the credit. The executive team patted him on the back, and he didn't say a word about the late nights you pulled. You're angry, but you want to broach this sensitive issue with your boss productively.

Why it happens

"Your relationship with your boss is a significant predictor of your experience at work," says Liane Davey. A

positive relationship is likely to lead to interesting assignments, meaningful feedback, and recognition for your contributions, so you want things to go well. But because of that desire, you may also hold your boss to a higher, unobtainable standard.

What to do about it

Fighting with your manager, says McKee, "sparks a deep, primal response: fear." And for good reason. "Bosses hold our lives in their hands—the keys to our futures, not to mention our daily bread." Given that, you could do nothing and move on—as discussed in chapter 2, this is a good option if you don't think your boss will change his ways or is unwilling to hear you. But if you're worried that your anger will only grow, you may want to take the following steps.

Cool down

Remember the advice in chapter 6 about walking away? You don't want to say anything you don't mean. First, give yourself some time—wait a day or two. Your anger may fade to the point where you're willing to let the irksome behavior go. If not, you may decide to address the conflict directly.

Show respect

This may be the last thing you want to do, especially when you feel slighted, but your boss expects—and hopefully deserves—your respect. You can still label your disagreement as a relationship conflict, but before explaining what's made you so mad, "assure your boss that you respect him and his position," says Joseph Grenny,

author of *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*. "When that sense of respect is secure, you can venture into expressing your views openly and honestly." You might say, "I enjoy working for you, and I know I have a lot to learn from you."

Focus on the business needs, not yours

When you talk to your boss, you can point out how surprised you were by what he did, but you'll get further with the conversation if you frame it in terms of your goals. What's best for the business? Where do your goals align? Your boss may be more willing to change his behavior if you explain that not sharing the credit could create a bottleneck because those above him think he's the only one who can get things done.

Explain your intent

As you would do any time you address conflict directly, tell your boss what your objective is in giving him this feedback. Do you want to show off the work of the team? Are you concerned that you'll become disengaged if your work isn't recognized? Grenny says that you can clarify your intent by contrasting what you mean with what you don't mean. "I'd like to share a concern, but I'm worried that it will sound as if I doubt your character. I don't. And yet I don't think I'd be fully loyal if I didn't share my perspective. May I do so?"

Alina's story

Alina's company had an informal policy that it wouldn't start work with clients (especially new ones) before there was a signed contract in place. Rodrigo, one of the firm's

partners, asked Alina to start working with a new client before he'd gotten the contract finalized. "It was a busy time, and I was stretched incredibly thin, but the project started moving forward pretty quickly," she says. She worked nights and weekends to keep up only to find out that the client pulled out before the contract was signed. Rodrigo sent an email letting Alina and the rest of the team know. It ended with "Sorry about this!" which irked Alina. "It seemed flippant to me, and it was inadequately matched to the suckiness of the situation," she explains.

Rodrigo called her to talk through the logistics of how to wrap up the work, but she didn't feel ready to have the conversation. "I wanted to be prepared, and I was afraid I would talk about how personally annoyed I was when really what bothered me was how much of the firm's money was wasted," she explains. She asked Rodrigo if they could talk the following morning instead. She thought about it that night and decided she wouldn't be able to let it go. Rodrigo might not change, but she really needed to get it off her chest.

She knew that both she and Rodrigo were conflict seekers, so she set up a full hour for them to talk. Then she set the tone for the conversation. "I told him that my pushing back on him was not because I didn't respect him. I did. He was amazing at client service. But I felt as if it would be a disservice to him if I didn't point out why ignoring the policy was so bad." At first, Rodrigo was defensive, arguing about whether or not the contract would've made a difference. After she let him vent, he calmed down and vowed to be better about the contracts in the future. He even asked her to keep him ac-

countable, refusing to do work for him if there wasn't a contract in place.

You're Dealing with a Bully

The situation

Your colleague consistently undermines you in meetings, withholds information you need to do your work, and speaks badly about you. This isn't just one jab on a bad day; it's persistent negative behavior over time. You feel sick to your stomach whenever you see her name in your inbox or hear her voice down the hall.

Why it happens

Research from Nathanael Fast, a professor at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, proves a commonly held idea: People act out when their ego is threatened. "We often see powerful people behave aggressively toward less powerful people when their competence is questioned," he says. It's not just people in positions of authority who act this way. Whoever it is, chances are, she's singled you out for this bullying because she's jealous that others like you or that you have skills she doesn't, says Gary Namie, the founder of the Workplace Bullying Institute. You may also seem like an easy target, particularly if she sees that you shy away from conflict.

What to do about it

Just because you're a victim doesn't mean you can't take action. Try the following.

Understand the situation better

Being bullied can be downright painful. Stepping back and looking at the situation can help give you some insight into the dynamic between the two of you. Are you a conflict avoider while she's a seeker? Are your disagreements mostly relationship conflicts? Or are there elements of task conflict as well? Using the advice in this book can give you some distance from the pain of the situation and the emotional room to start to address it.

Stand up for yourself

Call out bad behavior when it happens. "I believe very strongly in making immediate corrections," says Michele Woodward, an executive coach. "If someone calls you honey in a meeting, say right then: 'I don't like being called that. Please use my name,'" she says. If you're uncomfortable with a direct, public response, Woodward advises saying something as soon as you're able. After the meeting, you could say, "I didn't like being called honey. It demeans me." Show that there is no reward for treating you that way. "The message should be: Don't mess with me; it won't be worth your effort," Namie says.

Enlist help

Talk to colleagues you trust and see what they can do, even if it's simply confirming your perspective. They might stand up for you in a meeting, defending your ideas or asking the bully not to call you honey. Or they might go speak to the bully one-on-one and explain how disruptive her behavior is to the larger group. This can

be especially helpful if your supporters have power over the bully or the bully trusts them.

Know the limitations

If your colleagues' interventions don't help, escalate the situation to someone more senior or to HR. Your objective is to get the bullying behavior to stop. But that's not always possible. "The only time I've seen bullies change is when they are publicly fired. The sanctions don't work," says Woodward. Instead, protect yourself. Perhaps take time off from work. Or move on—when you're in an abusive situation at work, the most tenable solution may be to leave, if that's a possibility. The Workplace Bullying Institute has done online surveys that show more people stay in a bullying situation because of pride (40% of respondents) than because of economics (38%). If you're worried about letting the bully win, Namie says, you're better off worrying about your own well-being.

Cedric's story

Cedric took a new position at a veterinary clinic with the intention of buying into the practice, which he did after several months, becoming the business partner of the owner, Ruth. A year later, after what seemed like a minor disagreement, Ruth stopped speaking to Cedric for six weeks. When he confronted her, she told him she was contemplating dropping him as a partner. Cedric was shocked. He had taken out a loan to buy into the firm and felt financially stuck.

Cedric soon recognized a pattern in Ruth's behavior. She was a clear conflict seeker. Any time the two

had a conflict, no matter what the original source of the disagreement (task, process), it immediately turned personal. "If I disagreed, she would ice me out. If I confronted her, she iced me out longer," he says. He eventually figured out that stroking her ego was more effective. "You could flatter her, tell her how great she was, how well she did in a case, and she'd be back on your side. I learned to do this sort of dance in order to survive."

But Ruth's harsh behavior wore Cedric down. Things got so bad at one point that she didn't speak to him for three months. He enlisted a professional coach, who helped him see that Ruth was a narcissist and a bully who was threatened by his skills. This gave him the confidence to set his limits: He told her he was looking for someone to buy out his part of the business, and she offered to do it. "It was the best thing I could've done," he says. "I wish I had left when she first showed me who she truly was."

Your Counterpart Is Suffering from a Mental Illness

The situation

You never know what frame of mind you'll catch your fellow team member in. Sometimes when you ask him why he didn't respond to an email you sent, he snaps at you and storms off. Other times, when coworkers challenge his ideas, he laughs inappropriately. When he doesn't show up to meetings or get his share of the team's work done, you're afraid to confront him because you have no

idea how he'll react. You wonder whether there's more going on here than just a quirky personality—perhaps he has a mental illness.

Why it happens

In 2014, the National Institute of Mental Health estimated that 18.1% of adults in the United States had a mental illness, most of whom didn't have an official diagnosis. With percentages that high, you're likely to have coworkers with some sort of mental illness—depression, personality disorders, schizophrenia—"especially since many of these issues don't prevent people from working," McKee says.

What to do about it

We can't account for our colleagues' moods, nor should we. "There are clues, however, that let us know that there may be something more going on than a disagreement," says McKee. Your interactions or homework to better understand your counterpart may reveal things such as sudden changes in mood or communication style, personality, or personal habits, or social withdrawal—all of which are indications that your coworker may have an underlying mental health issue. Addressing the conflict could be dangerous—to your and your coworker's well-being. Instead, do the following.

Look for patterns

Is his behavior often erratic? Do his regular actions seem outside the norm? Don't jump to conclusions. "Occasionally people do things that others deem inappropriate,

but if it happens on a consistent basis or every time the person feels threatened, it's an indication that there's a larger issue," says McKee.

Don't diagnose

Although it's helpful to recognize when something bigger might be affecting your colleague, don't try to come up with a specific diagnosis. Chances are that you aren't trained to evaluate emotional or psychological problems. "And we really don't know if there's truly something going on," says Judith White. What you can do instead, suggests White, is educate yourself about the symptoms you may be able to observe in family, friends, and colleagues. "The National Alliance on Mental Illness [https://www.nami.org/] is a good resource for friends and family members who either know or suspect mental illness," she says. This information can help you distinguish between an isolated incident that may be safe to address and a deeper problem that is better handled by a professional.

Don't let the problem lie

You might be tempted to steer clear and exercise your do-nothing option because you're afraid or unsure about what to do. Doing nothing may be the right approach to the conflict but not necessarily to the person. It's most certainly a sensitive situation, but that doesn't mean you have to completely ignore it. After all, it may be hard for this person to do his job if he can't get along with people. "Most job descriptions have requirements for 'interaction' or 'collaboration' of some kind baked in, and if the person can't fulfill this aspect of the job, then it's time to

step in," says White. Indirectly addressing the conflict is often the right approach here. White recommends asking your boss or HR for help with the problem, or reaching out to your company's employee assistance program, if you have one.

Be compassionate

"Remember that everyone has a story," says McKee. Don't judge what's going on with your colleague. He might be suffering from his behavior as much as or more than you. If you have a close personal relationship and you suspect there is an underlying health issue, gently ask about what might be going on outside of work. But don't push. If he doesn't want to talk, don't force it.

Go by the book

Because of the sensitivity of the situation, this is not a place to wing it. White says to follow any formal rules your company has for resolving the conflict because informal persuasion or negotiation is unlikely to work. "Look up the legal or regulatory rules, and if they don't exist, then find out past precedent in your organization and write it down," says White. Then keep records of your interactions. If the conflict escalates, you'll be able to justify your actions to this person, and to any third parties.

Heather's story

Heather was concerned about her fellow professor, Jacques. "He had always been jovial, but his behavior changed midway through the year," Heather explained. "We were coleading an independent study for five

students, and he basically stopped showing up," she says. Every time Heather tried to ask Jacques whether he had read the students' papers or was planning to come to the next meeting, Jacques would snap and insist he was fine. "I felt bad for him, but I was also annoyed because I was picking up his slack and I was already having a busy semester, and here he is yelling at me," says Heather. When she realized that the direct approach wasn't working, Heather thought about doing nothing. She knew that she could cover the class, and she hoped that after the summer break, Jacques might return feeling better. "But that didn't feel right. I didn't want to get him in trouble, but there was clearly something wrong. He had become a different person."

Heather decided to ask for help. She went to their department chair and explained the situation, telling him that some of the students had started to complain. The chair worked with HR to talk with Jacques and convince him to take a leave of absence. Heather found out a year later that Jacques had been suffering from severe depression. "I wasn't surprised, but it explained a lot. I'm glad I handled it the way I did. I tried to be as compassionate as I could."

You Manage Two People Who Hate Each Other

The situation

As a manager you probably didn't expect to play referee, but two of your team members just aren't getting along. They won't look at each other, they openly deride each

other, and they refuse to cooperate. How you can right such a dysfunctional relationship?

Why it happens

Conflict, as discussed in chapter 5, is often based on the fear of losing something—ego, respect, status. Your team members may be insecure, anxious about their status in the team, or worried about their jobs. Instead of handling their emotions appropriately, they're taking them out on each other.

What to do about it

You have an obligation to help your team members. You don't have to hold their hands, but you do need to examine your role in the problem and offer suggestions for moving forward.

Hear them out

Give each person a chance to explain his point of view. First, sit down with each person one-on-one. "Redirect comments that include assumptions about what the other person is thinking or feeling," Davey suggests. For example, if he says, "She's trying to destroy my credibility," respond by reframing the idea: "We don't know her motive; I'm interested in how her behavior is being interpreted by you. How do you feel when she disagrees with you in front of the team?"

Determine if you've contributed to the problem

Make sure you haven't set these two up for failure, suggests Davey, by either being unclear about roles or

sparking unhealthy competition. Ask: Do they have a clear understanding of what's expected of them? Are their metrics and rewards designed to promote collaboration rather than rivalry? If either answer is no, sit them down to make expectations clear and rejigger their goals so that they can work better together.

Manage your reaction

You may be fed up with these two. If you can't be empathetic, you won't be able to help because your annoyance is likely to further heighten the conflict. "Start with the positive assumption that your direct reports are good people experiencing something stressful," says Davey. This shift in mindset will help in the same way it does when you're addressing your own conflict (as discussed in chapter 5). It will also make you calmer: a key component of managing your emotions—and theirs.

Help them see the other side

Ask questions so that they can understand the other person's perspective. "How do you think she felt when she joined a team of people who are older and more experienced than she is?" "How might you help her get her point across so that she doesn't need to be so assertive?" If there's someone on the team they both get along with, ask that person to serve as a bridge and raise each other's awareness about what the other is thinking.

Bring them together

After they've had a chance to vent and see the situation from the other's perspective, bring them together. Davey

suggests you start by saying, "I've been speaking with each of you about my concerns over your strained relationship, and I was hoping you felt ready to talk directly to each other." Interject as little as possible in the conversation, but when you know there is something that's not being said, provide a gentle nudge: "Heather, we talked about your reaction to Tony's tone of voice. Do you want to share that with him?"

Work toward a shared agreement

Ask them each to make commitments about what they'll change. "Heather, what are you planning to do differently going forward? And Tony, how about you?" Then tell them that you'd like to keep them accountable to those promises. Document what they said they would do differently and send it to both of them to confirm agreement.

Focus them on work

Leadership professor Richard Boyatzis says the best way to heal war wounds is to start working again. Give them a relatively easy task to rebuild their confidence as a team. As they restore their relationship, help them follow Bob Sutton's advice from chapter 8, "Repair the Relationship," about working together. Put them on projects that require deeper collaboration and give them the opportunity to work through task or process conflicts.

Prevent additional problems

Encourage your team members to handle issues themselves. Research by Grenny shows that top-performing

teams immediately and respectfully confront one another when problems arise. "Not only does this drive greater innovation, trust, and productivity, but it also frees the boss from being the playground monitor," says Grenny. Let new team members know up front that you expect them to hold *you* and others responsible. Call out positive examples and be a good model yourself. If people still come running to you whenever there's a fight, refuse to get involved. If you're not solving it for them, they'll figure out how to do it on their own.

Marshall's story

Marshall, the owner of an eco-lodge, employed four managers including Helga, a German expat who ran the front office and oversaw the staff when Marshall was offsite, and Carlos, a Belizean who was in charge of client services. Helga was incredibly organized and meticulous about her work. Carlos's expertise was client service. "He had an ability to make every guest feel as if he or she is the first one to ever see a snake," says Marshall.

But Helga and Carlos weren't getting along. In fact, Helga asked Marshall to fire Carlos because she felt he wasn't doing his job; he regularly forgot to do tasks and was sloppy with his paperwork. She was frustrated and felt as if she was working twice as hard as he was. Carlos had also previously complained about Helga. He resented her criticism and felt she was too cold to the clients.

As Marshall saw it, they were both failing to understand or appreciate each other's talents. Marshall encouraged Helga to step back and look at the situation.

Carlos was failing to do part of his job description, but he was invaluable to the lodge. Helga conceded that Carlos's job description should be changed so that he could live up to expectations.

He spoke to both employees, explained why each one was extremely valuable to the team, and asked them to appreciate what the other brought. He asked them to focus on the larger purpose and to put their disputes behind them. With expectations reset, Carlos and Helga found a way to work together by accepting that they had completely different styles but both cared ultimately about the same thing—making the lodge successful.

Your Team Turns on You

The situation

Your team members disengage or stop coming to meetings. They simply don't do, or even refuse outright, what you ask of them. They begin meeting without you. You start to worry that you have a mutiny on your hands.

Why it happens

Your team may be upset about a decision you made (or didn't make) or fed up with you continually interrupting them, taking credit for their ideas, or not going to bat for them.

What to do about it

For a leader, this can be a disheartening and terrifying experience, but it's not irreparable. By being open to

what's happening, listening to your team, and being direct, you can regain the group's confidence and your effectiveness as a leader.

Find out what's going on

Is one person driving the negativity, or are the feelings shared across the team? Are people taking issue with your leadership, or is fighting among team members causing them to rebel against you? Ask direct and open questions that get at the source of the conflict. It's easiest to do this in one-on-one meetings with team members you trust most. But if they tell you that others have an issue with you, ask them to send the others to talk to you directly.

Name what's happening

Once you've identified the source of the conflict, acknowledge it with your team. "It seems as if you all are upset with the way I've been gathering and incorporating your input into the new strategy. Is that right? Am I missing anything?" Trying to gloss over a problem can turn it into the elephant in the room. "If you're pretending that nothing's wrong and the rest of your team knows there is, it can be really problematic," says Deborah Ancona, an MIT professor. And while you may want to follow the team's lead in not directly addressing the situation, when they're letting the conflict seep out in other ways, doing nothing isn't a smart option.

Own the issue

No matter the cause of the problem, recognize the things that became destructive under your watch. Publicly ac-

knowledge what you have done to contribute to the problem, and explain what you're going to do to address it. "Great leaders are able to get up and say, 'Thanks for the feedback. I realize I haven't been doing X. These are the steps I'm taking to correct this, and I'd appreciate feedback on how it's going,'" says Ancona.

Get outside help if necessary

When a team is particularly defiant or upset, you may not be able to resolve the conflict alone. Find a mediator—either an outside coach or an uninvolved person from another part of the organization—to get the issues out in the open and negotiate a resolution. Typically you do this when you've exhausted all options, as discussed in chapter 7, "Get to a Resolution and Make a Plan," but you may need to go this route sooner because there are so many people involved and you may not get the whole story as the boss. Working with a coach can help you understand why your style or approach is not effective with your team.

Katja's story

Katja was ready to close her marketing company. The business was doing OK, but there were some severe personnel problems: Morale was low, and her employees were angry and resentful. "The soul of my business was black," she recalls.

When she looked honestly at the situation, she saw that there wasn't disagreement over task or process or even status. It was pure relationship conflict. Her boyfriend at the time convinced her to work with an executive coach before she truly called it quits. The coach helped her to develop a plan to address the conflict. She

started by talking with members of her staff to find out what was going on. But every time she spoke to anyone, they would claim they didn't have an issue, but someone else did. "Eventually, I started to realize that no one was going to own up to the conflict, so I had to get it out in the open."

Katja requested that they start communicating directly. There couldn't be any gossip if they were going to turn things around and improve their relationships. She also acknowledged her role in creating the destructive atmosphere. She herself had gossiped on occasion, and she knew she'd set a bad example. Once her employees started having the difficult conversations needed to resolve their conflicts with her and with one another, they began to feel more united and committed. Soon they realized there was pent-up client demand they hadn't been able to serve because they were so wrapped up in what was going on inside the business. In the next six years, the company's revenue tripled.

You're Fighting with Someone Outside the Office

The situation

Your vendor has missed several deadlines, and you're getting nervous the IT project isn't going to get done on time. But your contact there isn't answering your calls or emails. You're wondering if it's time to switch vendors.

Why it happens

When you're interacting with people in other organizations—a customer, supplier, a partner—you typically

know little about them. Without the shared context of an office, colleagues, and other commonalities, it's easy for you and an external partner to misunderstand each other or misinterpret intentions.

What to do about it

Whether the person is a vendor who has missed several deadlines, a customer who complains about a rise in your product's price, or a colleague from a partner organization who is accusing you of not holding up your end of an agreement, approach the issue in the same way.

Don't overcompensate

It's tempting to treat the situation differently than fighting with someone inside your organization. You might think, "This is a key supplier. I should do whatever it takes to smooth over this disagreement" or "They're just a vendor. We can find a new one next week." You may feel less invested in the relationship because there are 10 vendors who want your business. But although you may have lots of alternatives, know what it would mean to pursue them. Sometimes the cost of switching vendors or suppliers is higher than you think. "With external parties, you don't want to fall on your sword, but you also don't want to treat them as if they don't matter," says Jeff Weiss.

Show respect

With people you don't see regularly, and perhaps with whom you communicate mostly via email, it's important to demonstrate that you value the relationship. This isn't always implicit. It's a good way to signal that you're invested in working through the issue. Plus, it

establishes a foundation of trust from which you can solve the problem: "I know we don't see each other often, but I wanted you to know that I value this relationship and appreciate what your company does for ours."

Jointly diagnose the problem

As with any conflict, you want to understand what the root cause is, but because you work in different organizations, you may know less about your counterpart, his perspective, and his goals. Sit down to jointly diagnose what led to the conflict. Is there a communication problem? Are you perceiving an issue differently? What about your contribution to the issues? Have you not given the supplier clear instructions? Have you been too hands-off? Have you made it difficult for him to do his job?

Know your counterpart's stakeholders

You likely have a contact at your supplier, but this isn't the person who makes all of the decisions that affect you. You're frustrated that he's not getting back to you about pricing or delivery terms, but it may be that he's trying to get his boss or finance on board with the new terms. "You are at the interface of the conflict," says Jonathan Hughes. When you do the work to better understand your counterpart and your goals, don't just focus on your point of contact. Also consider anyone who may have a stake in the decision. And when you propose a resolution, figure out how you can help your contact sell it internally at his organization so that it fits into their goals. You can ask, "How can I help you get approval for this arrangement?"

Consider the precedent

Because you may have fewer interactions with this person than you do with coworkers, it's important to examine the tone you're setting as it's likely to influence any discussions that come next. "Think about the history you want to have behind you," advises Weiss. If you mistreat your counterpart, you're sending the message that he can do the same the next time an issue comes up between your two organizations—whereas if you are thoughtful and respectful, and take his (and his company's) perspective into consideration, you're paving the way for smoother interactions in the future.

Zach's story

As the project manager at a building company, Zach works with dozens of subcontractors at a time—plumbers, painters, carpenters, electricians. "I approach these relationships with one question in mind: 'How can we partner to get this project done for a client?'" he says. But he acknowledges that it's difficult to settle disputes because the subcontractors can walk away from the job. "They don't have the relationship with the client; I do," he says.

A plumber with whom he was working on a big redesign project was getting upset about the payment terms. "It's standard in the industry to pay subcontractors within 30 days, but we're not always able to do that," Zach says. The plumber had put a lot of time and material into the project, and he hadn't received any payment. "The trouble was that the client wasn't paying us, so we

couldn't pay out our subs." The plumber threatened to walk off the job.

Although Zach knew he could find another subcontractor if necessary, he valued his relationship with this plumber and said so. He told him, "Look, you've always been a great partner, and as you know, we typically pay net 30, but we're stuck in a bind this time. Can you see it from my perspective? I'd love to pay you, but I just don't have the money." Zach then offered to let him know as soon as the client check came in. "I promised I'd send him his check the very same day," he says. "I don't think he was happy with the outcome because he still had to wait for his money, but he understood the position I was in."

Knowing how to manage conflict at work won't make it go away, but it will make dealing with any disagreements easier and less stressful. Whether you're experiencing conflict with your direct report or your boss—or someone outside your business—you now have the tools to assess the situation and choose an approach that works for you. As these scenarios show, directly addressing the conflict is just one alternative. You also need to know when to walk away or get out of the relationship altogether. But if you do choose to sit down with your counterpart, you're now better equipped to prepare for and engage in a difficult conversation, manage your and your counterpart's emotions, and develop a resolution together.

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HBR Guide to **Managing Stress at Work**

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What You'll Learn

Struggling to keep up with your many commitments? Feeling snappish? Unable to sleep? You're painfully familiar with the signs of work-related stress—chronic headaches, impatience with colleagues and family, loss of focus, fluctuating weight, nails bitten to the quick. And you know what you're supposed to do to prevent them: Stick to your priorities. Work more efficiently. Get adequate sleep. Exercise regularly. Limit your caffeine. But sometimes, when the pressure's on, all that is easier said than done. You shortchange yourself to meet a tight deadline or win a new client.

True, a certain amount of stress boosts your productivity. But then you push it too far, and it saps your energy and performance.

How do you put yourself on an even keel—and stay there? This guide will give you the tools you need to do your best work by protecting and feeding your well-being.

You'll learn how to:

- Harness stress so that it spurs your productivity
- Create realistic, sustainable rituals

- Aim for progress, not perfection
- Make a case for a flexible schedule
- Decide when to set work/life boundaries and when to blur them
- Leave a bad day at the office *at the office*
- Ease the physical tension of spending too much time at your computer
- Manage a dual-career relationship
- Renew yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally

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Introduction: Nine Ways Successful People Defeat Stress

by Heidi Grant Halvorson

Feeling stressed? Of course you are. You have too much on your plate, deadlines looming, and people counting on you. You're under a lot of pressure—so much that, at times, the quality of your work suffers.

But overall, your success on the job doesn't depend on *whether* you suffer from intense bouts of stress. These days, nearly all professionals do. What matters is *how you deal with them.* When your stress levels get out of hand, these nine methods will help you regain balance.

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on December 13, 2012

1. Cut Yourself Some Slack

When you're feeling overwhelmed, dwelling on your failures and weaknesses won't solve the problem. You're better off looking at your mistakes with compassion and remembering that everyone messes up now and then. Research shows that people who do this aren't just happier, more optimistic, and less anxious and depressed—they're also more successful. In one study, Berkeley's Juliana Breines and Serena Chen gave people who had failed a test a chance to retake it and improve their scores. Those with a self-compassionate view of their failure studied 25% longer and scored higher on the second test than participants who weren't self-compassionate.

Most of us believe we need to be hard on ourselves to perform at our best. But by giving yourself permission to make mistakes and learn from them, you can actually reduce your stress *and* improve your performance.

2. See the Big Picture

As you're facing your mountain of tasks, draw energy and motivation from the larger goals you're striving for. By thinking about the greater purpose that each action supports, you'll cast a whole new light on things that don't seem important or inspiring on their own. Next time you're slogging through e-mails at the end of a long day, don't think of it as merely "digging myself out of my inbox." View it as "wrapping up a critical project on schedule," for example, or "showing decision makers how committed I am to meeting their goals." Studies show that when we think about the *why* behind our behavior, we're

less impulsive, less vulnerable to temptation, and more likely to plan our actions in advance. We're more certain of who we are and what we want, and we're therefore much less likely to feel that outside forces—such as other people, luck, or fate—control what happens to us.

3. Rely on Routines

If I asked you to name the major causes of stress in your work life, you'd probably cite deadlines, time-sucking meetings, a heavy workload, bureaucracy, and maybe even a controlling boss. You might not think to say "making decisions," because most of us aren't aware of this powerful and pervasive cause of stress in our lives. Yet every time you make a decision—which candidate to hire, when to ask your supervisor for help, whether to delegate a task—you create mental tension that is, in fact, stressful.

So use routines to reduce the number of decisions you need to make. U.S. President Barack Obama, who has one of the most stressful jobs imaginable, takes this approach. Here's what he told *Vanity Fair* (October 2012) about it:

> *You'll see I wear only gray or blue suits. I'm trying to pare down decisions. I don't want to make decisions about what I'm eating or wearing. Because I have too many other decisions to make. You need to focus your decision-making energy. You need to routinize yourself. You can't be going through the day distracted by trivia.*

If there's something you need to do every day, do it *at the same time* every day. Establish a ritual for preparing

for work in the morning, for example: Perhaps you can check e-mails and voice mails and respond to the urgent ones first thing, which clears the decks and makes it easier to move more quickly to important projects. Set up a similar routine for packing up to go home at night. Once you've put less-important decisions on autopilot, they'll stop weighing on you—and you'll free up your energy for things that matter more.

4. Do Something Interesting

Interest in an activity doesn't just keep you going despite fatigue—it actually *replenishes* your energy for whatever you'll do next. That's what Dustin Thoman (California State University), Jessi Smith (Montana State University), and Paul Silvia (University of North Carolina at Greensboro) learned in a recent experiment: They gave participants a particularly draining task and then varied whether the *next* task was difficult but interesting or relatively easy but dull. The people who received the harder follow-up task put in more effort and performed much better—despite being tired—than those who worked on the easy one. Engagement restored their energy.

In another study, the researchers found that interest resulted in better performance on a *subsequent* task as well. In other words, you won't just do a better job on Task A because you find Task A interesting—you'll do a better job on follow-up Task B *because you found Task A interesting*. The replenished energy flows into whatever you do next. So make time during your day for projects that fascinate you, for brainstorming, and for reading about exciting innovations in your field. All that will help

you power through your less-interesting but necessary tasks. (You'll find more examples and ideas in section 2, "Renewing Your Energy.") Also, remember that *interesting* doesn't merely mean pleasant, fun, or relaxing. As the studies cited above show, it's something that captivates you and requires effort.

5. Add *When* and *Where* to Your To-Do List

Does a whole day (or even a week) often go by before you check a single item off your lengthy to-do list? Stressful, isn't it?

To get things done in a timely manner, add a specific *when* and *where* to each task on your list. If-then planning can help you fill in those blanks. For example, "Call Bob" becomes "*If* it's Tuesday after lunch [when], *then* I'll call Bob from my desk [where]." Now that you've created an if-then plan for calling Bob, your unconscious brain will start scanning the environment, searching for the conditions in the *if* part of your plan. This enables you to seize the critical moment and make the call, even when you're busy doing other things. You've already done the hard work of deciding what to do; now you can execute the plan without consciously thinking about it.

Nearly 200 studies, on everything from negotiation and time management to diet and exercise, show that deciding in advance when and where you will complete a task can double or triple your chances of actually doing it. Bracing yourself for an upcoming presentation? Don't just fret about it—make a date with yourself to prepare: "*If* I can reserve a small conference room [where] for an

hour tomorrow afternoon [when], *then* I'll use it to practice going through my slides."

6. Articulate Your Desired Response

When we're stressed, it can feel as if the universe is conspiring against us. It's easy to get trapped in a negative spiral, ruminating on everything that's going wrong—essentially paralyzing ourselves. Perfectionism can similarly trap us. We keep going into the weeds to fix "just one more thing." Projects never get done because we're endlessly fiddling with them.

How do you break the cycle when it's your own mind playing tricks on you? Do some additional if-then planning, because it can help you do more than tackle your to-dos. According to research by NYU's Peter Gollwitzer, it also allows you to control emotional responses such as fear, sadness, fatigue, self-doubt, and even disgust. Just think of the situations that provoke those reactions from you and decide how you would like to respond instead. Then make an if-then plan that links your desired response to the situations that tend to raise your blood pressure. For instance: "*If* I see lots of e-mails in my inbox when I log in, *then* I will take three deep breaths to stay calm and relaxed." Whatever thoughts or actions work for *you,* make them a part of your if-then plan.

7. Focus on Improving, Not Perfecting

We all pursue our goals with one of two mind-sets: what I call the *be-good approach,* where you focus on proving that you already know what you're doing, and the *get-*

better approach, where you concentrate on developing your abilities and learning new skills. It's the difference between wanting to show that you *are smart* and wanting to *get smarter.*

If you're in be-good mode, expecting to do everything perfectly right out of the gate, you may constantly (often unconsciously) compare yourself with others to see how you size up. And when things don't go smoothly, you'll quickly start to doubt the abilities you're desperately trying to prove, which creates more stress and anxiety. Ironically, worrying about your ability makes you much more likely to fail.

A get-better mind-set, by contrast, leads to *self-*comparison: You measure how well you're doing today against how you did yesterday, last month, or last year. When you catch yourself comparing your performance with others' or being too self-critical, shift your perspective by asking yourself "Am I improving?" (and "If I'm not, what can I do to change that?"). You'll experience far less stress—and it will be easier to stay motivated, despite any setbacks.

8. Appreciate the Progress That You've Already Made

"Of all the things that can boost emotions, motivation, and perceptions during a workday, the single most important is making progress in meaningful work." That's the central idea in Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer's book *The Progress Principle.* They argue that it's the "small wins" that keep us going—particularly in the face of stressors.

So it's enormously helpful to reflect on what you've accomplished so far before turning your attention to the challenges that remain ahead. If you're stressed by a complex yearlong project six months in, take a moment to list what's been done since day 1. Remember the difficulties you've already encountered and how you dealt with them. Then, with a sense of well-earned confidence, think about how far you have left to go and keep your eyes on the prize.

9. Know What Motivates You

Without realizing it, we can add stress to our work lives by managing it in ways that don't mesh with our own motivational styles. Figuring out what drives you will help you rein in your stress.

If it's optimism, you have what psychologists call a *promotion focus*: You think of your job as rife with opportunities for achievement. You're driven by the belief that everything will work out if you apply yourself. You probably also:

- Work quickly
- Brainstorm lots of alternatives to consider
- Plan for best-case scenarios
- Seek positive feedback (and lose steam without it)
- Feel dejected when things go wrong

The best way to cope with your stress is to maintain forward momentum. Motivation feels like eagerness to

you—it runs on positivity. If you're feeling stuck, shift to another project and make some progress there before returning to the original obstacle. Also, since you're someone who needs to stay optimistic to be truly effective, reflect on some of your past triumphs to keep your chin up.

By contrast, if you have a *prevention focus,* you're motivated by security—and hanging on to what you've worked so hard for. You tend to:

- Work deliberately, with a high degree of accuracy
- Prepare yourself for the worst
- Get stressed over short deadlines
- Stick to tried-and-true ways of doing things
- Feel uncomfortable with praise or optimism
- Get anxious when things go wrong

For you, managing stress at work largely means avoiding mishaps and fulfilling your responsibilities. It feels like vigilance, and it's sustained by a kind of defensive pessimism—the need to keep danger at bay. In fact, it feels downright *wrong* to "stay positive" when you're under stress. You actually work best when you think about what might go awry and what you can do to keep that from happening (or how you'll respond if it happens, anyway). When you're dealing with potential budget cuts, for example, you cope most effectively by preempting the problem—figuring out where you can trim some of the fat, just in case. To others, this might seem like wallowing

in negativity and making your life needlessly stressful (after all, the budget cuts might not happen), but you're actually alleviating stress by considering all possible scenarios and solutions and planning accordingly. You're working to minimize your losses.

We all take different views (promotion versus prevention) at different times, depending on which challenges we're facing. But most of us have a dominant motivational style. Identify yours, and then embrace either the sunny outlook or the hearty skepticism that will reduce your stress and keep you performing at your best.

The nine ideas I've shared here are just a start. You'll find many other useful tips in this guide—practical advice from experts on how to balance work and family, how to refill your tank when you're running on fumes, and tools to use when you're completely overwhelmed. If you're currently under a lot of pressure, you may want to skip ahead to section 4, "Finding the Tools That Work for You."

Here's the main thing to remember as you read: When it comes to stress, you are far from powerless. You may not be able to remove the stressors from your life, but you can take control of how they affect you. Stress doesn't have to interfere with your productivity, your health, and your happiness. You can even learn to harness its power for good by viewing stress-inducing challenges as opportunities to become more skilled and resilient.

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Section 1

Understanding How You're Wired

Chapter 1

Are You Working Too Hard?

A Conversation with Herbert Benson, MD

by Bronwyn Fryer

A summary of the full-length HBR interview with **Herbert Benson, MD,** *highlighting key ideas.*

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

The key to overcoming negative stressors is the *breakout principle,* or relaxing at the height of your struggle. There are four steps:

Adapted from *Harvard Business Review,* November 2005 (product #R0511B)

1. Take on a thorny problem, and really work hard at it until you feel you have reached the limits of your performance.
2. Walk away. Do something entirely different, such as breathing deeply while focusing on a calm phrase or taking a nap or hot shower.
3. Let go. This is the actual breakout, where you experience a flow of creative ideas and solutions.
4. Return to the "new-normal" sense of self-confidence.

Do the breakout sequence whenever you need to—and achieve gains in productivity and success.

When does stress help your performance, and when does it hurt? To find out, HBR senior editor Bronwyn Fryer talked with Herbert Benson, MD, founder of the Mind/Body Medical Institute in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. Also an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, Benson has spent more than 35 years conducting research in the fields of neuroscience and stress. He is best known for his 1975 best-seller, *The Relaxation Response.* He first described a technique to bring forth the complex physiological dance between stress and relaxation, and the benefits to managers of practices such as meditation, in "Your Innate Asset for Combating Stress" (HBR July–August 1974). His most recent book is *Relaxation Revolution* (Scribner, 2011) with William Proctor.

Benson and Proctor have found that we can learn to use stress productively by applying the *breakout principle*—a paradoxical active-passive dynamic. By using simple techniques to regulate the amounts of stress we feel, we can increase performance and productivity and avoid burnout. In this edited conversation, Benson describes how we can tap into our own creative insights, boost our productivity at work, and help our teams do the same. He is quick to acknowledge the large part Proctor's thinking has played in the ideas he discusses here.

HBR: We all know that unmanaged stress can be destructive. But are there positive sides to stress as well?

Yes, but let's define what stress is first. Stress is a physiological response to any change, whether good or bad, that alerts the adaptive fight-or-flight response in the brain and the body. Good stress, also called *eustress,* gives us energy and motivates us to strive and produce. We see eustress in elite athletes, creative artists, and all kinds of high achievers. Anyone who's clinched an important deal or had a good performance review, for example, enjoys the benefits of eustress, such as clear thinking, focus, and creative insight.

But when most people talk about stress, they are referring to the bad kind. At work, negative stressors are usually the perceived actions of customers, clients, bosses, colleagues, and employees, combined with demanding deadlines. At the Mind/Body Medical Institute, we also encounter executives who worry incessantly about . . . the

impact of China on their companies' markets, the state of the economy, the world oil supply, and so on. Additionally, people bring to work the stress aroused by dealing with family problems, taxes, and traffic jams, as well as anxieties stemming from a continuous diet of bad news that upsets them and makes them feel helpless—hurricanes, politics, child abductions, wars, terrorist attacks, environmental devastation, you name it.

Many companies offer various kinds of stress-reduction programs, from on-site yoga classes and massage to fancy gyms to workshops. What's wrong with these?

It's critical that companies do something to address the rampant negative effects of workplace stress if they want to compete effectively, but often the kinds of programs they institute are stopgaps. HR may bring in a lecturer once or twice a year or set up tai chi sessions and urge everyone to go, but few people show up because they feel they can't take the time to eat their lunch, much less spend an hour doing something perceived as both unrelated to work and relaxing to boot. Unless the leadership and culture explicitly encourage people to join in, employees will continue to feel guilty or worry that they'll be seen as slackers if they go.

This state of affairs is inexcusable if you look at the billions lost to absenteeism, turnover, disability, insurance costs, workplace accidents, violence, workers' compensation, and lawsuits, not to mention the expense of replacing valuable employees lost to stress-related problems. Fortunately, each of us holds the key for managing stress,

and leaders who learn to do this and help their employees to do likewise can tap into enormous productivity and potential while mitigating these costs.

What is the science behind your research, and what does it reveal?

First, let me say that we at the Mind/Body Medical Institute didn't discover anything new. The American philosopher William James identified the breakout principle in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* in 1902. What we set about to do was explore the science behind what James had identified.

Over the past [several decades], our teams have collected data on thousands of subjects from population studies, physiologic measurements, brain imaging, molecular biology, biochemistry, and other approaches to measuring bodily reactions to stress. From these we identified the relaxation response and could see how powerful it was. It is a physical state of deep rest that counteracts the harmful effects of the fight-or-flight response, such as increased heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension.

Neurologically, what happens is this: When we encounter a stressor at work—a difficult employee, a tough negotiation, a tight deadline, or worse—we can deal with it for a little while before the negative effects set in. But if we are exposed for excessively long periods to the fight-or-flight response, the pressure on us will become too great, and our system will be flooded with the hormones epinephrine, norepinephrine, and cortisol. These cause blood pressure to rise and the heart rate and brain

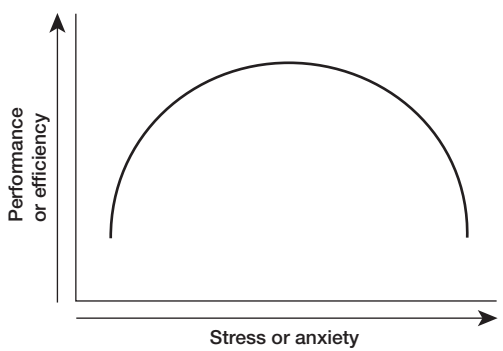
activity to increase, effects that are very deleterious over time. But our . . . findings indicate that by completely letting go of a problem at that point by applying certain triggers, the brain actually rearranges itself so that the hemispheres communicate better. Then the brain is better able to solve the problem.

The best way to understand this mechanism is to go back [about] 100 years to the work of two Harvard researchers, Robert Yerkes and John Dodson. In 1908, these two demonstrated that efficiency increases when stress increases, but only up to a point; after that, performance falls off dramatically (see figure 1-1). We found

FIGURE 1-1

The Yerkes-Dodson curve

Stress is an essential response in highly competitive environments. Before a race, before an exam, before an important meeting, your heart rate goes up and so does your blood pressure. You become more focused, alert, and efficient. But past a certain level, stress compromises your performance, efficiency, and eventually your health. Two Harvard researchers, Robert M. Yerkes and John D. Dodson, first calibrated the relationship between stress and performance in 1908, which has been dubbed the Yerkes-Dodson law.



that by taking the stress level up to the top of the bell curve and then effectively pulling the rug out from under it by turning to a quieting, rejuvenating activity, subjects could evoke the relaxation response, which effectively counteracts the negative effects of the stress hormones. Molecular studies have shown that the calming response releases little "puffs" of nitric oxide, which has been linked to the production of such neurotransmitters as endorphins and dopamine. These chemicals enhance general feelings of well-being. As the brain quiets down, another phenomenon that we call *calm commotion*—or a focused increase in activity—takes place in the areas of the brain associated with attention, space-time concepts, and decision making.

In eliciting the relaxation response, individuals experience a sudden creative insight, in which the solution to the problem becomes apparent. This is a momentary phenomenon. Thereafter, the subjects enter a state of sustained improved performance, which we call the *new-normal* state, because the breakthrough effect can be remembered indefinitely.

We find this to be an intriguing phenomenon. By bringing the brain to the height of activity and then suddenly moving it into a passive, relaxed state, it's possible to stimulate much higher neurological performance than would otherwise be the case. Over time, subjects who learn to do this as a matter of course perform at consistently higher levels. The effect is particularly noticeable in athletes and creative artists, but we have also seen it among the businesspeople we work with.

So how can we actually go about tapping into the breakout principle?

A breakout sequence occurs in four steps. The first step is to struggle mightily with a thorny problem. For a businessperson, this may be concentrated problem analysis or fact gathering; it can also simply be thinking intently about a stressful situation at work—a tough employee, a performance conundrum, a budgetary difficulty. The key is to put a significant amount of preliminary hard work into the matter. Basically, you want to lean into the problem to get to the top of the Yerkes-Dodson curve.

You can tell when you have neared the top of the curve when you stop feeling productive and start feeling stressed. You may have unpleasant feelings such as anxiety, fearfulness, anger, or boredom, or you may feel like procrastinating. You may even have physical symptoms such as a headache, a knot in the stomach, or sweaty palms. At this point, it's time to move to step two.

Step two involves walking away from the problem and doing something utterly different that produces the relaxation response. There are many ways to do this. A 10-minute relaxation-response exercise, in which you calm your mind and focus on your out-breath while disregarding the thoughts you've been having, works extremely well. Some people go jogging or pet a furry animal; others look at paintings they love. Some relax in a sauna or take a hot shower. Still others "sleep on it" by taking a nap or getting a good night's rest, having a meal with friends, or listening to their favorite calming music.

One male executive I know relaxes by doing needlepoint. All of these things bring about the mental rearrangement that is the foundation for new insights, solutions, and creativity. The key is to stop analyzing, surrender control, and completely detach yourself from the stress-producing thoughts. When you allow your brain to quiet down, your body releases the puffs of nitric oxide that make you feel better and make you more productive.

One executive we observed was worried about a big presentation she had to make before some top-level managers. She worked and worked on it, but the harder she worked, the more befuddled she became and the more anxiety took over. Fortunately, she had learned to evoke her relaxation response by visiting the art museum near her office. So she did. After a while, she felt a sense of total release as she stood there looking at her favorite pictures. At that point, she suddenly had the insight that she was trying to cover too many topics at once and needed to pare down the presentation to a single, overriding concept she could illustrate with solid examples. She felt inspired and confident that she had the answer. She went back to the office, redid the presentation, and, feeling relaxed and happy, went home for the day.

This third step—gaining a sudden insight—is the actual breakout. Breakouts are also often referred to as *peak experiences, flow,* or *being in the zone.* Elite athletes reach this state when they train hard and then let go and allow the muscle memory to take over. They become completely immersed in what they're doing, which feels automatic, smooth, and effortless. In all cases, a breakout is experienced as a sense of well-being and relaxation

that brings with it an unexpected insight or a higher level of performance. And it's all the result of a simple biological mechanism that we can tap into at will.

The final step is the return to the new-normal state, in which the sense of self-confidence continues. The manager who reorganized her presentation, for example, came in the next morning knowing all would be well. The meeting did go well, and she received accolades for her work from her bosses and colleagues.

Does a breakout occur all the time or just occasionally? What percentage of people, according to your research, experience breakouts in this way?

We don't yet have hard data on this, but anecdotally I can tell you that when you compare groups of people who have been trained to evoke the relaxation response to groups who lack such training, the former experience breakouts much more frequently. About 25% of people trained in this process, and sometimes many more, can reliably reach the breakout stage.

It sometimes takes a serious illness caused or exacerbated by stress for people to have their "aha" moments. One well-known CEO we worked with spent years putting in more than 60 hours a week at his intensely stressful job. He came to us after he had been diagnosed with a silent heart attack. His world had completely turned upside down. He took a leave of absence from work to focus on healing, to ask himself why he was on the planet, and to spend time with his family. We trained him to use

the relaxation response and the breakout principle. He recovered and came back to work far more resilient and productive than he was before.

Can teams or groups do this together or somehow feed off one another?

Certainly. The benefits of mind/body management are by no means limited to individuals. Those who become skilled in these techniques can also expect to have an exponential impact in groups or teams; they can work together to solve organizational problems as part of what we might call a *mind/body orchestra.*

Let me give you an example of how this works. A few years ago, three software executives with whom we had worked spent two days trying to cajole venture capitalists in Singapore to fund several projects having to do with a new kind of encryption technology. They had all thought long and hard about the problems with encryption, both at their home office in the States and in their preparations for the Singapore presentation. This produced significant levels of stress hormones.

After the meetings finally ended, the three of them took a cab to the airport. The drive was long, and they all felt they could finally let their hair down and relax. Through no planning on anyone's part, the environment in the taxi produced the required break from prior thinking patterns and emotions. The sense of relief, the release from days of high stress, the feeling of camaraderie, and the mentally lulling ride in the dark taxi clearly triggered the

relaxation response. That put them all in a neurological position to focus and think clearly about encryption.

The inventor of the technology was the most creative thinker of the three, the one who could best integrate his left- and right-brain functions. He tossed out a thought that had just come to him for a revolutionary product. The others, who were more linear and practical in their thinking style, got excited and chimed in with all kinds of questions and ideas for marketing and selling it. By the end of the cab ride, the trio had fashioned an entirely new encryption product—without taking a single note as the final idea emerged in their minds. They filed a provisional patent three weeks afterward and their final patent application one year later. They are now selling a version of the product as part of a multimillion-dollar enterprise.

Bronwyn Fryer was a senior editor at *Harvard Business Review*.

Chapter 2
Overloaded Circuits

Why Smart People Underperform

by Edward M. Hallowell

IDEA IN BRIEF

Frenzied executives who fidget through meetings, miss appointments, and jab at the elevator's "door close" button aren't crazy—just crazed. They're suffering from a newly recognized neurological phenomenon called **attention deficit trait** (**ADT**)**.** Marked by distractibility, inner frenzy, and impatience, ADT prevents managers from clarifying priorities, making smart decisions, and managing their time. This insidious condition turns

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otherwise talented performers into harried underachievers. And it's reaching epidemic proportions.

ADT isn't an illness or character defect. It's our brains' natural response to exploding demands on our time and attention. As data increasingly floods our brains, we lose our ability to solve problems and handle the unknown. Creativity shrivels; mistakes multiply. Some sufferers eventually melt down.

How to control ADT's ravaging impact on performance? *Foster positive emotions* by connecting face-to-face with people you like throughout the day. *Take physical care of your brain* by getting enough sleep, eating healthfully, and exercising regularly. *Organize for ADT*, designating part of each day for thinking and planning, and setting up your office to foster mental functioning (for example, keeping part of your desk clear at all times).

These strategies may seem like no-brainers. But they'll help you vanquish the ADT demon before it can strike.

IDEA IN PRACTICE

How You Can Combat ADT

Promote positive emotions

Negative emotions—especially fear—can hamper productive brain functioning. To promote positive feelings, especially during highly stressful times, interact directly with someone you like at least every four to six hours. In environments where people are in physical contact with

people they trust, brain functioning hums. By connecting comfortably with colleagues, you'll help your brain's "executive" center (responsible for decision making, planning, and information prioritizing) perform at its best.

Take physical care of your brain

Ample sleep, a good diet, and exercise are critical for staving off ADT. You're getting enough sleep if you can awake without an alarm clock. You're eating well if you're avoiding sugar and white flour and consuming more fruits, whole grains, vegetables, and protein instead. You're exercising enough if you're taking a brisk walk or going up and down a flight of stairs a few times a day.

Organize for ADT

Instead of getting sucked into the vortices of e-mail or voice mail first thing in the morning, attend to a critical task. With paperwork, apply the OHIO ("Only handle it once") rule: Whenever you touch a document, act on it, file it, or throw it away. Do crucial work during times of the day when you perform at your best. Use whatever small strategies help you function well mentally—whether it's listening to music or walking around while working, or doodling during meetings. And before you leave for the day, list three to five priority items you'll need to address tomorrow.

What Your Company Can Do

In firms that ignore ADT symptoms, employees underachieve, create clutter, and cut corners. Careless mistakes, illness, and turnover increase, as people squander

their brain power. To counteract ADT and harness employees' brainpower, invest in amenities that foster a positive, productive atmosphere.

> *Example:* Major software company SAS Institute creates a warm, connected, and relaxed work environment by offering employees perks such as a seven-hour workday that ends at 5:00; large on-site gym and day care facility; and a cafeteria that provides baby seats and high chairs so parents can eat lunch with their children. The payoff? Employees return the favors with high productivity. And SAS's turnover never exceeds 5%—saving the company millions on recruiting, training, and severance.

David drums his fingers on his desk as he scans the e-mail on his computer screen. At the same time, he's talking on the phone to an executive halfway around the world. His knee bounces up and down like a jackhammer. He intermittently bites his lip and reaches for his constant companion, the coffee cup. He's so deeply involved in multitasking that he has forgotten the appointment his Outlook calendar reminded him of 15 minutes ago.

Jane, a senior vice president, and Mike, her CEO, have adjoining offices so they can communicate quickly, yet communication never seems to happen. "Whenever I go into Mike's office, his phone lights up, my cell phone goes off, someone knocks on the door, he suddenly turns to his screen and writes an e-mail, or he tells me about a new issue he wants me to address," Jane complains.

"We're working flat out just to stay afloat, and we're not getting anything important accomplished. It's driving me crazy."

David, Jane, and Mike aren't crazy, but they're certainly crazed. Their experience is becoming the norm for overworked managers who suffer—like many of your colleagues, and possibly like you—from a very real but unrecognized neurological phenomenon that I call attention deficit trait, or ADT. Caused by brain overload, ADT is now epidemic in organizations. The core symptoms are distractibility, inner frenzy, and impatience. People with ADT have difficulty staying organized, setting priorities, and managing time. These symptoms can undermine the work of an otherwise gifted executive. If David, Jane, Mike, and the millions like them understood themselves in neurological terms, they could actively manage their lives instead of reacting to problems as they happen.

As a psychiatrist who has diagnosed and treated thousands of people over the past 25 years for a medical condition called attention deficit disorder, or ADD (now known clinically as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), I have observed firsthand how a rapidly growing segment of the adult population is developing this new, related condition. The number of people with ADT coming into my clinical practice has mushroomed by a factor of 10 in the past decade. Unfortunately, most of the remedies for chronic overload proposed by time-management consultants and executive coaches do not address the underlying causes of ADT.

Unlike ADD, a neurological disorder that has a genetic component and can be aggravated by environmental and

physical factors, ADT springs entirely from the environment. Like the traffic jam, ADT is an artifact of modern life. It is brought on by the demands on our time and attention that have exploded over the past two decades. As our minds fill with noise—feckless synaptic events signifying nothing—the brain gradually loses its capacity to attend fully and thoroughly to anything.

The symptoms of ADT come upon a person gradually. The sufferer doesn't experience a single crisis but rather a series of minor emergencies while he or she tries harder and harder to keep up. Shouldering a responsibility to "suck it up" and not complain as the workload increases, executives with ADT do whatever they can to handle a load they simply cannot manage as well as they'd like. The ADT sufferer therefore feels a constant low level of panic and guilt. Facing a tidal wave of tasks, the executive becomes increasingly hurried, curt, peremptory, and unfocused, while pretending that everything is fine.

To control ADT, we first have to recognize it. And control it we must, if we as individuals and organizational leaders are to be effective. In the following pages, I'll offer an analysis of the origins of ADT and provide some suggestions that may help you manage it.

Attention Deficit Cousins

To understand the nature and treatment of ADT, it's useful to know something of its cousin, ADD.

Usually seen as a learning disability in children, ADD also afflicts about 5% of the adult population. Researchers using MRI scans have found that people with ADD suffer a slightly diminished volume in four specific brain

regions that have various functions such as modulating emotion (especially anger and frustration) and assisting in learning. One of the regions, made up of the frontal and prefrontal lobes, generates thoughts, makes decisions, sets priorities, and organizes activities. While the medications used to treat ADD don't change the anatomy of the brain, they alter brain chemistry, which in turn improves function in each of the four regions and so dramatically bolsters the performance of ADD sufferers.

ADD confers both disadvantages and advantages. The negative characteristics include a tendency to procrastinate and miss deadlines. People with ADD struggle with disorganization and tardiness; they can be forgetful and drift away mentally in the middle of a conversation or while reading. Their performance can be inconsistent: brilliant one moment and unsatisfactory the next. ADD sufferers also tend to demonstrate impatience and lose focus unless, oddly enough, they are under stress or handling multiple inputs. (This is because stress leads to the production of adrenaline, which is chemically similar to the medications we use to treat ADD.) Finally, people with ADD sometimes also self-medicate with excessive alcohol or other substances.

On the positive side, those with ADD usually possess rare talents and gifts. Those gifts often go unnoticed or undeveloped, however, because of the problems caused by the condition's negative symptoms. ADD sufferers can be remarkably creative and original. They are unusually persistent under certain circumstances and often possess an entrepreneurial flair. They display ingenuity and encourage that trait in others. They tend to improvise

well under pressure. Because they have the ability to field multiple inputs simultaneously, they can be strong leaders during times of change. They also tend to rebound quickly after setbacks and bring fresh energy to the company every day.

Executives with ADD typically achieve inconsistent results. Sometimes they fail miserably because they're disorganized and make mistakes. At other times, they perform brilliantly, offering original ideas and strategies that lead to performance at the highest level.

David Neeleman, the CEO of JetBlue Airways, has ADD. School was torture; unable to focus, he hated to study and procrastinated endlessly. "I felt like I should be out doing things, moving things along, but here I was, stuck studying statistics, which I knew had no application to my life," Neeleman told me. "I knew I had to have an education, but at the first opportunity to start a business, I just blew out of college." He climbed quickly in the corporate world, making use of his strengths—original thinking, high energy, an ability to draw out the best in people—and getting help with organization and time management.

Like most people with ADD, Neeleman could sometimes offend with his blunt words, but his ideas were good enough to change the airline industry. For example, he invented the electronic ticket. "When I proposed that idea, people laughed at me, saying no one would go to the airport without a paper ticket," he says. "Now everyone does, and it has saved the industry millions of dollars." It seems fitting that someone with ADD would invent a way around having to remember to bring a paper ticket.

Neeleman believes ADD is one of the keys to his success. Far from regretting having it, he celebrates it. But he understands that he must manage his ADD carefully.

Attention deficit trait is characterized by ADD's negative symptoms. Rather than being rooted in genetics, however, ADT is purely a response to the hyperkinetic environment in which we live. Indeed, modern culture all but requires many of us to develop ADT. Never in history has the human brain been asked to track so many data points. Everywhere, people rely on their cell phones, e-mail, and digital assistants in the race to gather and transmit data, plans, and ideas faster and faster. One could argue that the chief value of the modern era is speed, which the novelist Milan Kundera described as "the form of ecstasy that technology has bestowed upon modern man." Addicted to speed, we demand it even when we can't possibly go faster. James Gleick wryly noted in *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything* that the "close door" button in elevators is often the one with the paint worn off. As the human brain struggles to keep up, it falters and then falls into the world of ADT.

This Is Your Brain

While brain scans cannot display anatomical differences between people with "normal" brains and people suffering from ADT, studies have shown that as the human brain is asked to process dizzying amounts of data, its ability to solve problems flexibly and creatively declines and the number of mistakes increases. To find out why, let's go on a brief neurological journey.

Blessed with the largest cortex in all of nature, owners of this trillion-celled organ today put singular pressure on the frontal and prefrontal lobes, which I'll refer to in this article as simply the frontal lobes. This region governs what is called, aptly enough, executive functioning (EF). EF guides decision making and planning; the organization and prioritization of information and ideas; time management; and various other sophisticated, uniquely human, managerial tasks. As long as our frontal lobes remain in charge, everything is fine.

Beneath the frontal lobes lie the parts of the brain devoted to survival. These deep centers govern basic functions like sleep, hunger, sexual desire, breathing, and heart rate, as well as crudely positive and negative emotions. When you are doing well and operating at peak level, the deep centers send up messages of excitement, satisfaction, and joy. They pump up your motivation, help you maintain attention, and don't interfere with working memory, the number of data points you can keep track of at once. But when you are confronted with the sixth decision after the fifth interruption in the midst of a search for the ninth missing piece of information on the day that the third deal has collapsed and the 12th impossible request has blipped unbidden across your computer screen, your brain begins to panic, reacting just as if that sixth decision were a bloodthirsty, man-eating tiger.

As a specialist in learning disabilities, I have found that the most dangerous disability is not any formally diagnosable condition like dyslexia or ADD. It is fear. Fear shifts us into survival mode and thus prevents fluid learning and nuanced understanding. Certainly, if a real tiger

is about to attack you, survival is the mode you want to be in. But if you're trying to deal intelligently with a subtle task, survival mode is highly unpleasant and counterproductive.

When the frontal lobes approach capacity and we begin to fear that we can't keep up, the relationship between the higher and lower regions of the brain takes an ominous turn. Thousands of years of evolution have taught the higher brain not to ignore the lower brain's distress signals. In survival mode, the deep areas of the brain assume control and begin to direct the higher regions. As a result, the whole brain gets caught in a neurological catch-22. The deep regions interpret the messages of overload they receive from the frontal lobes in the same way they interpret everything: primitively. They furiously fire signals of fear, anxiety, impatience, irritability, anger, or panic. These alarm signals shanghai the attention of the frontal lobes, forcing them to forfeit much of their power. Because survival signals are irresistible, the frontal lobes get stuck sending messages back to the deep centers saying, "Message received. Trying to work on it but without success." These messages further perturb the deep centers, which send even more powerful messages of distress back up to the frontal lobes.

Meanwhile, in response to what's going on in the brain, the rest of the body—particularly the endocrine, respiratory, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, and peripheral nervous systems—has shifted into crisis mode and changed its baseline physiology from peace and quiet to red alert. The brain and body are locked in a reverberating circuit while the frontal lobes lose their sophistication, as

if vinegar were added to wine. In this state, EF reverts to simpleminded black-and-white thinking; perspective and shades of gray disappear. Intelligence dims. In a futile attempt to do more than is possible, the brain paradoxically reduces its ability to think clearly.

This neurological event occurs when a manager is desperately trying to deal with more input than he possibly can. In survival mode, the manager makes impulsive judgments, angrily rushing to bring closure to whatever matter is at hand. He feels compelled to get the problem under control immediately, to extinguish the perceived danger lest it destroy him. He is robbed of his flexibility, his sense of humor, his ability to deal with the unknown. He forgets the big picture and the goals and values he stands for. He loses his creativity and his ability to change plans. He desperately wants to kill the metaphorical tiger. At these moments he is prone to melting down, to throwing a tantrum, to blaming others, and to sabotaging himself. Or he may go in the opposite direction, falling into denial and total avoidance of the problems attacking him, only to be devoured. This is ADT at its worst.

Though ADT does not always reach such extreme proportions, it does wreak havoc among harried workers. Because no two brains are alike, some people deal with the condition better than others. Regardless of how well executives appear to function, however, no one has total control over his or her executive functioning.

Managing ADT

Unfortunately, top management has so far viewed the symptoms of ADT through the distorting lens of morality

or character. Employees who seem unable to keep up the pace are seen as deficient or weak. Consider the case of an executive who came to see me when he was completely overloaded. I suggested he talk the situation over with his superior and ask for help. When my client did so, he was told that if he couldn't handle the work, he ought to think about resigning. Even though his performance assessments were stellar and he'd earned praise for being one of the most creative people in the organization, he was allowed to leave. Because the firm sought to preserve the myth that no straw would ever break its people's backs, it could not tolerate the manager's stating that his back was breaking. After he went out on his own, he flourished.

How can we control the rampaging effects of ADT, both in ourselves and in our organizations? While ADD often requires medication, the treatment of ADT certainly does not. ADT can be controlled only by creatively engineering one's environment and one's emotional and physical health. I have found that the following preventive measures go a long way toward helping executives control their symptoms of ADT.

Promote positive emotions

The most important step in controlling ADT is not to buy a superturbocharged BlackBerry and fill it up with to-dos but rather to create an environment in which the brain can function at its best. This means building a positive, fear-free emotional atmosphere, because emotion is the on/off switch for executive functioning.

There are neurological reasons why ADT occurs less in environments where people are in physical contact

and where they trust and respect one another. When you comfortably connect with a colleague, even if you are dealing with an overwhelming problem, the deep centers of the brain send messages through the pleasure center to the area that assigns resources to the frontal lobes. Even when you're under extreme stress, this sense of human connection causes executive functioning to hum.

By contrast, people who work in physical isolation are more likely to suffer from ADT, for the more isolated we are, the more stressed we become. I witnessed a dramatic example of the danger of a disconnected environment and the healing power of a connected one when I consulted for one of the world's foremost university chemistry departments. In the department's formerly hard-driven culture, ADT was rampant, exacerbated by an ethic that forbade anyone to ask for help or even state that anything was wrong. People did not trust one another; they worked on projects alone, which led to more mistrust. Most people were in emotional pain, but implicit in the department's culture was the notion that great pain led to great gain.

In the late 1990s, one of the department's most gifted graduate students killed himself. His suicide note explicitly blamed the university for pushing him past his limit. The department's culture was literally lethal.

Instead of trying to sweep the tragedy under the rug, the chair of the department and his successor acted boldly and creatively. They immediately changed the structure of the supervisory system so that each graduate student and postdoc was assigned three supervisors, rather than a single one with a death grip on the trainee's career. The

department set up informal biweekly buffets that allowed people to connect. (Even the most reclusive chemist came out of hiding for food, one of life's great connectors.) The department heads went as far as changing the architecture of the department's main building, taking down walls and adding common areas and an espresso bar complete with a grand piano. They provided lectures and written information to all students about the danger signs of mental wear and tear and offered confidential procedures for students who needed help. These steps, along with regular meetings that included senior faculty and university administrators, led to a more humane, productive culture in which the students and faculty felt fully engaged. The department's performance remained first-rate, and creative research blossomed.

The bottom line is this: Fostering connections and reducing fear promote brainpower. When you make time at least every four to six hours for a "human moment," a face-to-face exchange with a person you like, you are giving your brain what it needs.

Take physical care of your brain

Sleep, a good diet, and exercise are critical for staving off ADT. Though this sounds like a no-brainer, too many of us abuse our brains by neglecting obvious principles of care.

You may try to cope with ADT by sleeping less, in the vain hope that you can get more done. This is the opposite of what you need to do, for ADT sets in when you don't get enough sleep. There is ample documentation to suggest that sleep deprivation engenders a host of

problems, from impaired decision making and reduced creativity to reckless behavior and paranoia. We vary in how much sleep we require; a good rule of thumb is that you're getting enough sleep if you can wake up without an alarm clock.

Diet also plays a crucial role in brain health. Many hardworking people habitually inhale carbohydrates, which cause blood glucose levels to yo-yo. This leads to a vicious cycle: Rapid fluctuations in insulin levels further increase the craving for carbohydrates. The brain, which relies on glucose for energy, is left either glutted or gasping, neither of which makes for optimal cognitive functioning.

The brain does much better if the blood glucose level can be held relatively stable. To do this, avoid simple carbohydrates containing sugar and white flour (pastries, white bread, and pasta, for example). Rely on the complex carbohydrates found in fruits, whole grains, and vegetables. Protein is important: Instead of starting your day with coffee and a Danish, try tea and an egg or a piece of smoked salmon on wheat toast. Take a multivitamin every day as well as supplementary omega-3 fatty acids, an excellent source of which is fish oil. The omega-3s and the E and B complex contained in multivitamins promote healthy brain function and may even stave off Alzheimer's disease and inflammatory ills (which can be the starting point for major killers like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer). Moderate your intake of alcohol, too, because too much kills brain cells and accelerates the development of memory loss and even dementia. As you change your diet to promote optimal brain function

and good general health, your body will also shed excess pounds.

If you think you can't afford the time to exercise, think again. Sitting at a desk for hours on end decreases mental acuity, not only because of reduced blood flow to the brain but for other biochemical reasons as well. Physical exercise induces the body to produce an array of chemicals that the brain loves, including endorphins, serotonin, dopamine, epinephrine, and norepinephrine, as well as two recently discovered compounds, brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) and nerve growth factor (NGF). Both BDNF and NGF promote cell health and development in the brain, stave off the ravages of aging and stress, and keep the brain in tip-top condition. Nothing stimulates the production of BDNF and NGF as robustly as physical exercise, which explains why those who exercise regularly talk about the letdown and sluggishness they experience if they miss their exercise for a few days. You will more than compensate for the time you invest on the treadmill with improved productivity and efficiency. To fend off the symptoms of ADT while you're at work, get up from your desk and go up and down a flight of stairs a few times or walk briskly down a hallway. These quick, simple efforts will push your brain's reset button.

Organize for ADT

It's important to develop tactics for getting organized, but not in the sense of empty New Year's resolutions. Rather, your goal is to order your work in a way that suits you, so that disorganization does not keep you from reaching your goals.

First, devise strategies to help your frontal lobes stay in control. These might include breaking down large tasks into smaller ones and keeping a section of your work space or desk clear at all times. (You do not need to have a neat office, just a neat section of your office.) Similarly, you might try keeping a portion of your day free of appointments, e-mail, and other distractions so that you have time to think and plan. Because e-mail is a wonderful way to procrastinate and set yourself up for ADT at the same time, you might consider holding specific "e-mail hours," since it isn't necessary to reply to every e-mail right away.

When you start your day, don't allow yourself to get sucked into vortices of e-mail or voice mail or into attending to minor tasks that eat up your time but don't pack a punch. Attend to a critical task instead. Before you leave for the day, make a list of no more than five priority items that will require your attention tomorrow. Short lists force you to prioritize and complete your tasks. Additionally, keep torrents of documents at bay. One of my patients, an executive with ADD, uses the OHIO rule: Only handle it once. If he touches a document, he acts on it, files it, or throws it away. "I don't put it in a pile," he says. "Piles are like weeds. If you let them grow, they take over everything."

Pay attention to the times of day when you feel that you perform at your best; do your most important work then and save the rote work for other times. Set up your office in a way that helps mental functioning. If you focus better with music, have music (if need be, use earphones). If you think best on your feet, work standing up

or walk around frequently. If doodling or drumming your fingers helps, figure out a way to do so without bothering anyone, or get a fidget toy to bring to meetings. These small strategies sound mundane, but they address the ADT devil that resides in distracting details.

Protect your frontal lobes

To stay out of survival mode and keep your lower brain from usurping control, slow down. Take the time you need to comprehend what is going on, to listen, to ask questions, and to digest what's been said so that you don't get confused and send your brain into panic. Empower an assistant to ride herd on you; insist that he or she tell you to stop e-mailing, get off the telephone, or leave the office.

If you do begin to feel overwhelmed, try the following mind-clearing tricks. Do an easy rote task, such as resetting the calendar on your watch or writing a memo on a neutral topic. If you feel anxious about beginning a project, pull out a sheet of paper or fire up your word processor and write a paragraph about something unrelated to the project (a description of your house, your car, your shoes—anything you know well). You can also tackle the easiest part of the task; for example, write just the title of a memo about it. Open a dictionary and read a few definitions, or spend five minutes doing a crossword puzzle. Each of these little tasks quiets your lower brain by tricking it into shutting off alarmist messages and puts your frontal lobes back in full control.

Finally, be ready for the next attack of ADT by posting the sidebar "Control Your ADT" near your desk where

CONTROL YOUR ADT

In General

- Get adequate sleep.
- Watch what you eat. Avoid simple, sugary carbohydrates, moderate your intake of alcohol, add protein, stick to complex carbohydrates (vegetables, whole grains, fruit).
- Exercise at least 30 minutes at least every other day.
- Take a daily multivitamin and an omega-3 fatty acid supplement.

At Work

- Do all you can to create a trusting, connected work environment.
- Have a friendly, face-to-face talk with a person you like every four to six hours.
- Break large tasks into smaller ones.
- Keep a section of your work space or desk clear at all times.
- Each day, reserve some "think time" that's free from appointments, e-mail, and phone calls.
- Set aside e-mail until you've completed at least one or two more important tasks.
- Before you leave work each day, create a short list of three to five items you will attend to the next day.

- Try to act on, file, or toss every document you touch.
- Don't let papers accumulate.
- Pay attention to the times of day when you feel that you are at your best; do your most important work then, and save the rote work for other times.
- Do whatever you need to do to work in a more focused way: Add background music, walk around, and so on.
- Ask a colleague or an assistant to help you stop talking on the telephone, e-mailing, or working too late.

When You Feel Overwhelmed

- Slow down.
- Do an easy rote task: Reset your watch, write a note about a neutral topic (such as a description of your house), read a few dictionary definitions, do a short crossword puzzle.
- Move around: Go up and down a flight of stairs or walk briskly.
- Ask for help, delegate a task, or brainstorm with a colleague. In short, do not worry alone.

you can see it. Knowing that you are prepared diminishes the likelihood of an attack, because you're not susceptible to panic.

What Leaders Can Do

All too often, companies induce and exacerbate ADT in their employees by demanding fast thinking rather than deep thinking. Firms also ask employees to work on multiple overlapping projects and initiatives, resulting in second-rate thinking. Worse, companies that ask their employees to do too much at once tend to reward those who say yes to overload while punishing those who choose to focus and say no.

Moreover, organizations make the mistake of forcing their employees to do more and more with less and less by eliminating support staff. Such companies end up losing money in the long run, for the more time a manager has to spend being his own administrative assistant and the less he is able to delegate, the less effective he will be in doing the important work of moving the organization forward. Additionally, firms that ignore the symptoms of ADT in their employees suffer its ill effects: Employees underachieve, create clutter, cut corners, make careless mistakes, and squander their brainpower. As demands continue to increase, a toxic, high-pressure environment leads to high rates of employee illness and turnover.

To counteract ADT and harness employee brainpower, firms should invest in amenities that contribute to a positive atmosphere. One company that has done an excellent job in this regard is SAS Institute, a major software company in North Carolina. The company famously offers its

employees a long list of perks: a 36,000-square-foot, on-site gym; a seven-hour workday that ends at 5 PM; the largest on-site day care facility in North Carolina; a cafeteria that provides baby seats and high chairs so parents can eat lunch with their children; unlimited sick days; and much more. The atmosphere at SAS is warm, connected, and relaxed. The effect on the bottom line is profoundly positive; turnover is never higher than 5%. The company saves the millions other software companies spend on recruiting, training, and severance (estimated to be at least 1.5 times salary in the software industry). Employees return the favors with high productivity. The forces of ADT that shred other organizations never gain momentum at SAS.

Leaders can also help prevent ADT by matching employees' skills to tasks. When managers assign goals that stretch people too far or ask workers to focus on what they're not good at rather than what they do well, stress rises. By contrast, managers who understand the dangers of ADT can find ways of keeping themselves and their organizations on track. JetBlue's David Neeleman, for example, has shamelessly and publicly identified what he is not good at and found ways to deal with his shortcomings, either by delegating or by empowering his assistant to direct him. Neeleman also models this behavior for everyone else in the organization. His openness about the challenges of his ADD gives others permission to speak about their own attention deficit difficulties and to garner the support they need. He also encourages his managers to match people with tasks that fit their cognitive and emotional styles, knowing that no one style

is best. Neeleman believes that helping people work to their strengths is not just a mark of sophisticated management; it's also an excellent way to boost worker productivity and morale.

ADT is a very real threat to all of us. If we do not manage it, it manages us. But an understanding of ADT and its ravages allows us to apply practical methods to improve our work and our lives. In the end, the most critical step an enlightened leader can take to address the problem of ADT is to name it. Bringing ADT out of the closet and describing its symptoms removes the stigma and eliminates the moral condemnation companies have for so long mistakenly leveled at overburdened employees. By giving people permission to ask for help and remaining vigilant for signs of stress, organizations will go a long way toward fostering more productive, well-balanced, and intelligent work environments.

Edward M. "Ned" Hallowell, MD, is a psychiatrist and the founder of the Hallowell Center for Cognitive and Emotional Health in Sudbury, Massachusetts. He is the author of *Shine: Using Brain Science to Get the Best from Your People* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2011).

Section 2

Renewing Your Energy

Chapter 3
Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time

by Tony Schwartz and Catherine McCarthy

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Tony Schwartz** *and* **Catherine McCarthy**, *highlighting key ideas.*

IDEA IN BRIEF

Is your job demanding more from you than ever before? Do you feel as if you're working additional hours but rarely getting ahead? Is your mobile device leashing

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you to your job 24/7? Do you feel exhausted, disengaged, sick?

Spending longer days at the office and putting in extra hours at home doesn't work because your time is a limited resource. But your personal energy is renewable. By fostering deceptively simple *rituals* that will help you regularly replenish your energy, you can strengthen your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual resilience. These rituals include taking brief breaks at specific intervals, expressing appreciation to others, reducing interruptions, and spending more time on the activities you do best and enjoy most.

IDEA IN PRACTICE

Try these practices to renew the four dimensions of your personal energy:

Physical Energy

- Enhance your sleep by setting an earlier bedtime and reducing alcohol use.
- Reduce stress by engaging in cardiovascular activity at least three times a week and strength training at least once a week.
- Eat small meals and light snacks every three hours.
- Learn to notice signs of imminent flagging energy, including restlessness, yawning, hunger, and difficulty concentrating.

- Take brief but regular breaks away from your desk at 90- to 120-minute intervals throughout the day.

Emotional Energy

- Defuse negative emotions—irritability, impatience, anxiety, insecurity—through deep abdominal breathing.
- Fuel positive emotions in yourself and others by regularly expressing appreciation to people in detailed, specific terms through notes, e-mails, calls, or conversations.
- Look at upsetting situations through new lenses. Adopt a *reverse lens* to ask, "What would the other person in this conflict say, and how might he be right?" Use a *long lens* to ask, "How will I likely view this situation in six months?" Employ a *wide lens* to ask, "How can I grow and learn from this situation?"

Mental Energy

- Reduce interruptions by performing high-concentration tasks away from phones and e-mail.
- Respond to voice mails and e-mails at designated times during the day.
- Select the most important challenge for the next day the night before. Then make that challenge your first priority when you arrive at work in the morning.

Spiritual Energy

- Identify your "sweet spot" activities—those that give you feelings of effectiveness, effortless absorption, and fulfillment. Find ways to do more of these. One executive who hated doing sales reports delegated them to someone who loved that activity.
- Allocate time and energy to what you consider most important. For example, spend the last 20 minutes of your evening commute relaxing, so you can connect with your family once you're home.
- Live your core values. For instance, if being considerate is important to you but you're perpetually late for meetings, practice intentionally showing up five minutes early for meetings.

Steve Wanner is a highly respected 37-year-old partner at Ernst & Young, married with four young children. When I met him a year ago, he was working 12- to 14-hour days, felt perpetually exhausted, and found it difficult to fully engage with his family in the evenings, which left him feeling guilty and dissatisfied. He slept poorly, made no time to exercise, and seldom ate healthy meals, instead grabbing a bite to eat on the run or while working at his desk.

Wanner's experience is not uncommon. Most of us respond to rising demands in the workplace by putting

in longer hours, which inevitably take a toll on us physically, mentally, and emotionally. That leads to declining levels of engagement, increasing levels of distraction, high turnover rates, and soaring medical costs among employees. My colleagues and I at the Energy Project have worked with thousands of leaders and managers in the course of doing consulting and coaching at large organizations during the past five years. With remarkable consistency, these executives tell us they're pushing themselves harder than ever to keep up and increasingly feel they are at a breaking point.

The core problem with working longer hours is that time is a finite resource. Energy is a different story. Defined in physics as the capacity to work, energy comes from four main wellsprings in human beings: the body, emotions, mind, and spirit. In each, energy can be systematically expanded and regularly renewed by establishing specific rituals—behaviors that are intentionally practiced and precisely scheduled, with the goal of making them unconscious and automatic as quickly as possible.

To effectively reenergize their workforces, organizations need to shift their emphasis from getting more out of people to investing more in them, so they are motivated—and able—to bring more of themselves to work every day. To recharge themselves, individuals need to recognize the costs of energy-depleting behaviors and then take responsibility for changing them, regardless of the circumstances they're facing.

The rituals and behaviors Wanner established to better manage his energy transformed his life. He set an earlier bedtime and gave up drinking, which had disrupted

his sleep. As a consequence, when he woke up he felt more rested and more motivated to exercise, which he now does almost every morning. In less than two months he lost 15 pounds. After working out he now sits down with his family for breakfast. Wanner still puts in long hours on the job, but he renews himself regularly along the way. He leaves his desk for lunch and usually takes a morning and an afternoon walk outside. When he arrives at home in the evening, he's more relaxed and better able to connect with his wife and children.

Establishing simple rituals like these can lead to striking results across organizations. At Wachovia Bank, we took a group of employees through a pilot energy management program and then measured their performance against that of a control group. The participants outperformed the controls on a series of financial metrics, such as the value of loans they generated. They also reported substantial improvements in their customer relationships, their engagement with work, and their personal satisfaction. In this article, I'll describe the Wachovia study in a little more detail. Then I'll explain what executives and managers can do to increase and regularly renew work capacity—the approach used by the Energy Project, which builds on, deepens, and extends several core concepts developed by my former partner Jim Loehr in his seminal work with athletes.

Linking Capacity and Performance at Wachovia

Most large organizations invest in developing employees' skills, knowledge, and competence. Very few help build

and sustain their capacity—their energy—which is typically taken for granted. In fact, greater capacity makes it possible to get more done in less time at a higher level of engagement and with more sustainability. Our experience at Wachovia bore this out.

In early 2006 we took 106 employees at 12 regional banks in southern New Jersey through a curriculum of four modules, each of which focused on specific strategies for strengthening one of the four main dimensions of energy. We delivered it at one-month intervals to groups of approximately 20 to 25, ranging from senior leaders to lower-level managers. We also assigned each attendee a fellow employee as a source of support between sessions. Using Wachovia's own key performance metrics, we evaluated how the participant group performed compared with a group of employees at similar levels at a nearby set of Wachovia banks who did not go through the training. To create a credible basis for comparison, we looked at year-over-year percentage changes in performance across several metrics.

On a measure called the "Big 3"—revenues from three kinds of loans—the participants showed a year-over-year increase that was 13 percentage points greater than the control group's in the first three months of our study. On revenues from deposits, the participants exceeded the control group's year-over-year gain by 20 percentage points during that same period. The precise gains varied month by month, but with only a handful of exceptions, the participants continued to significantly outperform the control group for a full year after completing the program. Although other variables undoubtedly influenced these

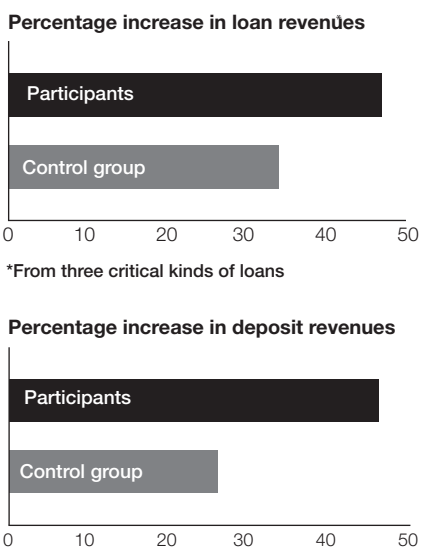
outcomes, the participants' superior performance was notable in its consistency. (See figure 3-1.)

We also asked participants how the program influenced them personally. Sixty-eight percent reported that it had a positive impact on their relationships with clients and customers. Seventy-one percent said that it had a noticeable or substantial positive impact on their productivity and performance. These findings corroborated a raft of anecdotal evidence we've gathered about

FIGURE 3-1

How energy renewal programs boosted productivity at Wachovia

At Wachovia Bank, employees participating in an energy renewal program outperformed a control group of employees, demonstrating significantly greater improvements in year-over-year performance during the first quarter of 2006.



the effectiveness of this approach among leaders at other large companies such as Ernst & Young, Sony, Deutsche Bank, Nokia, ING Direct, Ford, and MasterCard.

The Body: Physical Energy

Our program begins by focusing on physical energy. It is scarcely news that inadequate nutrition, exercise, sleep, and rest diminish people's basic energy levels, as well as their ability to manage their emotions and focus their attention. Nonetheless, many executives don't find ways to practice consistently healthy behaviors, given all the other demands in their lives.

Before participants in our program begin to explore ways to increase their physical energy, they take an energy audit, which includes four questions in each energy dimension—body, emotions, mind, and spirit. (See the sidebar "Are You Headed for an Energy Crisis?") On average, participants get eight to 10 of those 16 questions "wrong," meaning they're doing things such as skipping breakfast, failing to express appreciation to others, struggling to focus on one thing at a time, or spending too little time on activities that give them a sense of purpose. While most participants aren't surprised to learn these behaviors are counterproductive, having them all listed in one place is often uncomfortable, sobering, and galvanizing. The audit highlights employees' greatest energy deficits. Participants also fill out charts designed to raise their awareness about how their exercise, diet, and sleep practices influence their energy levels.

The next step is to identify rituals for building and renewing physical energy. When Gary Faro, a vice president

ARE YOU HEADED FOR AN ENERGY CRISIS?

Please check the statements below that are true for you.

Body

☐ I don't regularly get at least seven to eight hours of sleep, and I often wake up feeling tired.

☐ I frequently skip breakfast, or I settle for something that isn't nutritious.

☐ I don't work out enough (meaning cardiovascular training at least three times a week and strength training at least once a week).

☐ I don't take regular breaks during the day to truly renew and recharge, or I often eat lunch at my desk, if I eat it at all.

Emotions

☐ I frequently find myself feeling irritable, impatient, or anxious at work, especially when work is demanding.

☐ I don't have enough time with my family and loved ones, and when I'm with them, I'm not always really with them.

☐ I have too little time for the activities that I most deeply enjoy.

☐ I don't stop frequently enough to express my appreciation to others or to savor my accomplishments and blessings.

Mind

☐ I have difficulty focusing on one thing at a time, and I am easily distracted during the day, especially by e-mail.

☐ I spend much of my day reacting to immediate crises and demands rather than focusing on activities with longer-term value and high leverage.

☐ I don't take enough time for reflection, strategizing, and creative thinking.

☐ I work in the evenings or on weekends, and I almost never take an e-mail–free vacation.

Spirit

☐ I don't spend enough time at work doing what I do best and enjoy most.

☐ There are significant gaps between what I say is most important to me in my life and how I actually allocate my time and energy.

☐ My decisions at work are more often influenced by external demands than by a strong, clear sense of my own purpose.

☐ I don't invest enough time and energy in making a positive difference to others or to the world.

How Is Your Overall Energy?

Total number of statements checked: __

ARE YOU HEADED FOR AN ENERGY CRISIS?

Guide to scores

0–3: Excellent energy management skills

4–6: Reasonable energy management skills

7–10: Significant energy management deficits

11–16: A full-fledged energy management crisis

What do you need to work on?

Number of checks in each category:

Body ___

Mind ___

Emotions ___

Spirit ___

Guide to category scores

0: Excellent energy management skills

1: Strong energy management skills

2: Significant deficits

3: Poor energy management skills

4: A full-fledged energy crisis

at Wachovia, began the program, he was significantly overweight, ate poorly, lacked a regular exercise routine, worked long hours, and typically slept no more than five or six hours a night. That is not an unusual profile among the leaders and managers we see. Over the course of the program, Faro began regular cardiovascular and strength training. He started going to bed at a designated time and sleeping longer. He changed his eating habits from

two big meals a day ("Where I usually gorged myself," he says) to smaller meals and light snacks every three hours. The aim was to help him stabilize his glucose levels over the course of the day, avoiding peaks and valleys. He lost 50 pounds in the process, and his energy levels soared. "I used to schedule tough projects for the morning, when I knew that I would be more focused," Faro says. "I don't have to do that anymore because I find that I'm just as focused now at 5 PM as I am at 8 AM."

Another key ritual Faro adopted was to take brief but regular breaks at specific intervals throughout the workday—always leaving his desk. The value of such breaks is grounded in our physiology. "Ultradian rhythms" refer to 90- to 120-minute cycles during which our bodies slowly move from a high-energy state into a physiological trough. Toward the end of each cycle, the body begins to crave a period of recovery. The signals include physical restlessness, yawning, hunger, and difficulty concentrating, but many of us ignore them and keep working. The consequence is that our energy reservoir—our remaining capacity—burns down as the day wears on.

Intermittent breaks for renewal, we have found, result in higher and more sustainable performance. The length of renewal is less important than the quality. It is possible to get a great deal of recovery in a short time—as little as several minutes—if it involves a ritual that allows you to disengage from work and truly change channels. That could range from getting up to talk to a colleague about something other than work, to listening to music on an iPod, to walking up and down stairs in an office building. While breaks are countercultural in most organizations

GROWN-UPS NEED RECESS, TOO

Taking time out of your workday to restore and rejuvenate yourself seems like a guilty pleasure. After all, shouldn't you be doing something to reduce costs or increase revenue? But our research for Wharton's Work/Life Integration Project shows that small breaks actually *improve* performance because you bring stronger, more focused effort to your work after fruitful rest—just as kids do after recess time in school.

What might this look like in practice? Here are a few examples:

- Turn off your mobile devices for 30 minutes each day, whenever works best. Just shutting off the stream of texts, instant messages, and calls counts as a break.
- Work out with a friend or coworker one morning a week.
- Set aside 15 minutes a day during your commute or coffee break to read something fun, do a crossword puzzle, or chat with a friend.
- Start a monthly book or puzzle swap with your colleagues.
- Find five minutes—and an empty conference room—to do jumping jacks or some light stretching.

How do you take time out in ways you can sustain? Here are some tips:

1. ***Try small steps.*** You're much more likely to keep it up if "recess" doesn't require a big restructuring of your life.
2. ***List the benefits—direct or indirect—to others.*** Maybe you feel less distracted at work, for example, or approach teamwork with more patience. If you think about what your coworkers are getting out of your improved outlook, you'll feel less guilty about doing something that at first might seem selfish.
3. ***Enroll someone you trust to serve as your coach.*** It can be anyone, as long as he or she provides both support and accountability pressure.
4. ***Get feedback after a week or two.*** Ask people at work if, indeed, you're better serving their needs and interests as a result of taking your recess and feeling refreshed. Adjust as you learn what's working—and what's not—from others' perspective.

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org by Stewart D. Friedman on February 25, 2009

and counterintuitive for many high achievers, their value is multifaceted.

Matthew Lang is a managing director for Sony in South Africa. He adopted some of the same rituals that Faro did, including a 20-minute walk in the afternoons. Lang's walk not only gives him a mental and emotional breather and some exercise but also has become the time when he gets his best creative ideas. That's because when he walks, he is not actively thinking, which allows the dominant left hemisphere of his brain to give way to the right hemisphere with its greater capacity to see the big picture and make imaginative leaps.

The Emotions: Quality of Energy

When people are able to take more control of their emotions, they can improve the quality of their energy, regardless of the external pressures they're facing. To do this, they first must become more aware of how they feel at various points during the workday and of the impact these emotions have on their effectiveness. Most people realize that they tend to perform best when they're feeling positive energy. What they find surprising is that they're not able to perform well or to lead effectively when they're feeling any other way.

Unfortunately, without intermittent recovery, we're not physiologically capable of sustaining highly positive emotions for long periods. Confronted with relentless demands and unexpected challenges, people tend to slip into negative emotions—the fight-or-flight mode—often multiple times in a day. They become irritable and impatient, or anxious and insecure. Such states of mind drain

people's energy and cause friction in their relationships. Fight-or-flight emotions also make it impossible to think clearly, logically, and reflectively. When executives learn to recognize what kinds of events trigger their negative emotions, they gain greater capacity to take control of their reactions.

One simple but powerful ritual for defusing negative emotions is what we call "buying time." Deep abdominal breathing is one way to do that. Exhaling slowly for five or six seconds induces relaxation and recovery, and turns off the fight-or-flight response. When we began working with Fujio Nishida, president of Sony Europe, he had a habit of lighting up a cigarette each time something especially stressful occurred—at least two or three times a day. Otherwise, he didn't smoke. We taught him the breathing exercise as an alternative, and it worked immediately: Nishida found he no longer had the desire for a cigarette. It wasn't the smoking that had given him relief from the stress, we concluded, but the relaxation prompted by the deep inhalation and exhalation.

A powerful ritual that fuels positive emotions is expressing appreciation to others, a practice that seems to be as beneficial to the giver as to the receiver. It can take the form of a handwritten note, an e-mail, a call, or a conversation—and the more detailed and specific, the higher the impact. As with all rituals, setting aside a particular time to do it vastly increases the chances of success. Ben Jenkins, vice chairman and president of the General Bank at Wachovia in Charlotte, North Carolina, built his appreciation ritual into time set aside for mentoring. He began scheduling lunches or dinners regularly with peo-

ple who worked for him. Previously, the only sit-downs he'd had with his direct reports were to hear monthly reports on their numbers or to give them yearly performance reviews. Now, over meals, he makes it a priority to recognize their accomplishments and also to talk with them about their lives and their aspirations rather than their immediate work responsibilities.

Finally, people can cultivate positive emotions by learning to change the stories they tell themselves about the events in their lives. Often, people in conflict cast themselves in the role of victim, blaming others or external circumstances for their problems. Becoming aware of the difference between the facts in a given situation and the way we interpret those facts can be powerful in itself. It's been a revelation for many of the people we work with to discover they have a choice about how to view a given event and to recognize how powerfully the story they tell influences the emotions they feel. We teach them to tell the most hopeful and personally empowering story possible in any given situation, without denying or minimizing the facts.

The most effective way people can change a story is to view it through any of three new lenses, which are all alternatives to seeing the world from the victim perspective. With the *reverse lens,* for example, people ask themselves, "What would the other person in this conflict say and in what ways might that be true?" With the *long lens* they ask, "How will I most likely view this situation in six months?" With the *wide lens* they ask themselves, "Regardless of the outcome of this issue, how can I grow and learn from it?" Each of these lenses can help people intentionally cultivate more positive emotions.

Nicolas Babin, director of corporate communications for Sony Europe, was the point person for calls from reporters when Sony went through several recalls of its batteries in 2006. Over time he found his work increasingly exhausting and dispiriting. After practicing the lens exercises, he began finding ways to tell himself a more positive and empowering story about his role. "I realized," he explains, "that this was an opportunity for me to build stronger relationships with journalists by being accessible to them and to increase Sony's credibility by being straightforward and honest."

The Mind: Focus of Energy

Many executives view multitasking as a necessity in the face of all the demands they juggle, but it actually undermines productivity. Distractions are costly: A temporary shift in attention from one task to another—stopping to answer an e-mail or take a phone call, for instance—increases the amount of time necessary to finish the primary task by as much as 25%, a phenomenon known as "switching time." It's far more efficient to fully focus for 90 to 120 minutes, take a true break, and then fully focus on the next activity. We refer to these work periods as "ultradian sprints."

Once people see how much they struggle to concentrate, they can create rituals to reduce the relentless interruptions that technology has introduced in their lives. We start out with an exercise that forces them to face the impact of daily distractions. They attempt to complete a complex task and are regularly interrupted—an experience that, people report, ends up feeling much like everyday life.

Dan Cluna, a vice president at Wachovia, designed two rituals to better focus his attention. The first one is to leave his desk and go into a conference room, away from phones and e-mail, whenever he has a task that requires concentration. He now finishes reports in a third of the time they used to require. Cluna built his second ritual around meetings at branches with the financial specialists who report to him. Previously, he would answer his phone whenever it rang during these meetings. As a consequence, the meetings he scheduled for an hour often stretched to two, and he rarely gave anyone his full attention. Now Cluna lets his phone go to voice mail so that he can focus completely on the person in front of him. He now answers the accumulated voice-mail messages when he has downtime between meetings.

E&Y's hard-charging Wanner used to answer e-mail constantly throughout the day—whenever he heard a "ping." Then he created a ritual of checking his e-mail just twice a day—at 10:15 AM and 2:30 PM. Whereas previously he couldn't keep up with all his messages, he discovered he could clear his in-box each time he opened it—the reward of fully focusing his attention on e-mail for 45 minutes at a time. Wanner has also reset the expectations of all the people he regularly communicates with by e-mail. "I've told them if it's an emergency and they need an instant response, they can call me and I'll always pick up," he says. Nine months later he has yet to receive such a call.

Michael Henke, a senior manager at E&Y, sat his team down at the start of the busy season last winter and told them that at certain points during the day he was going

to turn off his Sametime (an in-house instant-message system). The result, he said, was that he would be less available to them for questions. Like Wanner, he told his team to call him if any emergency arose, but they rarely did. He also encouraged the group to take regular breaks throughout the day and to eat more regularly. They finished the busy season under budget and more profitable than other teams that hadn't followed the energy renewal program. "We got the same amount of work done in less time," says Henke. "It made for a win-win."

Another way to mobilize mental energy is to focus systematically on activities that have the most long-term leverage. Unless people intentionally schedule time for more challenging work, they tend not to get to it at all or rush through it at the last minute. Perhaps the most effective focus ritual the executives we work with have adopted is to identify each night the most important challenge for the next day and make it their very first priority when they arrive in the morning. Jean Luc Duquesne, a vice president for Sony Europe in Paris, used to answer his e-mail as soon as he got to the office, just as many people do. He now tries to concentrate the first hour of every day on the most important topic. He finds that he often emerges at 10 AM feeling as if he's already had a productive day.

The Human Spirit: Energy of Meaning and Purpose

People tap into the energy of the human spirit when their everyday work and activities are consistent with what they value most and with what gives them a sense

of meaning and purpose. If the work they're doing really matters to them, they typically feel more positive energy, focus better, and demonstrate greater perseverance. Regrettably, the high demands and fast pace of corporate life don't leave much time to pay attention to these issues, and many people don't even recognize meaning and purpose as potential sources of energy. Indeed, if we tried to begin our program by focusing on the human spirit, it would likely have minimal impact. Only when participants have experienced the value of the rituals they establish in the other dimensions do they start to see that being attentive to their own deeper needs dramatically influences their effectiveness and satisfaction at work.

For E&Y partner Jonathan Anspacher, simply having the opportunity to ask himself a series of questions about what really mattered to him was both illuminating and energizing. "I think it's important to be a little introspective and say, 'What do you want to be remembered for?'" he told us. "You don't want to be remembered as the crazy partner who worked these long hours and had his people be miserable. When my kids call me and ask, 'Can you come to my band concert?' I want to say, 'Yes, I'll be there and I'll be in the front row.' I don't want to be the father that comes in and sits in the back and is on his BlackBerry and has to step out to take a phone call."

To access the energy of the human spirit, people need to clarify priorities and establish accompanying rituals in three categories: doing what they do best and enjoy most at work; consciously allocating time and energy to the areas of their lives—work, family, health, service to

others—they deem most important; and living their core values in their daily behaviors.

When you're attempting to discover what you do best and what you enjoy most, it's important to realize that these two things aren't necessarily mutually inclusive. You may get lots of positive feedback about something you're very good at but not truly enjoy it. Conversely, you can love doing something but have no gift for it, so that achieving success requires much more energy than it makes sense to invest.

To help program participants discover their areas of strength, we ask them to recall at least two work experiences in the past several months during which they found themselves in their "sweet spot"—feeling effective, effortlessly absorbed, inspired, and fulfilled. Then we have them deconstruct those experiences to understand precisely what energized them so positively and what specific talents they were drawing on. If leading strategy feels like a sweet spot, for example, is it being in charge that's most invigorating or participating in a creative endeavor? Or is it using a skill that comes to you easily and so feels good to exercise? Finally, we have people establish a ritual that will encourage them to do more of exactly that kind of activity at work.

A senior leader we worked with realized that one of the activities he least liked was reading and summarizing detailed sales reports, whereas one of his favorites was brainstorming new strategies. The leader found a direct report who loved immersing himself in numbers and delegated the sales report task to him—happily settling for

brief oral summaries from him each day. The leader also began scheduling a free-form 90-minute strategy session every other week with the most creative people in his group.

In the second category, devoting time and energy to what's important to you, there is often a similar divide between what people say is important and what they actually do. Rituals can help close this gap. When Jean Luc Duquesne, the Sony Europe vice president, thought hard about his personal priorities, he realized that spending time with his family was what mattered most to him, but it often got squeezed out of his day. So he instituted a ritual in which he switches off for at least three hours every evening when he gets home, so he can focus on his family. "I'm still not an expert on PlayStation," he told us, "but according to my youngest son, I'm learning and I'm a good student." Steve Wanner, who used to talk on the cell phone all the way to his front door on his commute home, has chosen a specific spot 20 minutes from his house where he ends whatever call he's on and puts away the phone. He spends the rest of his commute relaxing so that when he does arrive home, he's less preoccupied with work and more available to his wife and children.

The third category, practicing your core values in your everyday behavior, is a challenge for many as well. Most people are living at such a furious pace that they rarely stop to ask themselves what they stand for and who they want to be. As a consequence, they let external demands dictate their actions.

We don't suggest that people explicitly define their values, because the results are usually too predictable.

Instead, we seek to uncover them, in part by asking questions that are inadvertently revealing, such as, "What are the qualities that you find most off-putting when you see them in others?" By describing what they can't stand, people unintentionally divulge what they stand for. If you are very offended by stinginess, for example, generosity is probably one of your key values. If you are especially put off by rudeness in others, it's likely that consideration is a high value for you. As in the other categories, establishing rituals can help bridge the gap between the values you aspire to and how you currently behave. If you discover that consideration is a key value, but you are perpetually late for meetings, the ritual might be to end the meetings you run five minutes earlier than usual and intentionally show up five minutes early for the meeting that follows.

Addressing these three categories helps people go a long way toward achieving a greater sense of alignment, satisfaction, and well-being in their lives on and off the job. Those feelings are a source of positive energy in their own right and reinforce people's desire to persist at rituals in other energy dimensions as well.

This new way of working takes hold only to the degree that organizations support their people in adopting new behaviors. We have learned, sometimes painfully, that not all executives and companies are prepared to embrace the notion that personal renewal for employees will lead to better and more sustainable performance. To succeed, renewal efforts need solid support and commitment

from senior management, beginning with the key decision maker.

At Wachovia, Susanne Svizeny, the president of the region in which we conducted our study, was the primary cheerleader for the program. She embraced the principles in her own life and made a series of personal changes, including a visible commitment to building more regular renewal rituals into her work life. Next, she took it upon herself to foster the excitement and commitment of her leadership team. Finally, she regularly reached out by e-mail to all participants in the project to encourage them in their rituals and seek their feedback. It was clear to everyone that she took the work seriously. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and the results spoke for themselves.

At Sony Europe, several hundred leaders have embraced the principles of energy management. Over the next year, more than 2,000 of their direct reports will go through the energy renewal program. From Fujio Nishida on down, it has become increasingly culturally acceptable at Sony to take intermittent breaks, work out at midday, answer e-mail only at designated times, and even ask colleagues who seem irritable or impatient what stories they're telling themselves.

Organizational support also entails shifts in policies, practices, and cultural messages. A number of firms we worked with have built "renewal rooms" where people can regularly go to relax and refuel. Others offer subsidized gym memberships. In some cases, leaders themselves gather groups of employees for midday workouts. One company instituted a no-meeting zone between 8 and 9 AM to ensure that people had at least one hour ab-

solutely free of meetings. At several companies, including Sony, senior leaders collectively agreed to stop checking e-mail during meetings as a way to make the meetings more focused and efficient.

One factor that can get in the way of success is a crisis mentality. The optimal candidates for energy renewal programs are organizations that are feeling enough pain to be eager for new solutions but not so much that they're completely overwhelmed. At one organization where we had the active support of the CEO, the company was under intense pressure to grow rapidly, and the senior team couldn't tear themselves away from their focus on immediate survival—even though taking time out for renewal might have allowed them to be more productive at a more sustainable level.

By contrast, the group at Ernst & Young successfully went through the process at the height of tax season. With the permission of their leaders, they practiced defusing negative emotions by breathing or telling themselves different stories, and alternated highly focused periods of work with renewal breaks. Most people in the group reported that this busy season was the least stressful they'd ever experienced.

The implicit contract between organizations and their employees today is that each will try to get as much from the other as they can, as quickly as possible, and then move on without looking back. We believe that is mutually self-defeating. Both individuals and the organizations they work for end up depleted rather than enriched. Employees feel increasingly beleaguered and burned out. Organizations are forced to settle for employees who are

less than fully engaged and to constantly hire and train new people to replace those who choose to leave. We envision a new and explicit contract that benefits all parties: Organizations invest in their people across all dimensions of their lives to help them build and sustain their value. Individuals respond by bringing all their multidimensional energy wholeheartedly to work every day. Both grow in value as a result.

Tony Schwartz is the president and founder of The Energy Project in New York City, and a coauthor of *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal* (Free Press, 2003). **Catherine McCarthy** is a senior vice president at The Energy Project.

Chapter 4
Why Great Performers Sleep More

by Tony Schwartz

Why is sleep one of the first things we're willing to sacrifice as the demands in our lives keep rising? We continue to live by a remarkably durable myth: Sleeping one hour less will give us one more hour of productivity. In reality, even small amounts of sleep deprivation take a significant toll on our health, mood, cognitive capacity, and productivity.

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

When researchers put test subjects into environments without clocks or windows and ask them to sleep any

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time they feel tired, 95% sleep between seven and eight hours out of every 24. Another 2.5% sleep more than eight hours. That means just 2.5% of us require fewer than seven hours of sleep a night to feel fully rested. That's one out of every 40 people.

In my talks, when I ask who has had fewer than seven hours of sleep several nights during the past week, the majority raise their hands. That's true whether it's an audience of corporate executives, teachers, cops, or government workers.

Great performers are an exception. Typically, they sleep significantly *more* than the rest of us. In Anders Ericsson's famous study of violinists, the top performers slept an average of eight and a half hours out of every 24, including a 20- to 30-minute midafternoon nap—some two hours a day more than the average American.

The top violinists also reported that except for practice itself, sleep was the most important factor in improving their skills.

As I gathered research about sleep, I felt increasingly compelled to give it higher priority in my own life. Today, I go to great lengths to ensure that I get at least eight hours every night, and ideally between eight and a half and nine hours, even when I'm traveling.

I still take the overnight red-eye from California to New York, but I'm asleep by takeoff—even if I have to take a sleeping aid. When I get home at 6:00 or 7:00 AM, I go right to bed until I've had my eight hours. What I've learned about those days is that I'd rather work at 100% for five or six hours than at 60% for eight or nine hours.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ON HBR.ORG

Try the coffee nap—Lifehacker had a great article about [naps]. I'm a paramedic and I've used this trick for ages. Fix a cup of coffee so you can drink it quickly. Set up the spot where you'll nap and then drink the coffee. Set a timer for 20 minutes and make sure you get up when it goes off. Any longer and you'll feel worn out. I know this has saved my life on many late-night, long-distance transports. —Posted by John

With sufficient sleep, I feel better, I work with more focus, and I manage my emotions better, which is good for everyone around me. I dislike enduring even a single day when I haven't had enough sleep because the impact is immediate and unavoidable. On the rare days that I don't get enough, I try hard to get at least a 20- to 30-minute nap in the afternoon. That's a big help.

How to Get More Sleep

Here are three other tips to improve the quantity and quality of your sleep:

- **Write down what's on your mind before you get into bed.** If you leave items such as unfinished to-do's and unresolved issues in your working memory, they'll make it harder to fall asleep, and you'll end up ruminating about them if you wake up during the night.

- **Go to bed earlier—and at a set time.** Sounds obvious, right? The problem is there's no alternative. You're already waking up at the latest possible time you can. If you don't ritualize a specific bedtime, you'll find ways to stay up later, just the way you do now.
- **Start winding down at least 45 minutes before you turn out the light.** You won't fall asleep if you're all wound up from answering e-mail or doing other work. Create a ritual around drinking a cup of herbal tea, listening to music that helps you relax, or reading a dull book.

Tony Schwartz is the president and CEO of The Energy Project and the author of *Be Excellent at Anything* (Free Press, 2011). Become a fan of The Energy Project on Facebook and connect with Tony on Twitter at @tonyschwartz and @energy_project.

Section 3

Improving Your Work/Life Balance

Chapter 5
No, You Can't Have It All

by Eric C. Sinoway

Imagine that a company needs two volunteers for a high-profile, out-of-town project. Who should go? Everyone has pressures and commitments to consider. There's the young manager eager for his next promotion but worried about leaving his wife at home with their toddler and newborn son; the rising star who's already juggling long hours at work, a part-time MBA program, and the planning of her wedding; the mid-career executive who just joined a nonprofit board and doesn't want to miss his first meeting; the single colleague who would relish the assignment but is about to move her father into a nursing home; and an overweight team member with a family

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history of diabetes who knows the travel will cause him to blow his new diet and exercise routine.

Platitudes about the importance of work–life balance don't fully capture the complexity of those employees' situations. The pursuit of a meaningful, multifaceted life involves endless choices about both short-term tactical issues ("Should I volunteer for this project?") and long-term strategic ones ("How can I position myself to advance in my career?"). Howard Stevenson is an entrepreneur, professor, philanthropist, former chairman of Harvard Business Publishing, husband, and father who has spent four decades studying, teaching, and advising leaders in all types of organizations. He likens the challenge to walking on a balance beam while trying to juggle an egg, a crystal glass, a knife, and any number of other fragile or hazardous objects. As you progress in your career and life, more responsibilities and opportunities are tossed at you. And so at some point, to maintain your balance, you'll have to drop something. The key is to decide consciously what to relinquish instead of unwittingly letting go of the most important item.

It's hard for high-achieving people to accept that they can't have it all. Even those who recognize the limits on their time often still expect to be energetic and efficient enough to excel in every role: productive employee, inspiring boss and mentor, supportive colleague, active community member, and committed spouse, friend, parent, and child. It's a natural response to our upbringings; after all, in school we're taught that hardworking, intelligent students can get straight A's. But in the messy real

world, it is impossible to do everything perfectly at the same time. You cannot pursue all your goals simultaneously or satisfy all your desires at once. And it's an emotional drain to think you can. Instead, you must focus on long-term fulfillment rather than short-term success and, at various points in your life, think carefully about your priorities.

This article presents a framework that I have developed in collaboration with Howard. It's based on his experience teaching and mentoring students and on the lessons I've learned navigating my own career and now running Axcess Worldwide. The framework is designed to help people—particularly ambitious executives—understand their limits and make the tough trade-offs that can lead to more-satisfying careers and lives.

You, the Ongoing Process

We all know that it's difficult for a company to make good strategic or tactical decisions without a mission in mind. The same holds true for individuals. Think of a jigsaw puzzle: It's much easier to put the pieces together if you look at the front of the box. But life does not come with a picture that shows what success looks like. Most of us start walking and juggling on the balance beam without thinking holistically and explicitly about what aspects of our lives we value most and how we value those things in relation to one another. Those assessments are not easy, but they are central to defining your goals and your desired legacy. It helps to carefully consider all the dimensions of your life. Howard and I have identified seven:

- Family (parents, children, siblings, in-laws, and so on)
- Social and community (friendships and community engagement)
- Spiritual (religion, philosophy, or emotional outlook)
- Physical (health and well-being)
- Material (physical environment and possessions)
- Avocational (hobbies and other nonprofessional activities)
- Career (both short- and long-term perspectives)

For each dimension ask yourself three questions: Who do I want to be in this part of my life? How much do I want to experience this dimension? Given that I have a finite amount of time, energy, and resources, how important is this dimension relative to the others?

As you consider the answers, it's important to recognize two points. First, each dimension presents distinct challenges. It's crucial to tease them apart so that you are facing not an overwhelming whole but discrete issues that can be addressed individually. Second, your evaluation can and will change. The idea is to develop an aspirational picture of yourself for the present and a legacy vision for the future as a guide for deciding how to spend your personal resources. This is especially important when you feel you're losing your balance or are about to fumble.

Two of Howard's own life experiences offer potent examples of how to use this aspirational vision to shape decisions both large and small. The first is from the time when he was building Baupost—the money management firm he cofounded—as well as teaching at Harvard Business School. At that point, he couldn't spend as much time as he would have liked with his young children, because he was working long hours and traveling a lot. The situation reflected clear decisions he and his wife had made: He would sacrifice the family dimension of his life for a while in order to create the best long-term outcome for all of them. But Howard employed a tactical fix that honored his vision of himself as a committed husband and father. Whenever he was at home, he was fully responsive. Regardless of what else he was doing—catching up on work, reading a book, cleaning out the garage—if one of his family members asked for help with something or just wanted to talk, he would stop and engage. He knew that the emotional value from the interaction—for him and his family—would be far higher than the value of any other task. He applied clear-headed analysis to an important challenge: how to be a good father, husband, and provider while maximizing the professional dimension of his life.

Several years later, when Howard was in his late 40s and thriving at both Baupost and Harvard, he faced a much more complicated set of choices when his marriage ended. He realized he could regain his own and his sons' equilibrium only by rechanneling personal resources from his career to his family. And so he gave up his leadership role at Baupost—a job he loved, and one

CAN YOU REALLY ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL?

Before trying to pursue a significant goal, especially a professional one, it's important to assess whether you have the ability to achieve it. Consider two things:

1. Do you have the required core capacities: knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics?
2. Are your capacities as good as or better than those of other people with the same goal?

If you answer no to either question, you should consider revising your goal. If you answer yes to both, make sure you're not succumbing to one of these five common fallacies:

The hard-work fallacy: believing that determined effort will compensate for your shortcomings

The smarts fallacy: thinking that general intelligence translates into specific skills

The magnification fallacy: assuming that your particular talent is somehow more special than your peers'

The passion fallacy: believing you're good at things just because you really enjoy them or because they are immensely important to you

The "wishing will make it so" fallacy: convincing yourself that success (for you, anyway) will be easy

that might have given him an income in the tens of millions of dollars. "I needed to earn a consistently good grade as a father for an extended period," he explained. "I couldn't risk having some aspect of my family responsibilities slip through my fingers. Sure, my ego and my wallet both took big hits. But the value of having more time and energy for my kids far outweighed any incremental monetary value."

Assessing Value

Notice that in describing his experiences, Howard used the word "value." That's because he's an entrepreneur who knows that the only way to truly assess cost is to understand the value of one choice relative to another. For example, an hour spent reading to your daughter has a different value than an hour spent playing basketball with friends; and both have values different from an hour spent studying for a licensing exam or volunteering at a homeless shelter. The key is to differentiate between options that appear to be equally valuable by carefully considering how each of them advances you toward one dimension or another of your legacy vision. The following questions can help you in that process.

Where do your options fall on the needs–wants spectrum?

Needs start with food, shelter, and health; wants include diamond necklaces, round-the-world cruises, and mansions. Needs have more intrinsic value than wants. But most things fall somewhere in the middle. So the goal is to understand, in relative terms, where your options fall

on the spectrum, based on your individual circumstances at a given moment and on your legacy vision. Some wants are so strong—because of habit or even peer pressure—that it's difficult to separate them from needs.

Consider two examples. (In these and the cases of Willie and Andrew, below, names and some personal details have been changed out of respect for the subjects' privacy.) The first concerns a college classmate, Carin, who gets very sad if she can't take time each day to play the piano; the hobby is so much a part of who she wants to be that it has become, in practical terms, a need, so she sacrifices in other dimensions of her life to make time for it. The second involves two former colleagues, Irwin and Bill, who work at the same firm. Both were considering buying an expensive car and a handmade Swiss watch—investments that would consume significant amounts of cash and curtail their 401(k) contributions. For Irwin, a 29-year-old trying to impress his peers, these purchases were largely wants. But for Bill, a 46-year-old who had been promoted to a senior role in the luxury division of the company and was routinely entertaining wealthy clients, the car and the watch were closer to needs: He had to present himself in a certain way to be successful.

What are the investment and opportunity costs?

Almost every decision—whether agreeing to a strategic business alliance or committing to a leadership role in a nonprofit organization—involves two kinds of costs. There's the investment cost: the time, energy, and other resources you expend. And there's the opportunity cost:

the options you forgo by investing those resources. The challenge with investment costs is to be explicit about them up front and to understand if and how incurring them will lead you to your desired, well-defined outcome.

For example, rather than blindly diving into a full-scale job search to explore new career options, which would represent a very large investment of time and energy, you can commit to spending just five hours a week for two months researching a few industries you find promising, networking with contacts who know them, and doing informational interviews with executives working in them. The goal might be to create a short list of 10 companies where you'd like to work and to pinpoint three to five roles you'd like to play at them. At the same time, be sure to weigh your opportunity costs: what you won't be able to do because you're spending five hours a week on the job search. Perhaps you'll have to stop playing in the after-work softball league or decline to participate in a new cross-division initiative at your current workplace.

Are the potential benefits worth the costs?

Expected benefits must be evaluated just as carefully as costs, and in relation to them. Does the benefit you'll receive warrant the investment you'll have to make? The songwriter Lucy Kaplansky captures this idea succinctly: "How much did it cost you? How much did you pay? And are you sorry at the end of the day?" Willie, a friend who works for a large conglomerate, was recently told by his boss that he would be well served to earn his CPA, an achievement that requires three years of coursework. "Well served" implies a benefit, but how much of one?

Would he get a promotion or a raise after earning his CPA? If so, to what level? Would he be eligible to move to other divisions in the company? If so, which ones? Willie has to answer those questions in order to decide whether the costs of this particular effort would produce acceptable returns.

Can you make a trade?

Life is full of trade-offs, but sometimes units of one element of your life can't be exchanged for units of a different element. Think of Steve Jobs, who assuredly would have paid great sums to cure his cancer. But his money could not buy him health. There was no trade to be had. Many of us face similar, albeit less consequential, challenges throughout our careers and lives as we try to exchange something we have for something else that we want. The frustration arises when the two items in question can't be traded.

Consider the case of Andrew, a managing director at a respected financial services firm. He'd spent nearly 20 years in investment banking, but thanks to the unsteady economy, the demonization of his profession, and increased regulation, he was no longer enjoying his work. He'd long dreamed of walking away from financial services and opening a small beachside restaurant, and so, at age 52, he resigned. The firm offered him a staggering sum to stay, provided he commit to a five-year contract. After a few days of consideration, Andrew agreed, but now, two years later, he's miserable and still thinking about his restaurant. He ended up exchanging wealth for freedom, and although the money seemed very big and

the freedom to be gained from his new endeavor relatively small, in the end it was a bad trade.

Can you pursue your most important goals sequentially?

Howard is fond of citing a piece of advice his mother often gave him: "Remember that you may be able to have everything you want in life—just not all at once." Consciously staggering your goals may enable you to be equally successful in many dimensions over time. Mike Leven, the 74-year-old president and COO of Las Vegas Sands, has said that he decided to focus on his work dimension later than his peers, because he wanted to be a more hands-on parent when his three children were young. So he reached professional goals at 45 that many friends reached at 40; achieved wealth later than others; and secured his first really big job, as the president of Days Inn, when his kids were a bit older. He didn't slack off in the early part of his career, but he did give himself permission to pursue his top personal and professional goals—of being a great father and a successful corporate leader—at different points in his life, because he believed he couldn't achieve them simultaneously.

In today's complex, frenetic world, many of us are—like the employees described at the start of this article—struggling to chart a path toward success in our careers and a sense of fulfillment in all aspects of our lives. Any decision can be easier if you think carefully about your goals; the dimensions of yourself that are most important to you; your needs and wants; the specific costs and benefits associated with your choices; the commensurability

of those choices; and whether certain goals should be sequenced instead of pursued simultaneously to give you a better chance of success. Instead of striving for work–life balance, or even worrying about juggling on the balance beam, use this framework to pursue your life's work—holistically seeking both success and satisfaction. In the real world, isn't that what "having it all" really comes down to?

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Chapter 6
Making Time Off Predictable—and Required

by Leslie A. Perlow and Jessica L. Porter

IDEA IN BRIEF

- People in professional services believe a 24/7 work ethic is essential for getting ahead, and so they work 60-plus hours a week and are slaves to their BlackBerrys.
- The authors' research in several offices of the Boston Consulting Group, however, suggests that consultants and other professionals can meet the

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highest standards of service and still have planned, uninterrupted time off—whether in good economic times or bad.

- Here's how: Impose a strict mechanism for taking time off, encourage lots of talk about what's working and what isn't, promote experimentation with different ways of working, and ensure top-level support.

People in professional services (consultants, investment bankers, accountants, lawyers, IT, and the like) simply expect to make work their top priority. They believe an "always on" ethic is essential if they and their firms are to succeed in the global marketplace. Just look at the numbers: According to a survey we conducted last year, 94% of 1,000 such professionals said they put in 50 or more hours a week, with nearly half that group turning in more than 65 hours a week. That doesn't include the 20 to 25 hours a week most of them spend monitoring their BlackBerrys while outside the office. These individuals further say they almost always respond within an hour of receiving a message from a colleague or a client.

Yet our research over the past four years in several North American offices of the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) suggests that it is perfectly possible for consultants and other professionals to meet the highest standards of service and still have planned, uninterrupted time off. Indeed, we found that when the assumption that everyone needs to be always available was collectively chal-

lenged, not only could individuals take time off, but their work actually benefited. Our experiments with time off resulted in more open dialogue among team members, which is valuable in itself. But the improved communication also sparked new processes that enhanced the teams' ability to work most efficiently and effectively.

Predictable time off is the name we gave to the designated periods of time that consultants were required to take off. This was in addition to time the consultants took off with the natural ebbs and flows of their work. These predictable periods were established at the start of a project and required individuals to be off completely—no checking of e-mail or voicemail. The concept was so foreign that we had to practically force some professionals to take their time off, especially when it coincided with periods of peak work intensity. Eventually, however, the consultants came to enjoy and anticipate having predictable time off, particularly as the benefits for their work became evident.

After we had conducted more than 10 multi-month time-off experiments at BCG, the effects of the recession became sharply apparent. The time pressures on service professionals proved even greater in this period of collapse—a fact borne out in a survey we recently conducted with an additional 250 individuals across professional services firms: 66% of respondents reported increased pressure in their work life, and 36% reported a significant increase.

When faced with sobering bottom-line effects of the recession, leaders at BCG paused to discuss and reconsider the benefits of implementing predictable time

off—and decided to go ahead with this counterintuitive approach to increasing their efficiency and effectiveness. The payoff, they feel, is about far more than individual gains; it's about preserving a strong, engaged pool of talent and, ultimately, cultivating productive work processes for the long term.

To understand how effective predictable time off can be (in good times and bad), let's look at the experiments we conducted at BCG.

Rethinking the Unthinkable

The demands of consulting projects vary a great deal depending on multiple dimensions, including the scope of work promised, the type of relationship with the client, and the travel required. So in our first experiment, we made sure that our test was rigorous. We deliberately chose a team of four consultants who were working with a new client that BCG very much wanted to cultivate. The project involved a lot of daily interaction with the client, leading the consultants to believe that their presence at the client site four days a week was imperative. We imposed a requirement that everyone on the team take one full day off a week. Since that meant everyone was now working 80%, we added another consultant to the team to ensure that the client would still have the equivalent of four full-time people on the project.

At first, the team resisted the experiment. The partner in charge, who had been very supportive of the basic idea, was suddenly nervous about having to tell her client that each member of her team would be off one day a week. The project manager was also concerned: He was responsible

for the team's final output, and he feared that the experiment might affect the quality of the team's work. However, both reluctantly agreed to give the experiment a try. Their reasoning was that since their firm had been hired to help the client improve its work processes (of the sales force, in this case), they could position the experiment as their own attempt to do what they were asking of their client—namely, engage in process improvement. They assured the client that they would call off the experiment if there were any cause for concern. The client was receptive.

This first experiment tested predictable time off at an extreme level because consultants were required to take off a full day, in the middle of the work week. As a partner put it, "Forcing a full day off was like tying your right hand behind your back to teach you to use your left hand. It really helped the team overcome the perception that they had to be on call 24/7." Once we were able to demonstrate that taking full days off (working 80%) was possible, the next challenge was whether people working full time could have predictable time off and still achieve similar benefits for themselves and the organization.

In our second experiment, we required each consultant to take one scheduled night off a week, during which he or she could not work after 6 PM—not even check or respond to e-mails or other messages. (This didn't mean that consultants were expected to work all other nights; rather, it meant they were to have one scheduled uninterrupted night off every week, no matter what was going on at work.) We again chose a challenging project: This team was working on a postmerger restructuring for a demanding client. The project required on-site

interaction with members of the client organization in multiple locations, necessitating a great deal of overnight travel. But this time, we made no change in staffing.

Again, we met with resistance from the consultants, even though the time off in this experiment was outside the client's normal working hours. The general practice among consultants on the road is that they work very hard while away from home, but then they hope to have a reasonable day on Friday when they are back in the home office, and they want the weekends off. As a project manager summed up the skepticism surrounding the night-off experiment, "What good is a night off going to do? Won't it just force me to work more on weekends?"

In both experiments, participants felt conflicted between their commitment to the experiment and what they felt they owed both the client and their teammates. They were also concerned that involvement in the experiments wouldn't reflect well in their performance evaluations. As a consultant confided during the first week, "If you are making promotion decisions, and you look at someone who has been staffed on a project where she is really cranking it out and working long hours, and you compare that to someone who is getting a day off, it is hard to believe you are not going to promote the person who appears to be working harder."

As a result, consultants involved in the experiment worried that they were putting their careers in jeopardy. Moreover, they either worked and felt guilty, because they were in violation of the experiment, or they didn't work and felt guilty, because of the stress they thought they were putting on their teammates.

As time passed, their anxiety gradually subsided. Several weeks into the experiment, one consultant effused that his night off was phenomenal. "My project manager pushed me out of the office to make sure I took the time off," he said, "even though it was a busy week. I came back really refreshed." Before long, the consultants didn't need to be pushed into taking a little time for themselves.

In the five months following our initial experiments (which occurred in sequence over the course of a year), 10 more teams began experimenting with taking a night off. At the start of the experiments, participants were asked to rate the following statement: "I feel respected for setting boundaries." The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). In the first month, those on the experiment teams gave the statement a 3.7 ranking. In month five, they rated it at 5.2—demonstrating their slowly rising level of faith in the concept.

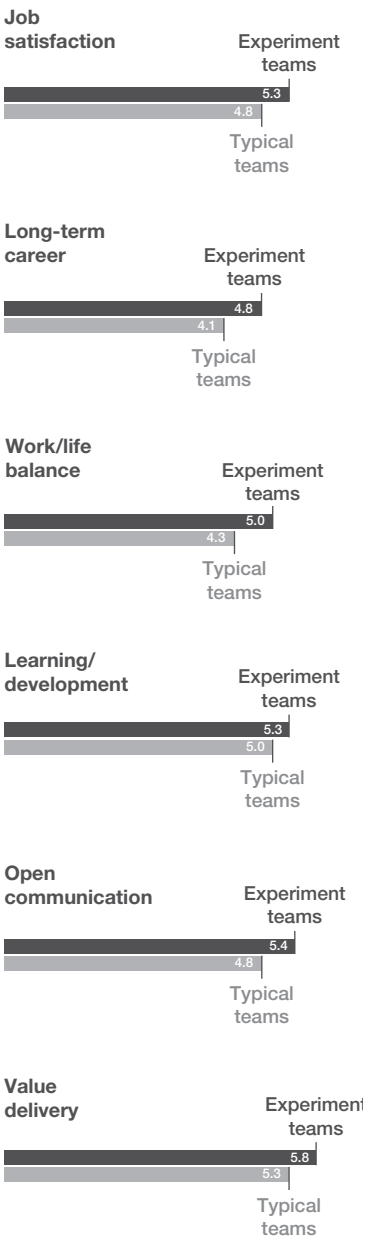
At the same time, 100% of people working on an experiment team and 76% of people in the rest of the office wanted their next case to be on a team experimenting with predictable time off. Compared with those not participating in the experiments, people on time-off teams reported higher job satisfaction, greater likelihood that they could imagine a long-term career at the firm, and higher satisfaction with work/life balance. (See figure 6-1.)

Beyond the intended work/life benefits, the participants reported more open communication, increased learning and development, and a better product delivered to the client. "It's a way to open up a conversation that everyone on your team wants to have, which is 'How

FIGURE 6-1

Early signs of progress

After only five months, consultants on teams experimenting with predictable time off perceived their work situations more favorably—on every dimension—than peers on nonexperiment teams. We asked consultants once a month to rate statements about their work situation on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). We saw statistically significant improvements across the board in the scores of teams that were scheduling regular days or nights off, demonstrating their growing faith in the time-off concept.



can we work smarter? How can we work together more often, and how can we make sure we deliver without sacrificing work/life balance?'" one project manager told us. "The experiment not only allows you to talk more, but it forces you to do so weekly. In the end, the process creates efficiencies and promotes work/life balance—without sacrificing anything on the client side."

Let's look now at what enabled our experiments to deliver these benefits.

Lesson 1: Impose a strict time-off mechanism

To get hard-driving consultants to agree to take time off during an assignment—not just when there happened to be a break in the work but at predictable times—we had to establish a mechanism that made it clear to everyone how time off must be taken: either a full day or a full night each week for everyone on the team, which was scheduled at the start of each project. All the team members knew for any given week which day or night they were to take off. Some teams opted to have each person take the same day or night each week (for instance, one team member had Monday, another had Tuesday, and so on). Other teams tried alternating the particular day or night off for each team member. On all teams, people spread out scheduled times off across the week to ensure coverage at work. Once the schedule was set, individuals were encouraged to make changes to accommodate personal events if they could do so without causing too much trouble for the team.

Admittedly, this arrangement didn't satisfy everyone. Some people in the day-off experiment, for example, would have preferred to come in late every morning instead. Most people would have preferred additional time off at home to a free night on the road.

Ultimately, the goal is for people to be able to take the type of time off that best suits their personal needs. To

UNPLUGGING FOR VACATION

We live in a world where we're expected to be available all the time, for almost any reason. Worse, we expect it from ourselves. While nonstop work might feel overwhelming, it's also reassuring. It makes us feel busy. Valuable. Indispensable.

So, leashed to our technology, we convince ourselves that we can't take a vacation that allows us to *really* get away.

We have two reasonable options for dealing with this problem:

1. **Completely unplug.** I've done this a few times, such as the week I spent camping and kayaking in the Grand Canyon. I was literally unreachable. When I returned to civilization—and a phone—I had more than 50 messages. But here's what's interesting: The first half of the messages raised problems that needed attention, and the second half were the same people telling me not to worry about their earlier messages because they had resolved the problems on their own.

get to that point, however, the feasibility of taking time off and the potential value of time off must first be recognized. Initially, everyone must take off the same type of time. Otherwise inequity (or the perception of it) can creep in. For example, is an hour in the morning the same as an hour at night? Is a Friday night off the same as a weeknight off? It quickly becomes quite complicated to assess

My unplugging created an opportunity for my team to grow, develop, and exercise their own judgment—and it gave me a wonderful, much-needed break.

2. **Schedule plug-ins.** If it's impossible or inappropriate to unplug completely, specify a time frame each evening when you'll be reachable—a few minutes at the end of each day (or, if you can manage, every few days) to answer e-mails and make phone calls. That sets clear expectations for the people trying to reach you, for the people you're vacationing with, and for yourself.

   Of course, before you do this, you need to admit to yourself that you will work during the vacation. But by setting aside time to work, you're also setting aside the rest of the time *not* to work. And that just might save your vacation.

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org by Peter Bregman on March 18, 2010

the relative value of time off when it is freely selected. If everyone takes the same type of time off, people's fears that they aren't pulling their weight will be reduced. Team members will also be more attuned to protecting their own and their teammates' time off. And when the time off takes the same form for everyone, it's easier to track.

In the end, the people in our experiments generally managed to take their time off. In the first experiment, 90% of days off were taken in the designated week, and 68% were taken on the scheduled day (or another day when the change was solely for personal reasons). In the second experiment, 98% of nights were taken off in the designated week, and 86% were taken on the night scheduled (unless the change was solely for personal reasons). As a result, people came to recognize that the 24/7 mentality could be broken and began to appreciate the value of doing so.

Lesson 2: Build dialogue into the process

In each of our experiments, we used explicit tactics to generate conversation around the time-off goals in particular, and around work processes more generally. The team began with a kickoff meeting in which the partners on the team emphasized the importance both of achieving the time-off goals and of team members' being open to and engaged in experimentation around work processes. After that, the teams had a weekly check-in to discuss how the experiment was going.

The check-ins consisted of three parts. One part involved a review of the calendar. Team members would

discuss whether they had taken their time off as planned during the past week, and whether they expected to be able to take it in the week ahead. When people hadn't taken their time off or thought they wouldn't be able to, team members questioned one another about what was going wrong and how to improve the situation.

The second part involved a pulse check, where each person was asked to rate and talk about four questions: (1) How are you feeling? (2) How much value are you delivering to the client? (3) How satisfied are you with your learning? and (4) Is the current operating model sustainable for you throughout the project?

The third part of the check-ins was a discussion of "tummy rumbles"—items people submitted anonymously in advance, comprising anything that was making them uncomfortable.

The weekly check-ins resulted in a far greater emphasis on how work was being done than on what work was being done. As a project manager noted, "In a typical team meeting, you'd probably spend 95% of the time discussing the content, and maybe only 5% of the time actually looking at the process. Because of the experiment, we probably spent more like 30% of the time talking about the process, and 70% of the time on the content."

People were initially skeptical about spending so much time looking at work processes. But in the end, most teams found it helpful. The check-ins not only allowed teams to engage in explicit conversations about achieving their time-off goals, but they also sparked valuable discussions—involving the whole team—about priorities, expectations, and problems people were facing. By

contrast, in typical, nonexperiment teams, consultants generally start talking about problems only when they are already overstressed and less able to think rationally or do much about them.

Our experiments emphasized open dialogue around a particular collective but personal goal: enabling individuals' time off. Because conversation was started on a focused, concrete topic, individuals could raise a small issue, see how it was received, and then choose whether to say more depending on the response. In the process, they gradually built trust and respect, enabling them to feel comfortable raising an increasingly wide range of topics. Team members learned about one another in more holistic ways, and they came to appreciate one another as human beings as well as business colleagues. And, in the end, they became all the more willing to speak up about their issues, both work-related and personal.

The discussions revealed not only small issues but large potential problems. "We were doing a major transformation piece, and the reaction from the client was critical for making it work," recalled one partner. "During an experiment check-in, consultants started raising concerns about the client's level of buy-in to our work. We came to realize that this was not an issue with just one member of the client organization; it was a pattern that each of the consultants was seeing in their contacts with the client." The team changed its approach accordingly, redoubling its efforts to get the client's buy-in.

Lesson 3: Encourage experimentation

Beyond creating a safe space for open dialogue, we found it imperative to encourage people to experiment with

new work processes. Ways of working that would have previously gone unquestioned were suddenly fair game for reconsideration.

One core process that was called into question had to do with how team members' work was allocated. In management consulting, projects are typically done by teams, but the team leader usually divides the work among the team members, who have personal responsibility for their part of the project. To achieve the time-off goals—especially for a full day off when consultants had daily interactions with the client—this fundamental assumption about how work was done had to be revisited. New ways of "teaming," where individuals more closely shared responsibility for work and, therefore, could more easily cover for each other, were needed.

Various teams experimented with different ways of teaming. For instance, those in the day-off-a-week experiment tried assigning primary responsibility for each piece of work to one person but also allocating secondary responsibility to another one or two people. To ensure effective handoffs and hand-backs, this team instituted a team blog. Each evening, every member would post an account of the progress made on his or her own work—for example, progress made while covering for someone else, or even hallway conversations with clients that might have an impact on the work in general. This nightly report helped to break down the silos that usually kept people focused on their own work, and it elevated the discourse of the team as a whole.

Teaming let consultants share expected spikes in the workload and pitch in when demands arose unexpectedly. It also increased the exchange of knowledge and

support among team members. "Think of all the times on cases you would love to grab another consultant for four hours, but you can't because they're so busy," one consultant explained. "Now people have more time for it because cooperation is built in." Consultants learned a great deal from one another as a result.

The work became better integrated because people were interacting better and more often. Inevitably, this led to improvements in the quality of work delivered—benefits that were certainly noticed by clients. As one noted, "This new way of working [gave BCG] a big advantage . . . [the consultants] were much more informed about what was going on with other modules, and people were more informed about the whole project."

Lesson 4: Insist on leadership support

Individuals won't willingly engage in these experiments unless they are able to suspend their disbelief. For that to happen, people need to know that there is value in trying; that they will be respected for participating; and that they will bear some responsibility for the success or failure of the experiment.

One of the reasons we had such a high level of engagement from the consultants in our experiments was strong support from the senior partners. They set the tone, making it OK to talk about issues as they related to work and personal life.

Such legitimization, of course, required more than a few statements from the top brass. BCG's partners and project managers needed to model the desired openness.

For instance, the partners were encouraged to be more transparent when they were taking personal time. "It was helpful to know that the reason the partner missed a meeting was that he was taking his daughter on a college tour," one consultant noted. "That helped me see that these issues are important to him." Another consultant added that at a kickoff meeting, the senior partner said that work was very important to him but not the most important thing in his life, and he didn't want to have to be embarrassed to say so. The consultant reported, "I had never heard a partner talk like that before. My work is really important to me, too, but it is not the most important thing in my life. [His openness] made me comfortable to admit that."

Partners were required to attend the kickoff and weekly check-in meetings. It's often hard for a partner to prioritize spending time with the team when other important things, such as client meetings, are being postponed. But both the partners and the teams appreciated the increased involvement. As one partner put it, "A lot of these things, communicating with our teams, actually attending the team meetings—it's not that complicated, but it's easy to let them slide if you're not focused on them." Another partner added that the time-off experiments and the new processes brought him "closer to the content of the case than I've been in years."

To help the leadership team make these adjustments, we acted as facilitators during the first two experiments. We helped the partners understand the signals they were sending and encouraged them to support the experiments in both word and deed. We attended the weekly

check-ins and followed up with each team member, to ensure that people were getting the support they needed to take their days or nights off and that team members were communicating openly with one another when issues arose.

During the next 10 time-off experiments, internal consultants at BCG were taken out of client service work to serve as full-time facilitators. They performed the same role we had in earlier experiments, attending weekly meetings, conducting regular check-ins, and prompting team members and BCG leaders to challenge assumptions and try new ways of working.

The Boston office of BCG, where the research originated, is now exploring changes in its formal reward system. It is piloting review forms for junior members of the firm that measure how well they communicate personal commitments and how well they plan and deliver against project needs while maintaining those personal commitments. It has also started to add questions to their upward-feedback forms to measure how well each senior member of the office models having a sustainable career and how well he or she respects the personal commitments of his or her teams.

Such explicit support for the predictable-time-off initiative provides a shield as the teams navigate between the firm's old norms and its new goals. A consultant who perceives unnecessary travel can raise the issue with his project manager by saying, for instance, "In the spirit of the time-off experiments, do we all really need to be on site at the client every day next week?" Once this ques-

tion might have been seen as a lack of commitment at BCG; now it is safe, even encouraged, to question decisions about how work is done.

It's important to recognize that our experiments are not about reducing professionals' commitments to their work and clients. We understand that the success of professional services firms depends on hardworking people who value the intensity of the work and are committed to their clients. They relish being in the thick of things, with all the learning and adrenaline buzz that engenders. What professionals don't like is the bad intensity—having no control over their own work and lives, being afraid to ask questions that could help them better focus and prioritize, and generally operating in ways that are inefficient. Still, professionals accept the bad intensity without hesitation, believing it comes with the territory.

This only perpetuates a vicious cycle: Responsiveness breeds the need for more responsiveness. When people are "always on," responsiveness becomes ingrained in the way they work, expected by clients and partners, and even institutionalized in performance metrics. There is no impetus to explore whether the work actually requires 24/7 responsiveness; to the contrary, people just work harder and longer, without considering how they could work better. Yet, what we discovered is that the cycle of 24/7 responsiveness can be broken if people collectively challenge the mind-set. Furthermore, new ways of working can be found that benefit not just individuals but the

organization, which gains in quality and efficiency—and, in the long run, experiences higher retention of more of its best people.

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Chapter 7
Winning Support for Flexible Work

by Amy Gallo

Many professionals seek flexible work arrangements to accommodate lives that don't mesh with a 9-to-5 day. Yet few companies have official policies or programs for alternative schedules—and just as few managers are willing or equipped to provide them for members of their teams. This doesn't mean you should give up on the idea of flextime if it would help you cut down a lengthy commute or avoid burnout. It just means that the onus is on you to propose a plan that works for you, your boss, and your company.

What the Experts Say

Before you pursue a flexible schedule, recognize that you're likely to be bucking long-held conventions. "Tra-

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on December 1, 2010

ditionally, managers were reluctant to have people work remotely because of lack of trust: Are you really working, or are you eating bonbons with your friend?" explains Stewart D. Friedman, founding director of the Wharton School's Work/Life Integration Project. Even those bosses who trust their employees worry about appearing to favor certain people or allowing productivity to decline.

Still, some managers and organizations are reaping the benefits of nontraditional schedules. Research from Lotte Bailyn, MIT management professor and coauthor of *Beyond Work-Family Balance,* shows that when employees have the flexibility they need, they meet goals more easily, they're absent or tardy less often, and their morale goes up. By focusing on these upsides and thoughtfully framing your request around them, you greatly increase your chances of getting approval for an alternative work arrangement.

Define What You Want

The first step is to figure out what you're trying to accomplish. Is your goal to spend more time with family? Less time at the office? Or do you want to remove distractions so you can focus on bigger, longer-term projects? Once you're clear on your goal, decide how you can achieve it while still doing your job effectively. Options include a compressed workweek, a job share, working from home, and taking a sabbatical. Of course, not every job is suited for a flexible arrangement. Before you make a proposal, think carefully about the impact your wished-

for schedule will have on your boss, your team, and your performance.

Next, investigate what policies, if any, your company has and whether there's a precedent for flexibility. You won't need to blaze a trail if one already exists.

Design It as an Experiment

Many managers will hesitate to approve a flexible schedule, especially if your organization lacks established protocols. You can allay their fears by positioning your proposal as an experiment. "Include a trial period so your boss doesn't worry that things will fall apart," says Bailyn. "He or she needs to be able to see the new way of working."

In his book *Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life,* Friedman talks about nine types of experiments you can do to gently introduce flexibility—everything from working remotely to delegating (see chapter 11, "Real Leaders Have Real Lives"). Whatever you propose, provide an out. Explain that if it doesn't work, you're willing to try a different arrangement or resume your former routine. "One can always go back to the original plan, but most such experiments work out very well," says Bailyn.

Ask for Team Input

"Our research has shown that flexibility only works when it's done collectively, not one-on-one between employee and employer," says Bailyn. Your team is affected by your work schedule, so you need everyone's support to make

your new arrangement a success. Explain what you're trying to achieve and ask for their input. "Engage them in the planning," Bailyn says, and let your boss know that you've incorporated your colleagues' suggestions into your proposal.

Involving your team can help head off another common concern: Some bosses worry that if they grant one person flexibility, the floodgates will open and everyone will want the same arrangement. This is often an unfounded fear. Friedman points out that there's a difference between *equality* and *equity,* and, in fact, many people prefer a traditional schedule. "You don't give everyone the same thing because they don't *want* the same thing," he says.

Highlight the Benefits to the Organization

Emphasize the organizational benefits over the personal ones. "Whatever you try has to be designed very consciously to not just be about you or your family," Friedman says. "Instead, have the clear goal of improving your performance at work and making your boss successful." Demonstrate that you have considered the company's needs, that your new schedule will not be disruptive, and that it will actually have positive benefits, such as improving your productivity or increasing your relevant knowledge.

Reassess and Make Adjustments

Once your flexible schedule has been in place for three or four months, evaluate its success. Are you reaching your

goals? Is the arrangement causing problems for anyone? Because you've designed it as a trial, you'll want to report back to your boss. "Get the data to support your productivity. Show that it's working," says Friedman. And if it's not, be prepared to suggest changes.

Case Study 1: Creating a Unique Job Share

Julie Rocco was working as a program manager at Ford Motor Company when had she her first baby. She knew she wanted to return after her maternity leave, but she didn't see how she could work a 12-hour-a-day job and also be a hands-on mom. So she asked a mentor at Ford for advice. The answer? Take advantage of the company's commitment to flexible work by crafting a job that suited her. The mentor also suggested she talk to another Julie at Ford, Julie Levine, about job sharing. Levine, a mother of two, had shared a job before and wanted to try it again, not least because it would give her an opportunity to move into mainstream project development.

"It's very much like picking a spouse," Levine says of choosing the right job-share partner. "That person is your eyes and ears when you're not there." After checking each other out in what they now refer to as "a blind date," they agreed to pitch themselves as a pair to Ford's management. The plan was this: Each would work three days a week, overlapping one day—Rocco on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday; Levine on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. They opted against splitting the week in half to avoid "losing momentum" during long stretches away. Each evening, except for Wednesday, the person

who'd been in the office would spend an hour and a half on the phone "downloading" the day's events to the one who'd been home. And on their days in common, they would either work together or, when things were exceptionally busy, divide and conquer. "It's our job to be seamless," they told their bosses. "We have the same outlook, the same goal, the same vision, the same work ethic. And you'll get more from us than one person could give."

"We said we would be a pilot," Levine recalls. Ford's management not only agreed, but also put the duo in charge of one of the company's highest-profile 2011 launches—the new Ford Explorer. The experiment was a success: Rocco and Levine are now known throughout the company as "the two Julies," twin dynamos. Both say the job share has made them happier at home and work, and also more effective. "One person might work a 12-hour day, go home and collapse, then have to do it all again the next day," Levine explains. "[With us], because you have to analyze your day and share it with another brain, [when] you show up the next day you're ready to run."

Case Study 2: Taking Time Off for Personal Development

Amit Desai had been working at Bayer Healthcare for 11 years when he decided he wanted to apply to Wharton's executive MBA program. However, his enrollment would mean attending a full day of school on Friday every other week and on an occasional Thursday for two years—more than 60 days away from his job as an automation project manager.

Although Bayer has official policies on telecommuting and flextime, special requests such as Desai's are decided on a case-by-case basis, so he was told to make a formal proposal. He started by looking into a similar request a previous employee had made and talking to his boss, who supported the plan with one stipulation: If a conflict ever arose, Desai would give priority to work over school. Desai agreed and created a pitch, including a detailed explanation of the MBA program and his goals in applying, a calendar of days he would be in school and how they tied into his work schedule, and a list of benefits to Bayer. "I have the ability to apply knowledge gained at school over the weekend to work on Monday," he told them. The vice president approved his request and wrote a letter endorsing his Wharton application.

Desai completed his MBA in 2011. Looking back, he says that the arrangement worked well because he was careful to coordinate with colleagues. Even though he was away from the office at set times, he reminded his immediate team when he would be out and blocked off the time in his Outlook calendar. "The stress level was low because my supervisor and peers always knew where I was," he says. And as he'd promised, he prioritized work over classes the few times that conflicts came up. He fulfilled his commitments at work while excelling in school.

Amy Gallo is a contributing editor at *Harvard Business Review*. Follow her on Twitter: @amyegallo.

Chapter 8

How Two-Career Couples Stay Happy

by Jackie Coleman and John Coleman

More and more of us live in two-career households. Almost half of the married couples in the United States are dual-career, along with roughly 70% in Canada and around two-thirds in the United Kingdom. And these couples often struggle to balance work and home life.

We're part of that cohort, and we've had many discussions about what it means to manage a relationship and our careers. Being a former marriage counselor, Jackie has seen problems other couples face—determining who will drop everything to pick up a sick child at school, dividing the household chores, deciding whether to move

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Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on July 27, 2012

for one partner's job, and so on. We've experienced those challenges and others, from living in different cities to coordinating crazy travel schedules. And because we each have unique needs and our own ideas about what we want from our jobs and home lives, we know that conversations about dual-career trade-offs can quickly become tense. But balance is possible, and you can thrive. The following tips will help you navigate the stresses of a two-career relationship.

Actively manage expectations

In relationships, unspoken assumptions often lead to disappointment and frustration. By clearly communicating those expectations up front, however, two-career couples can answer key questions before they cause tension. For example: How many meals should you eat together, and who will prepare (or buy) them? Who pays which bills? Do you need quiet time to decompress in the evening, or do you want to talk about the day's events with each other? Do you prefer frequent, brief interactions throughout the day (texts, instant messages, phone calls), or would you rather have lengthier conversations and more time together when you get home? How will you divide childcare responsibilities (drop-off and pick-up, sick days, school vacation coverage)?

It's essential to have open and honest discussions about these things, but they won't always be smooth sailing. Neither person will get his or her way all the time. If you prefer one approach but your spouse or partner wants another, determine the areas in which you're able to be flexible. At each impasse, instead of focusing mainly

on your needs, actively listen to your partner's preferences and concerns. The way you talk through these expectations and conflicts is extremely important. John Gottman, a leading researcher in marriage and relationships, says he can predict divorce with over 90% accuracy solely by analyzing how couples talk to each other in the first five minutes of an argument. And he has more than 35 years of data to back that up. While Gottman finds that the frequency of arguments is not a predictor of divorce, negative patterns like criticism and contempt are. Managing expectations through thoughtful discussion will help you argue constructively, not destructively.

Schedule time with each other

The average person spends 8.8 hours per day on the job—and for many of us, that number can double. To make sure everything gets done, we live by our calendars: We schedule meetings, reviews, time to complete tasks, trips to the gym, volunteer work, and breakfasts with friends. Most of us don't make appointments with our significant others, because we take it for granted that we'll see them. Research by Kingston and Nock, however, shows that one of the healthiest things you can do for your relationship is to put as much effort into booking time with each other as you do into managing your work schedules.

Recognizing that our professional obligations could theoretically take up all of our time, we've made a deliberate effort to schedule time together. Even with an infant at home, we commit to at least one date night per week, typically on Fridays. We regularly send each other Google calendar invitations for events we need to attend

together or even uninterrupted time we'd like to spend with each other. Before we started doing this, we often forgot to communicate these requests effectively, leaving one or both of us frustrated and disappointed. But regular scheduling makes each of us feel prioritized by the other person and gives us time to look forward to each week. This keeps us happier at home and more relaxed at work.

Cheat on your job

Despite your best scheduling efforts, work can creep into your personal time. How many times has a meeting at the office conflicted with something you've scheduled at home? How often do you need "just a few hours" during evenings and weekends to catch up on e-mails or assignments? We often "cheat" on our families by putting in a few hours of work when we're at home; there should be corollary times when we cheat on our jobs. Try meeting occasionally for lunch or letting a scheduled date night trump an optional work event. Scheduling ensures that you spend time together—but spontaneity matters, too, and it can make these opportunities even more fun.

We work in different areas of town, but whenever Jackie's meetings are near John's office, she'll call to see if she can stop by to say a quick hello. Little gestures like this can make partners feel valued. And impromptu breaks from work for family may even improve work performance. Researchers say that willpower is like a muscle that can get fatigued—taking a quick breather from work can actually boost self-control and productivity on the job. With renewed focus at work, you can both manage your professional stress and keep your relationship fresh.

Integrate work and home

Dual-career relationships can become more difficult when work and home occupy completely separate spheres. Not knowing each other's colleagues can lead to feelings of alienation and disconnectedness. You might feel out of touch with each other's day-to-day concerns, for example, or not understand inside jokes from work. Or it can be more serious than that: In an informal Vault.com survey, 32% of respondents reported having an "office spouse," a coworker with whom one has an intimate (nonphysical) relationship. These intimacies can sometimes cross a line. In her practice of more than 20 years, marriage and family therapist Shirley Glass found that 46% of unfaithful wives and 62% of unfaithful husbands had an affair with someone at work.

Even if cheating isn't an issue, you and your partner may be uncomfortable with each other's long nights at the office, business trips, and bonds with unknown colleagues. To avoid this, find ways to introduce your colleagues and your partner (or your family more broadly). Plan occasional dinners after work and encourage your coworkers to bring their spouses. Share anecdotes about your day and your coworkers with your significant other. Attend work-related social events together. These are just some ways in which you can build trust with your partner *and* humanize and deepen your professional relationships.

Share the compromises

Compromise is essential to healthy two-career couples, but sometimes it falls too consistently on one person. It's

quite common when children arrive, for example, for one partner (often a woman) to forgo career ambitions while the other gives up time at home. If one person sacrifices more—or even feels that way—frustration and resentment can build. There's no one-size-fits-all solution here, but by speaking frankly about how much of the load you each feel you're shouldering, you can prevent one person from making all the concessions.

Some big questions to consider: Whose job should you relocate for? Whose family will you live closer to? Does one partner feel responsible for supporting the family financially while the other has more flexibility to pursue what he or she wants, regardless of financial benefit? Who will bear primary child-rearing responsibility? If you look back over a catalog of these decisions and one partner is consistently sacrificing for the other, it might be time to assess whether that's what you as a couple intended or whether someone is feeling undervalued. Even small compromises add up: Whose family do you visit on which holidays? Who does which household chores? Periodically track these things for a week or two or simply discuss them to make sure the relationship really is a partnership—with decisions and compromises shared fairly.

Reassess

Just like a year-end review at work, regularly carve out time to assess your relationship and your priorities as individuals and as a couple. Keep the lines of communication open and adapt your plans as needed. How are things going? If your spouse or partner could change

something, what would it be? Do you both feel connected? What's working well? Overall, how is your partner feeling? Asking questions like these shows that you're making the relationship a high priority. And that will help you manage dual-career stress and can keep things on track at work *and* at home.

Jackie Coleman is a former marriage counselor and currently works on education programs for the State of Georgia. **John Coleman**, her husband, is a coauthor of *Passion & Purpose: Stories from the Best and Brightest Young Business Leaders* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2011). Follow him on Twitter: @johnwcoleman.

Chapter 9

Don't Take a Bad Day Home with You

by John Baldoni

Feeling frustrated at work—especially late in the day, when you're worn out? Right before you go home, do something that comes easily to you.

That advice was given to my daughter, a drop-in diver in a collegiate program. One day she had hit a wall and was about to head home when her coach pulled her aside and said, "Instead of leaving in a state of frustration, why don't you finish practice with a dive you *know* you do well?" My daughter followed her suggestion and left feeling much better about herself and her abilities.

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And that's exactly what we nondivers need to do. Things inevitably go wrong on the job because of our own or others' mistakes or failed systems or processes. Whatever the cause, tension builds. To prevent that stress from following you out the door and ruining your evening, dissipate it before you wrap things up.

Whether it's sending off a routine report or replying to a few straightforward e-mails, cross an item off your to-do list. Pick something that doesn't require much thought. This type of activity tends to slow your heart rate and give you a sense of ownership of what you're doing.

Once you've completed the task—and are hopefully feeling better—exit promptly. Do not check your e-mail one last time. Do not linger to see who else is hanging around. Just leave—gracefully, and with a smile on your face. The onerous work will be there tomorrow, but for the moment, flush it from your memory. For now, just go.

Of course, this won't always work. Sometimes you'll still leave exasperated. And if that happens more often than not, you probably have a larger problem to solve. You may need to find a new position, a new employer, or even a new line of work. But for the occasional bad day, doing one more dive that makes you feel good about yourself before you head home can help you leave your frustrations behind you.

John Baldoni is a leadership consultant, coach, and speaker. His newest book is *The Leader's Pocket Guide* (AMACOM, 2012).

Section 4

Finding the Tools That Work for You

Chapter 10
Positive Intelligence

by Shawn Achor

In July 2010 Burt's Bees, a personal-care products company, was undergoing enormous change as it began a global expansion into 19 new countries. In this kind of high-pressure situation, many leaders pester their deputies with frequent meetings or flood their in-boxes with urgent demands. In doing so, managers jack up everyone's anxiety level, which activates the portion of the brain that processes threats—the amygdala—and steals resources from the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for effective problem solving.

Burt's Bees's then-CEO, John Replogle, took a different tack. Each day, he'd send out an e-mail praising a team member for work related to the global rollout.

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He'd interrupt his own presentations on the launch to remind his managers to talk with their teams about the company's values. He asked me to facilitate a three-hour session with employees on happiness in the midst of the expansion effort. As one member of the senior team told me a year later, Replogle's emphasis on fostering positive leadership kept his managers engaged and cohesive as they successfully made the transition to a global company.

That outcome shouldn't surprise us. Research shows that when people work with a positive mind-set, performance on nearly every level—productivity, creativity, engagement—improves. Yet happiness is perhaps the most misunderstood driver of performance. For one, most people believe that success precedes happiness. "Once I get a promotion, I'll be happy," they think. Or, "Once I hit my sales target, I'll feel great." But because success is a moving target—as soon as you hit your target, you raise it again—the happiness that results from success is fleeting.

In fact, it works the other way around: People who cultivate a positive mind-set perform better in the face of challenge. I call this the "happiness advantage"—every business outcome shows improvement when the brain is positive. I've observed this effect in my role as a researcher and lecturer in 48 countries on the connection between employee happiness and success. And I'm not alone: In a meta-analysis of 225 academic studies, researchers Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King, and Ed Diener found strong evidence of directional causality between life satisfaction and successful business outcomes.

Another common misconception is that our genetics, our environment, or a combination of the two deter-

mines how happy we are. To be sure, both factors have an impact. But one's general sense of well-being is surprisingly malleable. The habits you cultivate, the way you interact with coworkers, how you think about stress—all these can be managed to increase your happiness and your chances of success.

Develop New Habits

Training your brain to be positive is not so different from training your muscles at the gym. Recent research on neuroplasticity—the ability of the brain to change even in adulthood—reveals that as you develop new habits, you rewire the brain.

Engaging in one brief positive exercise every day for as little as three weeks can have a lasting impact, my research suggests. For instance, in December 2008, just before the worst tax season in decades, I worked with tax managers at KPMG in New York and New Jersey to see if I could help them become happier. (I am an optimistic person, clearly.) I asked them to choose one of five activities that correlate with positive change:

- Jot down three things they were grateful for.
- Write a positive message to someone in their social support network.
- Meditate at their desk for two minutes.
- Exercise for 10 minutes.
- Take two minutes to describe in a journal the most meaningful experience of the past 24 hours.

The participants performed their activity every day for three weeks. Several days after the training concluded, we evaluated both the participants and a control group to determine their general sense of well-being. How engaged were they? Were they depressed? On every metric, the experimental group's scores were significantly higher than the control group's. When we tested both groups again, four months later, the experimental group still showed significantly higher scores in optimism and life satisfaction. In fact, participants' mean score on the life satisfaction scale—a metric widely accepted to be one

HAPPINESS AND THE BOTTOM LINE

For companies, happy employees mean better bottom-line results. Employees who score low in "life satisfaction," a rigorously tested and widely accepted metric, stay home an average of 1.25 more days a month, a 2008 study by Gallup Healthways shows. That translates into a decrease in productivity of 15 days a year.

In a study of service departments, Jennifer George and Kenneth Bettenhausen found that employees who score high in life satisfaction are significantly more likely to receive high ratings from customers. In addition, researchers at Gallup found that retail stores that scored higher on employee life satisfaction generated $21 more in earnings per square foot of space than the other stores, adding $32 million in additional profits for the whole chain.

of the greatest predictors of productivity and happiness at work—moved from 22.96 on a 35-point scale before the training to 27.23 four months later, a significant increase. Just one quick exercise a day kept these tax managers happier for months after the training program had ended. Happiness had become habitual. (See the sidebar "Happiness and the Bottom Line.")

Help Your Coworkers

Of the five activities described above, the most effective may be engaging positively with people in your social support network. Strong social support correlates with an astonishing number of desirable outcomes. For instance, research by Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy Smith, and Bradley Layton shows that high levels of social support predict longevity as reliably as regular exercise does, and low social support is as damaging as high blood pressure.

The benefits of social support are not just physical. In a study of 1,648 students at Harvard that I conducted with Phil Stone and Tal Ben-Shahar, we found that social support was the greatest predictor of happiness during periods of high stress. In fact, the correlation between happiness and Zimet's social support scale (the academic measure we used to assess students' positive engagement with their social networks) was a whopping .71—for comparison, the correlation between smoking and cancer is .37.

That study focused on how much social support the students *received*. But in follow-on research I conducted in March 2011, I found that even more important to sustained happiness and engagement was the amount

THE PERFORMANCE CONNECTION

- In a sweeping meta-analysis of 225 academic studies, Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King, and Ed Diener found that happy employees have, on average, 31% higher productivity; their sales are 37% higher; their creativity is three times higher.
- My research shows that employees who score the highest on providing social support are 40% more likely to receive a promotion in the following year, report significantly higher job satisfaction, and feel 10 times more engaged by their jobs than people who score in the lowest quartile.

of social support the students *provided*. For example, how often does a student help others when they are overwhelmed with work? How often does he initiate social interactions on the job? Social support providers—people who picked up slack for others, invited coworkers to lunch, and organized office activities—were not only 10 times more likely to be engaged at work than those who kept to themselves; they were 40% more likely to get a promotion.

How does social support work in practice as a tool for employee happiness? Ochsner Health System, a large health care provider that I work with, uses an approach

it calls the "10/5 Way" to increase social support among employees and patients. We educated 11,000 employees, leaders, and physicians about the impact of social support on the patient experience, and asked them to modify their behavior. When employees walk within 10 feet of another person in the hospital, they must make eye contact and smile. When they walk within 5 feet, they must say hello. Since the introduction of 10/5, Ochsner has experienced an increase in unique patient visits, a 5% increase in patients' likelihood to recommend the organization, and a significant improvement in medical-practice provider scores. Social support appears to lead to not only happier employees but also more-satisfied clients.

Change Your Relationship with Stress

Stress is another central factor contributing to people's happiness at work. Many companies offer training on how to mitigate stress, focusing on its negative health effects. The problem is, people then get stressed-out about being stressed-out.

It's important to remember that stress has an upside. When I was working with Pfizer in February 2011, I asked senior managers to list the five experiences that most shaped who they are today. Nearly all the experiences they wrote down involved great stress—after all, few people grow on vacation. Pick any biography and you'll see the same thing: Stress is not just an obstacle to growth; it can be the fuel for it.

Your attitude toward stress can dramatically change how it affects you. In a study Alia Crum, Peter Salovey, and I conducted at UBS in the midst of the banking crisis

and massive restructuring, we asked managers to watch one of two videos, the first depicting stress as debilitating to performance and the second detailing the ways in which stress enhances the human brain and body. When we evaluated the employees six weeks later, we found that the individuals who had viewed the "enhancing" video scored higher on the Stress Mindset Scale—that is, they saw stress as enhancing, rather than diminishing, their performance. And those participants experienced a significant drop in health problems and a significant increase in happiness at work.

Stress is an inevitable part of work. The next time you're feeling overwhelmed, try this exercise: Make a list of the stresses you're under. Place them into two groups—the ones you can control (like a project or your in-box) and those you can't (the stock market, housing prices). Choose one stress that you can control and come up with a small, concrete step you can take to reduce it. In this way you can nudge your brain back to a positive—and productive—mind-set.

It's clear that increasing your happiness improves your chances of success. Developing new habits, nurturing your coworkers, and thinking positively about stress are good ways to start.

Shawn Achor is the CEO of Good Think and the author of *The Happiness Advantage* (Crown Business, 2010).

Chapter 11
Real Leaders Have Real Lives

by Stewart D. Friedman

You can be a committed "A" player executive, a good parent, an attentive spouse, and a healthy person with time for community engagement *and* hobbies. How on earth do you do all that? Stop juggling and start integrating. Begin with a clear view of what you want from—and can contribute to—each domain of your life (work, home, community, and self). Carefully consider the people who matter most to you and the expectations you have for one another. Then experiment with some minor changes and see how they affect all four domains over a short period. If an experiment doesn't work out in one or more areas,

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Adapted from "Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life," *Harvard Business Review*, April 2008 (product #R0804H) and content posted on hbr.org on February 21, 2013

you make adjustments or put an end to it, and little is lost. But if it does work out, it's a small win. Rack up enough small wins, and you're well on your way to a life that's less stressful and more productive.

Skeptical? Many people are when they first hear about this approach. But time and again, I've seen maxed-out professionals use it to find the greater harmony they're seeking.

To show what it looks like in practice, I'll share a couple of stories from Target executives who have experimented their way toward improving their well-being and performance.

Manage Boundaries

David is a VP accountable for a multibillion-dollar P&L. (All names and titles are disguised.) For years, he felt a relentless tension between the domains of work and home, as many of us do. "I spent most of my waking hours at work," he explains, "and I always shut down from work at home." But keeping things separate like this hurt his relationship with his wife. They talked about the kids, nothing more, because that was all they had in common. And at work, David never had enough time to prepare for all his meetings.

So he devised an experiment. Before leaving the office each day, he'd look at the next day's schedule and pick one big meeting to get ready for. On his drive home—at a decent hour—he'd think about what he could do and say at that meeting. When he got home, he'd run some ideas by his wife.

It worked beautifully: "This gave us something new to talk about each day, it gave her a much better understanding of what I do, it engaged her, and it enhanced our relationship because we were having richer conversations. My wife made good suggestions—and I've had better meetings as a result."

The experiment has also had a positive effect on David's team. After he told his direct reports he was changing his hours in the office, one of them approached him with a request to adjust *her* schedule, because it was aggravating a medical problem. Another employee said he felt empowered to take care of an aging parent during the day when he needed to. He didn't feel guilty about it—David's own actions made it clear that it was OK.

"The example I was setting before was work first, work first, work first," David reflects. "Now I might be in the office for fewer hours, but I'm making faster and better decisions. And my wife has more understanding when work does have to come first. In the long term, this means that I'm a more engaged leader for Target without an unmanageable tension between my wife and my work."

Be the Change

Changing old run-yourself-ragged norms isn't easy. But by modeling new behavior, senior executives at Target are accelerating a "well-being" movement in the organization.

Take Max, who now runs the company's largest P&L business. He admits he "saw a couple of eyebrows raised" when he first told his team that he would come in late

two mornings a week so he could "go to the gym and have breakfast with my kids." Max adopted this schedule as an experiment. He's kept it up because it's effective: He's more closely connected to his family, and it's noticeably improving his focus and performance at work.

David (from earlier) also finds this to be true. His boss supports his experiments and asks for regular updates on them. "She's also given me tips and shared what she's learned in her experience," he says. "I talk to her about all this to hold myself accountable. She's reminded me that each new job in my career will be bigger and more demanding, so it's critical to get better and better about managing my commitments as I continue to develop."

When senior leaders in an organization take highly visible steps to reduce stress *and* improve performance—as David, Max, and their managers have done—more and more employees feel free to generate experiments of their own. Slowly, the culture changes. People at all levels discover that it makes good business sense to take care of all the things that matter in their lives.

Pursue Four-Way Wins

The most fruitful experiments help you make improvements across the four domains. At work, you may want to increase productivity or reduce hidden costs. Goals for home and community may include strengthening relationships and contributing more to social causes. For self, they're usually about becoming healthier and finding greater meaning in life.

How can a single experiment help you check off several—or all—of the boxes in table 11-1? Some experi-

ments improve one domain directly and others indirectly. For example, being more disciplined about your diet will have a direct impact on your health, but it may also give you more energy for your work and help you handle stress better, which in turn might make you a better parent and friend. Other activities—such as running a half-marathon with your kids to raise funds for a charity sponsored by your company—will feed all four domains simultaneously. Whether the benefits are direct or indirect, achieving a four-way win is the goal. That's what makes the changes sustainable: Everyone gains. Keep in mind that some benefits may be subtle or delayed—far-off

TABLE 11-1

Where are you feeling the most pain?

Before you can design smart experiments to better integrate the four domains of your life, you'll need to figure out what's most important to you and identify your biggest pain points. Using a four-way chart will help you set your priorities. I've filled out a sample one here, based on a fictitious professional we'll call Joan, but you can find a blank worksheet and other tools at www.totalleadership.org.

	Importance	Focus	Satisfaction 1=not at all satisfied 10=fully satisfied
Work	20%	70%	1 2 3 4 5 ⑥ 7 8 9 10
Home	40%	20%	1 2 ③ 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Community	15%	0%	① 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Self	25%	10%	1 ② 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Overall	100%	100%	1 2 3 ④ 5 6 7 8 9 10

Joan's reflection: I have to admit that what my husband says is true: I spend most of my time either at work or working from home. We don't do anything together anymore, except take care of the kids. We're losing touch as a couple. Also, I'm feeling tired and out of shape, even though my health is important to me. I do think my job and family are more important than community stuff, but it surprises me to realize I'm doing nothing in that area. Maybe I could do something active with my husband that would help me and our relationship—and even benefit the community.

career advancements, for instance, or a contact who might ultimately offer valuable connections.

Pace Yourself—and Gauge Your Progress

It's not practical to try out more than three experiments at once. (Typically, two turn out to be relatively successful and one goes haywire.) So after you've brainstormed lots of possibilities, narrow down the list to the three options that will:

- Give you the best overall return on your investment
- Cost the most in regret and missed opportunities if you *don't* do them
- Allow you to practice the leadership skills you most want to develop
- Involve more of what you enjoy doing
- Move you closest to your vision of how you want to lead your life

Once you begin experimenting, however, don't become too wedded to the details of any one plan. You will at some point need to make adjustments.

The only way to fail with an experiment is to fail to learn from it, which makes useful metrics essential (see table 11-2). No doubt it's better to achieve results than to fall short, but failed experiments give you, and those around you, information that helps create better ones in the future.

TABLE 11-2

Experiment worksheet

Suppose that Joan, the hypothetical professional described in table 11-1, has decided to try exercising three mornings a week with her spouse to address the pain points she identified in her four-way chart. In the sample worksheet below, she spells out her experiment's goals and tracks her progress in achieving them.

As you implement your own experiments, you may find that your initial goals or metrics are too broad or vague, so refine your scorecard as you go to make it more useful. The main point is to have practical ways of measuring your progress.

Experiment: Exercise three mornings a week with my husband.

Life area	Experiment's goals	How I will measure success	Implementation steps
Work	Improving alertness and productivity	No caffeine to get through the day, better morale on my team, more productive sales calls	• Get doctor's feedback on exercise plan • Join gym • Set alarm earlier on exercise days • Tell coworkers, family, and friends about my plan, how I need their help, and how it will benefit them
Home	Spending more time with husband	Fewer arguments, feeling closer	
Community	Increasing strength to participate in athletic fund-raising events with friends	Three 10K fund-raising walks completed within a year	
Self	Improving self-esteem	Greater confidence	

For a blank version of this worksheet and other tools, go to www.totalleadership.org.

Depending on your goals, your metrics may include cost savings from reduced travel, number of e-mail misunderstandings averted, degree of satisfaction with family time, hours spent volunteering at a teen center, and so on. They can be objective or subjective, qualitative or quantitative, reported by you or by others, and frequently or intermittently observed.

Highly ambitious experiments usually fail because they're too much to handle. When the stakes are smaller, it's easier to overcome the fear of failure that inhibits change—and you open doors that would otherwise be closed. You can say to your stakeholders, "Let's just try this. If it doesn't work, we'll go back to the old way or try something different." People who will be affected by the change will be more receptive if they know it's not permanent and if they have a say in whether it's working according to *their* expectations.

Stewart D. Friedman is Practice Professor of Management at the Wharton School. Formerly the head of Ford Motor's Leadership Development Center, he is the author of *Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2008). Follow him on Twitter: @StewFriedman.

Chapter 12

A Practical Plan for When You Feel Overwhelmed

by Peter Bregman

We've all experienced it: that feeling that we've got so much to do that there's no chance we'll get it all done. And certainly not done on time. Right now, I'm feeling completely overwhelmed by my to-do list.

Here's the crazy part. I just spent the last two days *trying* to work without actually working. I start something but get distracted by the internet. Or a phone call. Or an e-mail. At a time when I need to be most efficient, I've become less efficient than ever.

You'd think it would be the opposite—that when we have a lot to do, we'd become very productive in order to get it done. Sometimes that happens.

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on September 23, 2010

But often, when there's so much competing for our attention, we don't know where to begin—so we don't begin anywhere.

Next time you find yourself in this situation, try this approach:

1. **Write down everything you have to do on a piece of paper.** Resist the urge to use technology for this task. Why? I'm not sure, but somehow writing on paper—and then crossing things out—creates momentum.

2. **Spend 15 minutes completing as many of the easiest, fastest tasks on your list as you can.** Make your quick phone calls. Send your short e-mails. Don't worry about whether these are the most important tasks on your list. You're moving. The goal is to cross off as many tasks as possible in the shortest time. Use a timer to keep you focused.

3. **Work on the most daunting task for the next 35 minutes without interruption.** Turn off your phone, close all the unnecessary windows on your computer, and choose the most challenging task on your list, the one that instills the most stress or is the highest priority. *Then work on it and only it*—without hesitation or distraction—for 35 minutes.

4. **Take a break for 10 minutes, then begin the cycle again.** After 35 minutes of focused work, take

a break. Then start the hourlong process over again, beginning with the 15 minutes of quick actions.

"Thirty years ago," Anne Lamott writes in her book *Bird by Bird,* "my older brother, who was 10 years old at the time, was trying to get a report on birds written that he'd had three months to write. It was due the next day. We were out at our family cabin in Bolinas, and he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother's shoulder, and said, 'Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.'"

That's it. *Bird by bird, starting with a bunch of easy birds to help you feel accomplished and then tackling a hard one to gain serious traction and reduce your stress level.* All timed.

Working within a specific and limited time frame is important because the **race against time keeps you focused**. When stress is generalized and diffuse, it's hard to manage. Using a short time frame actually increases the pressure but keeps your effort specific and particular to a single task. That increases good, motivating stress while reducing negative, disconcerting stress. So the fog of feeling overwhelmed dissipates, and forward movement becomes possible.

In practice, I'm finding that although I make myself work at least the full 35 minutes, I don't *always* stop when the 35 minutes of hard work are over, because I'm in the middle of something and I have traction. On

the other hand, though it's tempting, I don't exceed the 15 minutes of easy, fast work. When the timer stops, so do I, immediately transitioning to the hard work.

Maybe this method has been working simply because it's novel for me and, like a new diet, offers some structure to motivate my effort. Today, though, it doesn't matter, because it's a useful tool for me. And I'll keep using it until I don't need it or it stops working.

Am I still stressed? Sure. But overwhelmed? Much less so. Because I'm crossing things off my list and getting somewhere on my little tasks as well as my big ones, bird by bird.

Peter Bregman is a strategic adviser to CEOs and their leadership teams. His latest book is *18 Minutes: Find Your Focus, Master Distraction, and Get the Right Things Done* (Business Plus, 2012).

Chapter 13
Desk Yoga

6 Poses You Won't Be Embarrassed to Do—Even in an Open Environment

by Linda Steinberg

Many of us sit behind our desks and stare at computer screens for far too much of the day. Although concentrated work can be beneficial to our jobs, it can be taxing on our bodies. The following yoga exercises will help you relieve any tension you might feel after too many hours of poring over spreadsheets. The poses also provide long-term benefits with regular practice. Each pose takes fewer than two minutes to complete, and you can do the whole series in just 10 minutes—but I promise you'll feel the effects long after.

Breathe deeply throughout the poses because sending oxygen to your muscles allows them to relax.

Shoulder Rolls (2 minutes)



- Sitting upright, lift your right shoulder to your ear. Slowly roll your shoulder around and back, dropping it away from your ear.
- Lift your left shoulder to your ear. Slowly roll your shoulder around and back, dropping it away from your ear.
- Continue these rolls three more times, alternating right and left.
- Lift both shoulders up to your ears and hold for a breath. Release them, slowly rolling your shoulders around and back, dropping them away from your ear. Repeat five times and then relax your shoulders.

Open Chest Stretch (1 minute)



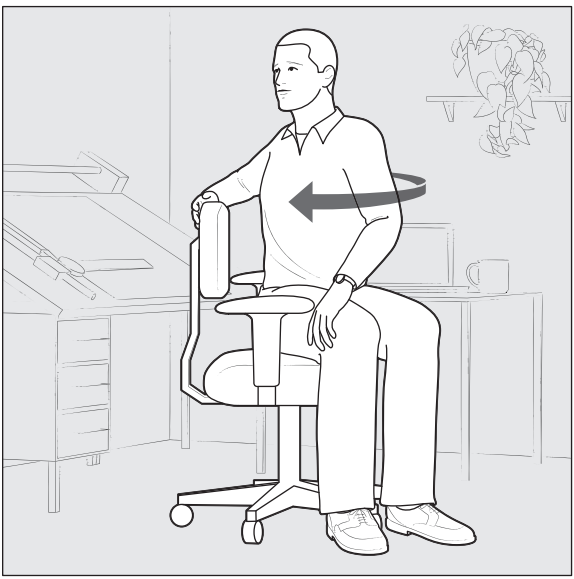
- Sit near the edge of your chair and interlace your fingers behind you, palms together and facing your back.
- Lean forward slightly, lifting your arms so that you feel the stretch in your chest.
- Inhale slowly, lifting your chest.
- Exhale and relax your shoulders away from your ears.
- Hold for 10 to 15 breaths.
- Slowly release your hands and return them to your sides.

Neck Stretch (1 minute)



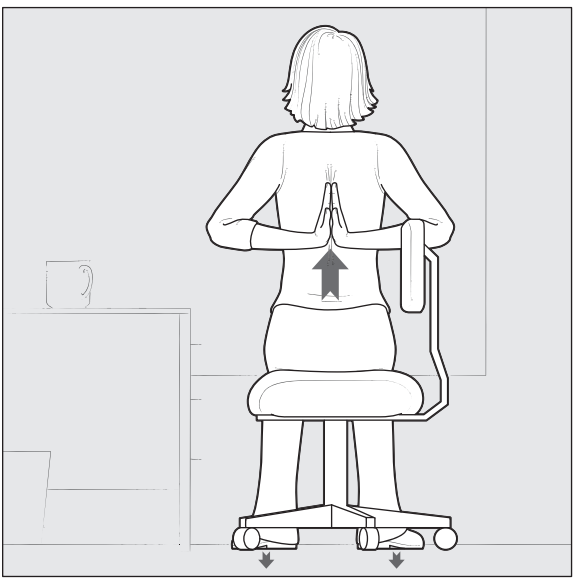
- Sit upright without letting your back touch the back of the chair.
- Hold your head directly over your spine, as if there is a string lifting the crown of your head up.
- Drop your right ear toward your right shoulder without lifting your right shoulder or turning your head.
- Take several breaths in and out, feeling the stretch on the left side of your neck.
- To create a deeper stretch, reach your right hand over your head and place it on the left side of your face. Hold the pose for at least five more breaths and then release your hand and straighten your neck, gently massaging your neck and shoulders with your left hand.
- Repeat on your left side.

Chair Twist (2 minutes)



- Sit near the edge of the chair, but turn your thighs toward the right side of the chair so that you are sitting diagonally. If you have an armrest on the side of your chair, bring your thighs as close to it as possible.
- Move your arm to the back of the chair on the opposite side, taking hold of the chair back with your right hand. With your left hand, take hold of your right knee or armrest.
- Breathe deeply, focusing on lengthening your spine.
- Twist to the right, pressing your right hand against the back of the chair to deepen the stretch. Focus on drawing your shoulder blades down.
- Breathe deeply, completely filling and emptying your lungs. Hold the pose for 10 to 15 breaths.
- Return to the center.
- Repeat on your left side.

Reverse Prayer Pose (2 minutes)



- Sit near the edge of your chair. Reach your arms around behind you and bring your palms together, fingertips pointing down.
- Rotate your wrists and turn your fingertips in toward your spine until your fingertips are pointing up.
- Slide your palms back together in prayer position.
- Use one hand to help pull the other hand up further on your back, to a comfortable spot. Be sure your shoulders are straight, not rounded.
- Press the outside edges of your palms lightly into your back. Press your palms together gently.
- Press your feet into the floor.
- Breathe deeply, completely filling and emptying your lungs. Hold the pose for 10 to 15 breaths.
- Exhale and release your arms.

Twisted Arms (2 minutes)



- Sit upright without letting your back touch the back of the chair.
- Reach your arms out in front of you at shoulder level.
- Tuck your right elbow into the crook of your left arm, and curl your forearms up into a 90-degree angle. The backs of your hands will be against each other.
- If you can, place your left fingers on your right palm, keeping palms straight in a single line with your nose.
- Breathe deeply, completely filling and emptying your lungs. Hold the pose for 10–15 breaths.
- Return to the center.

(*continued*)

(*continued*)

- Tuck your left elbow into the crook of your right arm, and curl your forearms up into a 90-degree angle. The backs of your hands will be against each other.
- If you can, place your right fingers on your left palm, keeping palms straight in a single line with your nose.
- Breathe deeply, completely filling and emptying your lungs. Hold the pose for 10 to 15 breaths.
- Exhale and return to the center.

Linda Steinberg is a certified yoga instructor who has been practicing and teaching partner-assisted yoga for over 20 years. Learn more about her work at www.yogatothetenth.com.

Chapter 14
Diversify Yourself

by Peter Bregman

Suicides account for almost one-third of U.S. work-related deaths caused by violence. It's tempting to blame companies for driving their employees too hard and failing to handle people with care, compassion, and respect. But the problem is deeper and more complicated than callous management teams who care about nothing except profits. The problem is also in how *we* as professionals see and define ourselves.

Often the first question we ask when we meet someone is, "What do you do?" We have become our work, our professions. Connected 24/7 via mobile devices, obsessively checking e-mail and voice mails, we have left no space for other parts of ourselves.

If we spend all our time working, traveling to work, planning to work, thinking about work, or communicating

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about work, then we will see ourselves as workers and nothing more. As long as work is going well, we can survive that way.

But when we lose our jobs, or fear that we might, our very existence is put into question. "Establishing your identity through work alone can restrict your sense of self and make you vulnerable to depression, loss of self-worth, and loss of purpose when the work is threatened," says Dr. Paul Rosenfield, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Columbia University.

Who am I if you take away my work? That's a question to which we'd better have a solid answer. Fortunately, once we realize this, we can do something about it.

We can diversify.

I don't mean diversifying your money, though that's a good idea, too. I mean diversifying *yourself* so that when one identity fails, the other ones keep you alive. If you lose your job but you identify passionately as a mother or a father, you'll be fine. If you have a strong religious identity or view yourself as an artist, you'll be fine.

Here's the thing, though: It's not enough to *see* yourself in a certain way; you need to *act* on it. It won't help if you identify as a father but rarely spend time with your children. Or if religion is a big part of your identity and yet you rarely engage in religious activities.

Cultivating multiple identities will help you perform better in each one, because you learn things as an athlete or a parent or a poet that will make you a better employee or leader. And if you believe that doing nothing but work is necessary to support your lifestyle, then it's worth look-

ing at ways to change your lifestyle, so you don't kill yourself trying to maintain it.

Walk away from e-mail and have dinner with your family. Leave work at a decent hour and play tennis with a friend. Choose nonwork rituals that have meaning to you (see also chapter 3, "Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time"). Doing the same thing repeatedly over time solidifies your identity.

When a good friend of mine lost her job, I called to see if I could do anything. My intention was to help her find a new job as soon as possible; I knew money was tight.

I was pleasantly surprised, though. She told me she had decided to postpone her job search for a few months. She was pregnant and wanted to focus on that for a while. Once she felt ready, she would look for work. She was too busy creating an identity as a mother to get caught up in her identity as a worker.

Recently I received an e-mail from her telling me she was back at work. "I love the job," she told me. "It's a great balance to motherhood."

Peter Bregman helps CEOs and their leadership teams break down silos and tackle their most important priorities together. His latest book is *18 Minutes: Find Your Focus, Master Distraction, and Get the Right Things Done* (Business Plus, 2011). He can be reached at www.peterbregman.com.

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What You'll Learn

Does your boss make you want to scream? Do you have more than *one* boss? Do you spend your day herding cats? Working across departmental silos? Corralling contractors?

Then you know that managing up and across your company is critical to doing your job well. It's all about understanding your boss's and colleagues' priorities, pressures, and work styles. You need to manage up and across not just because you may have a problem boss, incompetent colleagues, or projects that involve stakeholders flung far and wide. You need to manage up and across, for example, to get your marketing and sales folks to see that *your* project will help them meet *their* goals, too; to establish authority with higher-ups so they'll bless your new product ideas; to secure people's time for a new team when they're already feeling overextended.

Managing up and across will help you get the information and resources you need to solve your complex problems, increase your effectiveness, and make your work more enjoyable.

You'll get better at:

- Getting what you need from people who don't report to you
- Coping with micromanaging, conflict-aversive, or generally incompetent bosses
- Discovering what drives colleagues of all ages
- Partnering with your boss—and *her* boss
- Selling your ideas up and across your company
- Making the most of your boss's influence
- Establishing a shared vision and commitment
- Juggling multiple bosses' priorities
- Tailoring your pitch to your audience
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Section 1
Managing Up

Neglecting to manage up may cost you promotions or chances to put your great ideas into action. But understanding what makes your boss and his cohort tick and embracing their priorities will open doors for you.

This isn't kissing up or manipulation. You're not trying to inflate egos. You're helping the people you work for succeed, which in turn helps you succeed.

This section of the guide is about creating win-win relationships with higher-ups. You'll learn how to present problems and opportunities to them, give them feedback, connect with your boss's boss without doing an end run, and deal with a variety of difficult managers—from the micromanager to the conflict-averse.

Managing Your Boss

by Linda A. Hill and Kent Lineback

Managing *up* is important because your boss plays a pivotal role in your success—or your failure. You can leverage your boss's influence in the organization on your behalf in several ways—for example, by obtaining valuable information, winning needed resources, and securing important support for your personal development and career. When you face difficult trade-offs and must make decisions that create both beneficial and painful consequences for others, your boss's advice, insight, knowledge of the organization, and access to higher management can be invaluable. As your organization shifts and changes shape in an uncertain market, a good relationship here

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Adapted from *Being the Boss: The 3 Imperatives for Becoming a Great Leader* (product #12285), by Linda A. Hill and Kent Lineback, Harvard Business Review Press, 2011

becomes a necessity for navigating through the turmoil. The penalties of a poor relationship are many: less influence, little information or advice, fewer resources, and limited personal development and career support. Worst case, you can find yourself isolated, ignored, pushed out—your journey stalled, your career derailed.

Why Is It Often an Uneasy Relationship?

This relationship can be problematic for two reasons. First, a boss plays conflicting roles: supporter and evaluator, which can create confusion. Second, people often bring their past experience with authority into the relationship, which can create unnecessary complications.

This is an area where being a star as an individual contributor may not have prepared you for management. As an exceptional performer, you probably had minimal interaction with your boss. If so, you most likely didn't develop the skills of managing up that you need.

Do you see your boss as coach and developer or as evaluator and judge?

You're caught in a difficult dilemma, one that can feel personally threatening. The boss is not only a potential source of great help, in both your job and your career, but also the one who evaluates your performance. To get help from her as a developer, particularly with your personal development, you must reveal your shortcomings. But if you do, she in her role as evaluator may interpret your weaknesses as serious faults. Many managers handle this dilemma by striving to appear capable and in control

even when they're not. They see their boss more as threat than ally and lose the potential benefits of her help.

Are you confused by your boss's dual role? Do you tend to see your boss as primarily a judge? Does that attitude seem safer to you? That's understandable, but it's not always the most helpful point of view.

What can you do? Don't presume your boss is always one or the other, judge or coach. Instead, think of his dual roles as extremes between which he moves back and forth depending on the situation. At first, in small ways that aren't risky, test his willingness to provide support. That way, you can see when, where, and how he's likely to focus on development rather than evaluation. Learn his feelings about what's important in management—such as careful planning, decisiveness, building consensus—and make sure you develop and display those qualities.

Do you see past bosses in your current boss?

How do you feel about your current boss? How do you respond to authority in general and to those who have it? If most of your bosses have frustrated you and fallen short of your expectations, you and they may be victims of the emotional baggage you carry forward from past experience. Reflect on your own history and the feelings it's created in you. That history may lead you to perceive your current boss not as who she is but as an amalgam of past authority figures, with all the positive and negative feelings that flow from that past. Unless you're aware of these feelings, you'll be at their mercy.

On the other hand, you may respond to authority with overdependence, rather than resistance. Extreme

WHAT YOUR BOSS EXPECTS OF YOU

You and your boss agree on your annual, individual performance targets that support larger organizational goals. But what about her *undocumented* expectations? What should you be doing beyond your formal job description that will make you indispensable to your boss and your organization as a whole?

- ***Collaborate.*** Overcome differences between you and others so you work together effectively—even if you don't like each other.
- ***Lead initiatives.*** Don't be reluctant to associate yourself with unproven ideas, especially those that cross functional or unit boundaries. Raise your hand, and you'll climb the ladder faster than those who don't.
- ***Develop your own people.*** Take as active an interest in your employees' development as you do in your own—if not more. Go out of your way to criticize and praise your people when they need it. And during performance reviews, supply people with specific, candid, and useful feedback.

- ***Stay current.*** Regularly read and watch the news. What happens in the world affects what happens with your team, your marketplace, and your competition. Also know what's going on with your customers—how they're changing, how their competition is changing, and how technology and world events are affecting their strategies. Your customer relationships are key assets: Bring them to the table.

- ***Drive your own growth.*** Seek perpetual education and development—not necessarily by going to school but by finding exposure to new people and ideas. Seek feedback from your boss, and accept demanding assignments.

- ***Be a player for all seasons.*** Demonstrate positive behaviors even during hard times. You'll sustain your ability to motivate and inspire your own people no matter what's going on around you.

Adapted from "What Your Leader Expects of You" (product #R0704C) by Larry Bossidy, *Harvard Business Review,* April, 2007

deference and automatic, unquestioning compliance don't work well either. Those who react this way never disagree or push back, even when they're right or it's in their best interest.

Both antagonism to authority and too much deference will keep you from seeing your boss clearly and realistically and prevent you from securing the work and personal benefits available from a good relationship.

What Should Your Relationship with Your Boss Be?

Do you realize that your relationship is actually one of *mutual* dependence? Your boss depends on you and needs your commitment and support to succeed. Just as you may wrestle with your reliance on your people, he probably struggles with his dependence on you and his other direct reports.

Think of the relationship as a partnership in which the partners depend on each other to succeed and are able to influence each other in ways that improve the performance of each. It's not a relationship of equals, certainly, but it's not entirely one-way either. You usually do have some room to negotiate and create the relationship that works for both of you.

Take Stock of Your Current Relationship

Is your current relationship a partnership? Are you and your boss able to have a normal, constructive discussion about work? If not, why not?

Don't assume you can make significant differences in how your boss thinks or operates. Most likely, the best you can do is nudge her in directions that work better for you. That's certainly worth doing. But you're unlikely to create large changes.

With that in mind, use the following questions to assess and improve your relationship. They focus on actions you can take.

Are you meeting expectations?

By far, the key factor in a good relationship is your ability to perform as expected.

Results. Performance targets create the foundation for your ongoing relationship. Unless you and your group produce the results expected, you're unlikely to enjoy much of a partnership. And it's not just the results you attain but *how* you attain them. If you hit your numbers but your boss hears complaints all day about how you railroad other groups, he probably won't consider you someone who "meets expectations."

Information. But results aren't the only expectation. Do you keep your boss informed? Reach explicit agreement about how often and in what way you will report progress. Develop a sense of what your boss wants to know. Some prefer to know a great deal; others, much less. In general, no boss likes to be surprised or seem ignorant of something she should know. If you must err, do it on the side of overinforming. Many bosses actually want more information than they say, so discover the right balance through experience. Find out

as well how your boss wants information delivered: written reports via e-mail, in person if that's possible, or by video call.

Support and loyalty. Your goal is to make the relationship work for both of you, and that requires some degree of support and loyalty. Just as you want your boss to care about you, and your people want you to care about them, your boss wants your care and concern, too.

Be generous and assume the best intentions, even when you disagree. Express disagreement as your opinion offered in support of your boss's success. Some people bridle at the word *loyalty*. We don't mean blind loyalty, but loyal people earn the right to question and disagree on occasion. Those who speak up only when they disagree will usually enjoy less influence than those who have demonstrated prior support. So on those occasions when you do honestly agree with your boss, say so clearly and explicitly.

You cannot succeed in this relationship at the expense of your boss; you will rise or fall together. Your task is to make *both of you* effective. Help your boss build on her strengths, and overcome or bypass her limitations.

Does your boss trust you?

The foundation of all network relationships is trust, and the relationship with your boss is no different. Can he count on you to do the right thing? If you feel micromanaged, the reason may be that you've neglected to establish real trust. The essence of building trust is to negotiate what you both mean by "do the right thing."

Do you both see the current situation the same way? Make sure you share a common understanding of the

challenges your group faces and what needs to be done. If you see the need for fundamental change and your boss wants to stay the course, you must resolve this difference right away.

Do you agree about where you and your group are going? Once again, a plan is critical. Do you have one? Have you reviewed it with your boss? Does it make clear what's to be done and when? Make sure your boss knows your goals and plans and agrees with them. Ideally, she had a hand in creating them.

Do you negotiate expectations when you're given an assignment? Don't let your relationship be one in which you simply accept whatever is passed down without discussion. If the expectations are unrealistic, you will have no one to blame but yourself when your team fails. Reach agreement on the results you're expected to produce—what will happen by when. Do this at the beginning, and update expectations periodically. Warn your boss of potential risks, and play out various scenarios of how you might handle them.

Do you see and understand your boss as a person?

It's easy to forget that beneath your boss's mantle of authority there's a person just like you. He has hopes, aspirations, frustrations, strengths, weaknesses, and fears. He's the product of his background, training, and experience. He has a personal life—a family and family history, religious beliefs, social organizations, political views, and hobbies. Do you know enough that you're able to see the world through his eyes?

Do you understand your boss as a manager?

Your boss has goals, plans, and pressures, as well as managerial strengths and weaknesses, preferences, and foibles. Do you know them? What's your boss on the line for? What's her boss telling her to do?

Do you know how your boss prefers to make decisions, and do you work within that pattern? Does he prefer lots of analysis and data? Does he need time to reach a conclusion? Does he want everyone's opinion before deciding? If you must depart from these preferences, do you first negotiate explicitly what you will do?

Do you know and respect the ways your boss prefers to work? Some bosses want written analyses before a discussion, while others prefer the discussion or presentation first, followed by a written summary. Some want lots of data; others want the highlights. Some want to be intimately involved in every detail; others prefer regular reports but nothing more unless there's a problem.

When you approach your boss, do you expect guidance or answers? We know a manager whose boss always responded to questions with questions of her own. Finally, this manager realized: "I had to come in with some ideas about how I would handle the situation, and then she would talk about them with me. She would spend all the time in the world with me."

Do you present a problem and expect your boss to solve it? Many bosses resist that approach. Instead, try going in with a problem, an analysis, alternatives, and a recommendation he can react to.

Can you identify your boss's strengths?

This stumps many managers we know. They focus on their boss's weaknesses and can talk at length about them—and often do with their peers. But they seldom look for strengths. That's a shame because your boss's strengths are what you must leverage, and you cannot leverage what you don't recognize or appreciate. Whatever your boss's weaknesses, identify what she does well. There must be something. Don't fall back on something like "She knows how to play the organizational game." There's something there. What is it, and how can you use it to learn and do your work more effectively?

Are you clear about what you need and expect?

Negotiate what you need from your boss. Don't make him guess. What can he do to help you? Provide resources, support from other groups, relief from distracting responsibilities, clearer direction?

In addition, think about the way you prefer to work and what you need from a superior, such as specific goals, help and ongoing guidance, or a certain degree of autonomy. Be sure you know where the boundaries are. Test how negotiable they are. Where your needs and your boss's way of managing diverge, talk through the differences. Where differences involve high stakes, talk sooner than later. It's easy to underestimate the risks of conflict avoidance and the cost of the passive aggression that often accompanies it. Your nonverbal communications—expression, manner, body language, tone—often reveal

CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING YOUR BOSS

Make sure you understand your boss and his or her context, including:

- ☐ Goals and objectives
- ☐ Pressures
- ☐ Strengths, weaknesses, blind spots
- ☐ Preferred work style

Assess yourself and your needs, including:

- ☐ Strengths and weaknesses
- ☐ Personal style
- ☐ Predisposition toward dependence on authority figures

Develop and maintain a relationship that:

- ☐ Fits both your needs and styles
- ☐ Is characterized by mutual expectations
- ☐ Keeps your boss informed
- ☐ Is based on dependability and honesty
- ☐ Selectively uses your boss's time and resources

Adapted from "Managing Your Boss" (product #R0501J) by John J. Gabarro and John P. Kotter, *Harvard Business Review*, January 2005 (republished from 1980)

your true feelings about your boss and can slowly corrode this critical relationship.

Have you discussed with your boss your own growth, development, and aspirations?

How can your boss help you grow and develop? She's not responsible for your career and personal development, but it's in her best interest for you to improve in ways that will help you (and her) succeed. From your boss you can get advice and guidance; feedback about your performance, strengths, and weaknesses; insight into what others think of you; developmental assignments; and access to training programs and other learning opportunities.

To obtain these, you must first communicate your desire to learn. Then, you must agree about *how* and *where* you want to grow—what competencies you need to develop, such as building a network, making a plan, managing performance, or assessing subordinates. Have reasonable expectations. Take responsibility for your own development. Besides, your boss probably has no more time and no less pressure than you, and many bosses, unfortunately, are uncomfortable in this role. The more specific the requests you make, the better—to attend a training course, for example, or advice about a specific problem.

Do you and your boss come from different cultures?

Be aware that cultures differ in their expectations and treatment of people with authority. In some, the boss is expected to be participative; in others, directive. In some, proactive and assertive; in others, humble and modest.

Compare the characteristics of both your cultures. Where your assumptions and expectations differ, be prepared to talk about them explicitly.

Work hard to build a productive relationship with your boss. Initiate the kinds of discussions we've suggested. It's difficult to succeed without his support, and impossible in the face of his opposition. Always remember that your reports face these same issues with you. Let your experience in each relationship—with your boss and with your people—guide you in the other.

Don't make the mistake, as many managers do, of ignoring such a potentially powerful source of help and support. Take responsibility for, and play an active role in, making it a partnership that benefits both of you. Avoid seeing yourself as a passive, powerless subordinate. Don't assume it cannot be a positive, mutually helpful relationship until you've tested the possibilities on several occasions. It's too important—to your ability to exercise influence and thus to your journey—to merely let it be whatever it will be.

Linda A. Hill is the Wallace Brett Donham Professor of Business Administration and faculty chair of the Leadership Initiative at Harvard Business School. Now a writer and executive coach, **Kent Lineback** spent many years as a manager and an executive in business and government. They are the coauthors of *Being the Boss: The 3 Imperatives for Becoming a Great Leader* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2011).

Winning Over Your New Boss

by Lew McCreary

Getting a new boss can be fraught with anxiety and risk, often making it hard to see the opportunities fresh leadership will bring to you and your organization. You'll have to come to terms with whatever unpredictable changes she unleashes. Don't expect the new regime to resemble the old one. Leaders are often brought in to shake up the status quo, so you'll want to make it clear right away that you're a valuable contributor.

If you get a new boss by joining another organization, you'll have no immediate worries about job security. But you will need to figure out the culture (and its politics), meet with and impress new colleagues and direct reports, and above all create a successful partnership with your new boss. You'll need to understand—quickly and in detail—exactly what you've been brought aboard to do, what key stakeholders you'll need to please, what

resources you can command, and how your performance in the job will be measured.

In either new-boss scenario, uncertainties abound—but you have a role to play in taming them. As Tom Gilmore, a principal at the Center for Applied Research (CFAR), points out, you're just as responsible as your new boss for "the quality of the working alliance."

What does that responsibility involve? Establishing yourself as someone the new boss can turn to for candid opinions, insight, and support—someone she can count on to perform. Here are some tips for doing that.

Prepare to Meet the New Boss

Because your first meeting with your new boss feels like a make-or-break encounter—especially if she's the one who's new to the company and presumably looking for things to change—you may be tempted to lead with your personal agenda. If you do, you'll be part of a steady parade of petitioners, each bearing (as the leader sees it) a narrow set of demands.

Don't arrive at that initial meeting with thick stacks of documents and a PowerPoint presentation. And don't prepare an eager audition that recapitulates your LinkedIn recommendations. Instead, ask questions and listen to the answers. Find out who the new boss is, how she likes to work, what she doesn't yet know that you can help her learn. Answer her questions candidly as well, and don't be so tightly clenched that you fail to let the boss see who you are.

Gilmore, drawing on his experience and research at CFAR, offers the following advice for making crucial early encounters successful:

- **Ease into the relationship.** Think incrementally. Pick only a few vital issues to cover early on—ones that will help you lay the groundwork for an effective alliance with your new boss. For instance, initially brief her on your unit's new open-innovation initiatives. Over time, you can discuss in more depth the projects that have been green-lighted so far.

- **Observe her style.** Does your new boss prefer short or long conversations? A buffet of options or one best recommendation? Hard data or soft? Use these indicators to shape the way you present yourself and your ideas.

- **Consider others' claims on her attention.** It may be just the two of you sitting in her office, but you're not the only one who wants something from her. Take account of how other key stakeholders might affect her agenda, and highlight how your issues fit into those overall priorities.

- **Collaborate.** Help her form opinions on issues of importance to you, her, and the group. Avoid simply seeking her judgment on your ideas. If, for example, you believe the group has grown too risk-averse, begin a broader discussion about risk. Share anecdotes about how the group has dealt with it in the past, and ask about her experiences and ideas.

- **Be honest.** Most leaders understand the difficulty of speaking truth to power, and yet they must

depend at first on relative strangers for honest appraisals. Look for openings to provide helpful candor on some key aspect of the new boss's agenda. Say your boss wants to launch an initiative that would require buy-in from two unit heads who don't work well together. Diplomatically bring that dynamic to her attention and share stories of how others have been able to get the two to cooperate.

- **Accommodate her preferences.** Your new boss has inherited systems and processes tailored to her predecessor's quirks. The more you can learn about how she would like to be supported, the faster you can help develop new systems that work for her. For example, if her style is to delegate, suggest a regular weekly meeting to review assignments and workloads. Let her know what sorts of tasks you're best suited to take on and keep her apprised of your bandwidth.

Establish a sense of connection, says Gilmore, by "finding links between what you'd like to see happen and things the new boss wants to accomplish." There will be time for your agenda after you've built a solid relationship.

Be Yourself and Be Transparent

J. Bruce Harreld, who now teaches at Harvard Business School, has both been a new boss and reported to one many times—at IBM, Boston Chicken, Kraft General Foods, and elsewhere.

Whether you're getting a new boss at your current company or joining a different one, Harreld says, "The

best advice I can give . . . is just to be yourself and be transparent. The more I think about 'What should I say to the boss?' the more he and I are both in trouble. I'm there for a reason—for my best opinion. And he's there for a reason, which is to guide me and help me learn, and shape what my work agenda should be. And the more I posture to him, the less effective I am." In effect, it lowers the value of the relationship.

Candor goes hand in glove with confidentiality. Don't share your boss's comments with others unless he's asked you to. And beware of carrying tales of your peers back to him. "A lot of people view their boss as someone they have to tell everything to," says Harreld. "You have to be careful with that. In a complex organization, if you view the CEO as the kingmaker, you're putting yourself at risk. If I wear my power with my boss on my sleeve, and people know I run back to him often, I've just cut out all these other relationships and made myself totally ineffective."

When Harreld worked for Lou Gerstner at IBM in the mid-1990s, they didn't always agree, but they never pulled their punches: "That's part of the process, part of being on a team. You make your recommendation as forcefully as you can. And once the decision is made, you have to snap around and say, 'OK, here we go.' And sometimes people can't [make that pivot]—they get strident. And sometimes they have to leave the team."

That's worth remembering. The agenda for change may stretch farther than you and others are willing to go. Many new leaders have transformational marching orders. Your job in the course of a leadership transition is to see how compatible the new boss's plans are with

your own agenda and career goals. If they're at odds, you might have some thinking to do. And, of course, that thinking cuts both ways: If you're on the edge of disillusionment, a new boss can be a breath of fresh air, helping to rekindle your enthusiasm and optimism.

Help Your New Boss Get Up to Speed

If she's new to the organization, your boss has a lot of catching up to do. You can make it easier by:

- **Saving her some time.** Be generous with what and whom you know. Help your boss identify colleagues whose expertise will help her meet her goals.
- **Saving her some trouble.** Share shortcuts through the administrative mazes that drive every newbie crazy. This may seem like a small thing, but it's not. Let her know that Phil in the IT user-services group is the only person to call when her technology goes on the fritz. Or that Maureen in Finance has developed an idiot-proof Excel template for expense reports.
- **Saving her some work.** Being new is a job unto itself. There may be something on the boss's plate that you can take on or at least help with. If you see an opportunity, step up. Suppose your boss has been asked to honor her predecessor's speaking commitment at an industry conference, and it's clear she's not happy about going. Since you know your way around the presentation material, volunteer to fill in.

Listen for Clues to the Future

In town-hall get-acquainted sessions, new bosses often default to being politic and careful. Sometimes, however, telling comments slip out. File these away as possible clues to the mysterious future. Some of them will doubtless be worth probing later when you have one-on-one meetings with the boss.

Also bear in mind that you may end up with a new boss who isn't right for the business. Pay close attention to what she says (and how she says it). You may be able to spot trouble brewing early on. A former colleague and I, in our first joint meeting with a new boss, were surprised to hear him say, contentedly, that he really had "nothing to prove." Since just about everyone in the company was energetically focused on proving something, the comment seemed discordant. In less than a year, the new boss and the company parted ways.

Remember That the Stakes Are High

Reuben Slone has weathered—and learned from—numerous new-boss transitions in his career. He recently left OfficeMax, where he was an executive VP leading the supply-chain organization, for a comparable position at Walgreens. While at OfficeMax, he had five bosses in eight years.

Each time he's had to adapt to a new boss, Slone has reread the *Harvard Business Review* article "Surviving Your New CEO" (May 2007). He dusted it off again as he prepared for his new assignment at Walgreens, where his challenge is to take an increasingly complicated supply

chain—with a growing set of channels, customers, and offerings—to the next level of sophistication.

Slone values the article's tips on how to build a strong relationship with your new leader, whether it's you or your boss who's joining the organization. But he also rereads it for a reality check: It includes sobering research on the jeopardy executives face when a new boss takes over. In some cases, turnover among top executives is 33%—nearly double the normal rate. So every opportunity to make an impression matters tremendously.

Slone's advice? "Make sure the boss knows he can count on you, what he can count on you for, and that you're there to help make the transition as easy as possible. Be explicit about that. And get in early—don't wait for him to come to you."

Lew McCreary is an editorial consultant and a contributing editor to HBR. Working as a consultant means he gets new bosses regularly. He has learned that the most valuable attribute is to be flexible—up to a point.

Steps for Presenting Problems or Opportunities to Your Boss

Did your project come in $10,000 over budget? A rival poach your star performer? Your competitor beat you to market with a new product? None of us likes to deliver a difficult message, but it can be a valuable tool for building a trusting relationship with your boss. You know that you should never bring a problem to your boss without a proposed solution. But often we forget to frame the situation in a way that helps us garner the necessary resources or approval to begin moving toward a solution.

Adapted from *Managing Up* (product #14784) from the Pocket Mentor series, Harvard Business Review Press, 2008

Here are five steps to take the next time you need to deliver bad news—or a promising opportunity.

1. **Describe the problem or opportunity to your boss.** Provide a general overview of the problem, and show the specific impact it has on your work and the company's goals. If you've identified an opportunity, show the potential benefits—not just to you or your team, but to the larger organization.

   "Stu, we've got a morale problem on our tech team. Our recent employee survey shows that 40% of our staff in Atlanta doesn't find their work rewarding or challenging. If we don't address this, we might lose some of our best talent. We can't afford that at any time, but especially now when we're trying to release the new system by Q1. I have a few ideas I'd like to try, with your help and the cooperation of HR. I think with the right approach we can keep the team focused on meeting the Q1 goal."

2. **Identify your solution or approach.** Explain how you've already tried to solve the problem and what you've learned from those attempts. Recommend a specific approach, along with alternatives, to provide your manager with options.

   Clearly define each possible option, addressing the pros and cons, and any potential risks or barriers. Explain the logic behind your recommended approach. You want your man-

ager to be aware that you've considered several possible outcomes.

"It looks like we'd need to add two more managers to the project to meet the client's latest round of requests. When I mentioned this to Sarah during our conference call, she didn't respond. I'd like to go to Cincinnati and meet with her to discuss how we might renegotiate the contract. I think seeing her face-to-face will make a big difference. Plus if I do it the week after next, we'll have just delivered on the second phase of the project and she's likely to be pleased. We could of course take the hard line and just say no to their requests and then see what they come back with. But I'm afraid we'd be putting our future relationship at risk. We could also just expand the team and do the work and see it as a marketing investment. We'd likely win Sarah's good graces and, as you know, she's well connected with many companies in our target group. But it may be more financial risk than we're willing to take on right now."

3. **Explain the implications.** Consider the impact that your proposed solution will have on yourself and others, including your manager. Be explicit about how your idea will have far-reaching effects on the goals of the organization.

"If we put a formal process in place to track all sales leads, I can do a better job of

connecting the dots between the VPs who are meeting with potential customers. As you know, the current approach worked well when we just had two VPs doing the calls, but now we have over 20. This will increase their workload slightly, but it will be clearer to them how to share lead information. It will also give senior leadership a better view into the pipeline. It won't take a week to pull together our sales dev reports, which means you can be more responsive to requests from above."

4. **Discuss the benefits.** Focus your conversation on concrete examples of your idea's benefits. The specific features of the solution, or how it will be implemented, are less important at this stage. If you have tested your approach on a small scale with good results, share that information.

   "Delivering the product in a smaller container in the Latin American market will expand our customer base. We'll be able to serve truckers with small rigs who go on long hauls but don't have room for the 20-gallon containers. Most of these truckers haven't bought our products before, so we have the opportunity to convert them to our brand. They'll also be able to pay cash, since the smaller container will be at a lower price point. This is a real advantage in their cash-heavy economy. Carlos helped me run a quick experiment with a small set

of truckers in Panama, and the response was overwhelmingly positive."

5. **Accept responsibility for the outcome.** Demonstrate your commitment to ensuring success. Work with your manager to develop a final action plan for taking advantage of the opportunity you've presented.

   "This rests squarely on my shoulders. In the unlikely event that we don't convert enough customers from this campaign, I'll quickly move on to Plan B. But to get started I'm going to reach out to Terry to get the e-mail list of current customers who have opted-in. Then I'll work with Ellen to draft the e-mail pitch. Once I've done that, I'd like to get your help running it up the flagpole. Does that sound like a sensible plan to you?"

Manage Up with Your Mentor's Guidance

by Jeanne C. Meister

Your mentors can help you build better relationships with your boss and colleagues. How? Jeanne Meister, an expert in workplace learning and development, recently shared her ideas in an IdeaCast interview with Susan Francis from HBR. Here are some highlights.

What kind of support can mentors offer as you're trying to manage up?

> Mentors can help you navigate your company's political landscape and introduce you to key people so you can branch out. And they'll get you thinking like a senior executive long before you're anointed as a member of the upper ranks—which will prepare you for that metamorphosis. One of my first mentors

shared this valuable advice with me: Know who the thought leaders are across the organization, get to know them personally, and show them how your ideas can further their business agendas.

Mentors can also help you communicate your ideas to senior executives, who juggle myriad demands and don't have time to wade through a sea of PowerPoint slides. If you want to present a complex idea to a group like this, take a first pass at boiling it down to a one-page memo that focuses on business outcomes. Then turn to one of your mentors for input: Have you crafted a message that will get executives' attention—one that clearly and succinctly shows how your idea will affect the bottom line? What details should you trim? Where do you need to add data for support?

How can mentors help you work more effectively with your boss?

They can provide insight into the high-level challenges your boss faces and suggest realistic ways of supporting his goals. Ask your boss to clarify his top priorities with you—and write up a one- or two-page summary of that conversation to share with a trusted mentor. Then think with your mentor about how you can contribute. Maybe you can volunteer to assemble sales data your boss will need for his big presentation to the executive board, for example, or tap your network to gather anecdotal feedback on a product idea he's considering.

Also try asking a mentor for help processing and incorporating feedback from your boss. Suppose you've been told you need to speak up more in large staff meetings, but you're shy. You and a mentor can practice graceful ways of jumping into the conversation or brainstorm other things you can do to show you're engaged.

Part of managing up is figuring out which organizational battles to fight and how to fight them. What can mentors do to make this easier?

They can help you develop your personal brand—which will make it clearer which battles you should take on. For instance, if you want to be known at your company for your creative product ideas, a mentor can broker opportunities for you to present them. She'll also help you develop a better sense of when to go to the mat over them. For example, you and your mentor may decide it's worth fighting to protect your vision for a new product's positioning, but not to control the timing of its introduction.

Making sure your mentor gets value out of working with you is obviously good practice for managing up. Any suggestions on how?

This is almost the same as understanding your boss's priorities. When you know what's important to her, you can find ways to work toward her objectives. Simple gestures go a long way—for instance, putting

her top three subjects of interest in your Google alerts and passing along links you think she'll like. Look at her Twitter feed for insights into what she cares about: What kinds of conversations is she having—and how can you participate? Ask your mentor about her personal goals and see how you can help her achieve them. Suppose she's writing an article on pricing strategy for a marketing journal. Offer to read the manuscript and provide feedback from an execution perspective. If you find ways to give as well as receive, your mentor will take note—and become all the more invested in your development.

Jeanne C. Meister is a partner at Future Workplace, which helps organizations redefine their corporate learning and talent management strategies. She is a coauthor, with Karie Willyerd, of *The 2020 Workplace: How Innovative Companies Attract, Develop, and Keep Tomorrow's Employees Today* (HarperBusiness, 2010).

Change the Way You Persuade

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Gary A. Williams** *and* **Robert B. Miller,** *highlighting key ideas.*

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

Your proposal was brilliant; your logic, unassailable; your argument, impassioned. So why didn't your boss buy it?

Perhaps you took a one-size-fits-all approach to persuasion. But different people use different styles when deciding to accept an idea: Each wants certain kinds of information, at specific steps in the process.

There are five common but distinct decision-making styles: charismatic, thinker, skeptic, follower, and controller. One decision-making style isn't better than another. But to tip the outcome your way, understand your listener's preferences—then tailor your persuasive efforts accordingly.

Reprint #R0205D

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

Style	Decision-Maker's Characteristics	Prominent Examples	Persuader's Strategy	Examples of How to Approach Them
Charismatic	• Easily enthralled, but bases decisions on balanced information • Emphasizes bottom-line results	• Lee Iacocca • Herb Kelleher	• Focus on results • Make straightforward arguments • Stress proposal's benefits with visual aids	• Diagram your current organization and the problem(s), proposed solution(s), and benefits—especially improved competitiveness • Explain potential challenges and risk of inaction • Provide detailed reports for your boss to review postpresentation
Thinker	• Toughest to persuade • Cerebral, logical • Risk-averse • Needs extensive detail	• Michael Dell • Bill Gates	• Present market research, customer surveys, case studies, cost/benefit analyses • Help your boss understand all perspectives of a given situation	• Present different options in detail in a face-to-face meeting • Explain your data-gathering methods • Present case studies of similar initiatives • Use a follow-up meeting to fill argument gaps and recommend optimum plan • Wait weeks, months for your boss's decision
Skeptic	• Challenges every data point • Decides based on gut feelings	• Larry Ellison • Tom Siebel	• Establish credibility ahead of time with your expertise; draw on positive previous work experiences • Get endorsements from someone your boss trusts	• Copresent with a trusted colleague • Emphasize the credibility of your sources of information • Stroke your boss's ego ("You've probably seen this case study…") • Ground your argument in the real world

Follower	• Relies on own or others' past decisions to make current choices • Late adopter	• Carly Fiorina • Peter Coors	• Use testimonials to prove low risk • Present innovative, yet proven, solutions	• Highlight case studies from other industries, but note "We could be the first in our industry to do this." • Omit failed real-world examples (although you should have this information available should your boss request it) • Present multiple options • Tap your network for references to steer your boss toward your preferred choice; emphasize the option's affordability, etc.
Controller	• Unemotional, analytical • Abhors uncertainty • Implements only own ideas	• Martha Stewart • Ross Perot	• Present highly structured arguments • Make your boss "own" the data • Avoid aggressive advocacy	• Over several months, send your boss customer reports, marketing studies, financial projections; give him everything he needs to build your case for you • Emphasize data highlighting the company's challenge • Identify data contradictions, but let your boss analyze them • Wait for your boss to request a meeting after a significant incident (e.g., a large customer defects)

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Get to Know Your Boss's Boss

by Priscilla Claman

Does your boss's boss know you well? Is she impressed with you? Does she know exactly what you do? If you can't answer these questions with a "yes," you're missing out on career opportunities.

Here's a person with a broad perspective on your organization, someone who can see what's coming down the pike—whether it's a new product or a reorg—more clearly than you or your boss can. Forming a relationship with her will help you develop a 30,000-foot view, too. But it's more than that. She has a direct say in your growth and advancement. She approves your performance reviews, raises, promotions, and major changes in duties. She also signs off on any professional development you might be offered, such as stretch assignments or formal training.

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on November 17, 2011

To succeed in your organization, you need her to know your skills and have an idea of what your career plans are. Yes, your own boss is supposed to advocate for you, but he still has to get the approval of his boss. When you and others are competing for a promotion, it will go to someone your boss's boss thinks highly of.

But how do you get to know her? How do you earn her attention and respect? Here are some suggestions:

- **Interact with her.** It sounds basic, but smile and say "hello" when you see her. Some people duck and run when a powerful person comes into their work area. Instead, ask how you can help her. Reintroduce yourself if you see she doesn't remember you. Treat her like the very important customer she is.

- **Reach out to her.** Touch base when opportunities arise. If she gets a promotion or award, send her a congratulatory e-mail. If you find an article or book that's relevant to her interests, send her a link and ask whether she's heard about it.

- **Tap her for advice.** E-mail her to ask for input on courses you're thinking of taking, professional organizations you're considering joining, and more. First make sure it's OK with your boss, though, and use his name in your message so it's clear you're not bypassing the chain of command. Suppose your boss has asked you to research some new vendors, and you know his boss has several strong candidates in her extensive network. Send her your

list of finalists to see if she has any experience with them or knows of other good options. And when you do this, make your boss look good. Preface your question with, "John thought you might have some helpful insights for us . . ." Follow up on her suggestions and thank her for them when you write to let her know which vendor you've chosen and why.

- **Extend an invitation.** Do you have an interesting guest coming in for a meeting? Are you giving a presentation? Is your manager leading a training session? Ask your boss if you should invite his boss. Whether she comes or not, it's another chance to let them both know that you're thinking of the big picture.

- **Pass along praise.** Forward complimentary e-mails from colleagues or customers to your boss. He'll most likely send them on to his boss, since your success reflects well on him, too. Customer compliments are highly regarded, whether the customers are internal or external.

- **Volunteer for a cross-functional team.** Leading or joining a cross-functional team is a great way to contribute to the larger organization. So is offering to take notes at meetings and circulate them afterward. Most people see this as drudgery, but it's an opportunity to raise your visibility. Ask team members if they'd like you to copy their managers, and see if your boss would like you to copy his

boss. If they say yes, your notes—and your name—will be noticed by the senior team, including your boss's boss.

- **Fix a problem.** If you find a way to make an improvement that furthers a business objective or supports a corporate value, act on it—and share the results with your boss's boss. Here's an example: An administrative assistant at a global nonprofit found her organization's customer-tracking system inaccurate and hard to use. When she discovered that many colleagues felt the same way, she researched other systems. Some friends in accounting pulled together a cost/benefit analysis for her so she could develop a proposal for switching to a new system, which she presented to her boss and her boss's boss. She not only got funding for the project, she also earned a new leadership role: overseeing the conversion and managing the new system.

Try these tips, and your boss's boss will know—and care—who you are.

Priscilla Claman is president of Career Strategies, a Boston-based firm offering career coaching to individuals and competency development and career management services to organizations.

How to Make Your Boss Look Good—Without Becoming a Sycophant

by Michael Schrage

I find suck-ups loathsome. But I admire the managing-up technique I've seen ambitious people skillfully deploy. No fawning or flattery—they make smart use of technology to make their bosses look good.

For example, the boss's boss at one marketing firm had given a keynote speech at a major industry event. A twentysomething analyst easily found a couple of complimentary tweets referencing the talk. He e-mailed them to his fortysomething boss, who barely knew what Twitter was, but who was thrilled to bring them to his

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on April 15, 2010

boss's attention. Win. Win. Win. Everyone was happy. A simple 90-second investment made his boss look good.

At another firm, a project manager found that her boss's boss had an offbeat sense of humor and liked injecting levity into boring project reviews. She made it her mission to find the appropriate *New Yorker* or Dilbert cartoon to paste into a PowerPoint slide for presentations. Of course, she didn't do this for her own presentations; she selected amusing and relevant options for her boss's talk. He was grateful, and the boss's boss liked them.

What I like about making your boss look good is that it is the mirror image of the marketing mantra about knowing the customer's customer. Understanding your boss is vital. But researching, knowing, and appreciating your boss's boss ought to give you valuable insight into what makes your boss effective—and frustrated. That shapes how to better position your boss in the mind of *his* boss.

Your Boss as a Brand

If you saw your boss as a brand, how would you sell that brand to the ultimate customer—your boss's boss? Answering this question well requires market research. What can you do that will move your project forward and make your boss look good to his boss and peers, too? It can be a worthwhile investment of your time to consider what tools and technologies may help you.

The economic and technological "barriers of entry" to figuring out appropriate approaches to making your boss look good have collapsed. Most managers are but a LinkedIn connection or a blog comment away from insights into their boss's boss that makes a win-win-win

outcome a good bet. Should this occur daily? Only if you're comfortable being the teacher's pet. But there's nothing wrong with making your boss look good be a part of *your* brand.

Perhaps you think it would test the outer limits of your creativity and authenticity to make your boss look good. But give it a try. Think of it as a marketing challenge: What are the two things you could do in the next three days that would make your boss look better to his boss?

Michael Schrage, a research fellow at MIT Sloan School's Center for Digital Business, is the author of *Serious Play* (Harvard Business School Press, 1999) and the forthcoming *Getting Beyond Ideas.*

Stop Being Micromanaged

by Amy Gallo

None of us likes a boss who constantly scrutinizes our work. Micromanagers are not only annoying, their lack of faith may make you doubt yourself and stunt your professional growth. But you don't have to suffer with an overly controlling boss. If you reduce your micromanager's stress, you may be able to secure the autonomy you need.

What the Experts Say

Micromanagement can make you feel inept, but typically it has nothing to do with your performance. "It's more about your boss's level of internal anxiety and need to control situations than anything about you," says Jenny Chatman, a professor of management at Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley.

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You can't change the way your boss leads, but you can change the way you follow using these tactics:

Evaluate Your Boss's Behavior

Jean-François Manzoni, coauthor of *The Set-Up-to-Fail Syndrome: How Good Managers Cause Great People to Fail*, cautions that all controlling bosses are not the same. On one end of the spectrum are managers with very high standards. They may regularly have you rework something that doesn't measure up. They pay a great deal of attention to detail and exercise some degree of control, but they don't stifle you. In fact, you may learn a lot from them.

At the other end of the spectrum are people Manzoni describes as "pathological micromanagers who need to make it clear to themselves and others that they are in charge." These are the bosses who give you little to no independence, insist on being involved in every detail of your work, and are more concerned about specifics, such as font size, than the big picture. "You know you're working with [a pathological micromanager] if he gets involved in a level of detail that is way below his pay grade," says Chatman.

Don't Fight It

Railing against micromanagement isn't productive. "If you push back in one way or another—passively or aggressively—your manager may conclude you can't be trusted and get more involved," says Manzoni. It may be tempting to complain, but it will probably only make

your situation worse. "If I sense disdain, I'm going to be encouraged to show you that on my forehead it says 'boss' and on yours, it doesn't," says Manzoni. Instead, try to understand what's causing your boss's behavior. Is he under immense pressure? Is this his intuitive way of managing? Does the company culture encourage and reward this kind of behavior? If you recognize the underlying reasons, you can figure out how to respond.

Increase Trust

Micromanagement is usually "based on a general view that the world's standards are not up to what they should be," says Chatman. You therefore need to make a conscious effort to earn your manager's trust by succeeding in the dimensions that he cares most about. "You absolutely, positively must deliver and deliver in a way that doesn't increase your boss's stress. In fact, identify things that reduce [it]," says Manzoni. If you meet your boss's standards—deliver work on time, make sure projects include the elements she wants—she's likely to see you as someone she can lean on. The more she trusts you, the less inclined she'll be to tell you exactly how to do something.

Make Up-front Agreements

Another tactic is to talk to your boss—before a project starts—about how he'll be involved. "Try to agree on standards and basic approach," says Manzoni. What role will each of you play? What criteria will you use

to measure the project's success? Explain what you think the ideal plan of action is and then ask for his input. "Be sure you understand up front what the guiding principles are for the work—not just the tactical elements," says Chatman. For example, if you're working on an internal marketing campaign, be sure to talk about the message you want to send, not the font you should use. If the discussion becomes overly focused on detail, try to bring it back to the principles and approach you agreed on. Flattery can also work. Remind your boss that he's better off not getting involved in the minutiae because his time and effort are more valuable to the big picture.

Keep Your Boss in the Loop

Remember that micromanagers are often motivated by anxiety. "They are nervous about anyone else being able to do things as well or in the same way they would," says Chatman. Address that concern by keeping your manager informed of your project's progress. Schedule regular check-ins to help her feel part of the process. Or send unprompted e-mails that share important information. If she wants detail, get specific. Although annoying now, it may save you the effort of redoing work later on.

Give Feedback, but Only if Appropriate

Telling a micromanager that you don't appreciate his controlling behavior may only trigger more of it. But

some managers may be open to hearing your input. "Try to catch your boss in a moment of openness," says Manzoni. He suggests using the time in a scheduled performance review. Focus your feedback on how his behavior affects the process. Can you tweak his involvement so that he gets the information he needs without becoming a roadblock?

Get Help or Move On

If none of these approaches work for you, ask yourself: Do I really want to work here? "If it's pathological, you should consider transferring to another part of the company or finding another job," says Manzoni. Before you throw in the towel, however, look to others inside the company. Find a trusted coworker or a reliable HR manager who can counsel you. At the very least, you'll be able to do some restorative venting, and you may uncover additional tactics that could work for you.

Principles to Remember

- Do everything you can to gain the micromanager's trust
- Know what worries your boss and try to reduce her concerns
- Provide regular and detailed updates so your boss is aware of your progress
- Don't defy the micromanager—that often triggers more of the behavior you're trying to avoid

Case Study: Be Attentive to Her Concerns

In 2006, Marcy Berke (names have been changed) worked for an insurance company with offices throughout the U.S. Her boss's boss was a woman named Barbara, who was responsible for 10 agencies in her region. Barbara was passionate about efficiency. She asked all the agents in her region to produce a time report, accounting for the number of minutes each of them spent on various tasks each day. "She was concerned with keeping her own production figures up and burnishing her image with senior management," Marcy says.

Marcy recognized what mattered most to Barbara. "If I were heading up a project, I would make certain to e-mail Barbara, early and often, with any questions I might have about what her expectations were, and give her an outline of what my team was working on and the anticipated date of completion," she says. If her team was having difficulty meeting the deadline for any reason, she would let Barbara know as soon as possible, providing both a reason and a revised end date. Marcy supplied the information Barbara needed without being asked first so that Barbara could learn to trust her.

Since Marcy knew that Barbara was so preoccupied with time, she arrived at least two or three minutes early for meetings. When Marcy needed to set up a meeting with Barbara, she would make the request by e-mail, clearly stating the reason for the meeting, listing the questions she would be asking, and indicating how long the meeting would last.

This approach worked well for Marcy. She was able to thrive at the company for four years, despite Barbara's micromanagement, before she left to start her own firm.

Amy Gallo is a contributing editor at *Harvard Business Review*. Follow her on Twitter at @amyegallo.

Dealing with Your Incompetent Boss

by Amy Gallo

We all complain about our bosses from time to time. Some of us even consider it part of our job descriptions. But there's a difference between watercooler griping and paralyzing frustration, just as there's a clear distinction between a manager with a few flaws and one who is truly incompetent. So how can you handle your bad boss?

What the Experts Say

"Most people have had experience with someone who is incompetent, or at least unhelpful," says Annie McKee, coauthor of *Becoming a Resonant Leader: Develop Your Emotional Intelligence, Renew Your Relationships, Sustain Your Effectiveness*. That's because too many companies promote people for the wrong reasons. Whether

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your boss lacks technical or managerial ability, says Michael Useem, author of *Leading Up*, bad bosses sap motivation, kill productivity, and can make you want to run from the job screaming.

Although leaving is sometimes an option, it's not the only one for coping with a bad boss. Consider these tactics first:

Understand Your Boss's Incompetence

Before you declare your boss useless, check your bias and better understand what you're seeing. "When you're looking at your boss, the first thing you need to do before you judge is look at yourself," says McKee. Many of us have blind spots when it comes to our bosses. Ask yourself if you're jealous of her position in the organization or if you have a natural tendency to resist authority.

Also ". . . be cautious about your judgment until you collect all the evidence," says Useem. Your boss may have stressors you don't see or fully understand. "It's very common for people to completely miss the pressures their bosses are under; partly because a good manager will buffer you from them," says McKee. By learning more about your boss and developing empathy for him, you may reevaluate his competence. Even if you still conclude that he's incapable, remember that he's human. Don't demonize him.

Ask Others for Help

Look to peers or people outside the organization for advice and a place to vent. This doesn't mean indiscriminate moaning about your boss. Instead find confidants: a

trusted colleague, a spouse, a mentor, or a coach. Explain what you're seeing, how it's affecting you and your work, and ask for advice. "This is not to conspire against your boss but to check your point of view," says Useem. People outside the situation can give you a fresh perspective or offer new coping strategies.

Find a Way to Make It Work

Regardless of your boss's incompetence, you need to work together to get your job done. Be creative in collaborating with her. Figure out where she excels and then find ways to pair your strengths with her weaknesses. For example, if your boss is a competent writer but falls apart in front of an audience, suggest ways you can help with her presentation to the executive team. Can you listen to her trial run? Or present portions of it, as a development opportunity for you?

When you request something from her—whether it's input on a work plan, an introduction to a colleague, or her permission to reach out to a client—be specific about what you need. And do as much of the work for her as you can: Provide a draft e-mail or point out the three areas you'd like her to comment on. If she's unable to help, suggest an alternative: Perhaps you can ask one of her peers or superiors for input or the introduction. Your goal is to help her solve the problem, not set up more situations where she'll fail.

Step Up

Rather than give up on an ineffectual boss, focus on what *you* can do to make up the difference. If your boss fails to set priorities for the team, propose some that he can then

approve or tweak. If meeting follow-up isn't his strength, offer to send out the to-dos. Without harboring resentment, do what's best for your team and the organization. Recognize that stepping up can be a growth opportunity; you may be taking on responsibilities someone at your level doesn't usually have. And in the process, you gain the respect and appreciation of other higher-ups.

Develop Yourself

Sometimes incompetence can manifest itself in a lack of communication. You may have a manager who hasn't given you a clear sense of your goals or even a concrete job description. These are essential to doing your job well and advancing your career, so take them on yourself. Write your own job description and articulate goals for the quarter or year. Send them to your boss and ask to review them together. In person, you can then confirm your priorities and understand her expectations. If she's still unresponsive, keep a record of what you've proposed and work to meet the goals you laid out. It may be that she isn't sure what you should be working on and needs you to just take action.

Take Care of Yourself

Working for an incompetent boss can be bad for your health. "There's a lot of research on the negative psychological effects," says McKee. She suggests creating boundaries that protect you from the emotional damage. We have a tendency to point to a bad boss and say, "He's ruining my life." But this ignores the fact that you have agency in the situation. "Once you become a victim, you

cease to become a leader," she says. Focus on what makes you happy about your job, not miserable. "We can come to work every day and pay attention to this horrible boss, or we can choose to pay attention to the people we are happy to see every day and the work we enjoy. We can choose which emotions we lean into," says McKee.

Whenever possible, take on projects that allow you to spend time in other parts of the organization or with other leaders. Identify a mentor who can provide you with the feedback and instruction you aren't getting from your boss. Find a way to let off steam, such as taking short breaks throughout the day. Look for humor in the situation, and try not to allow one person to ruin your day, your job, or your career.

Amy Gallo is a contributing editor at *Harvard Business Review*. Follow her on Twitter at @amyegallo.

Coping with a Conflict-Averse Boss

by Anne Field

Does your boss avoid conflict at any cost? Do you find it difficult to get the resources you need because your boss won't advocate for you? Does she push your team to the brink because she fears saying no to requests from above?

Here's how to cope—and get the critical feedback and guidance you need.

Make Conflict More Comfortable

Having a defensive and conflict-averse boss doesn't mean you can never disagree with him. When an issue crops up, frame it in terms that will get the best results *for your business*. Play devil's advocate. Ask lots of "what if?" questions. "What if our printer continues to have quality-control issues? Might it be a good idea to start

Adapted from reprint #C0504A

investigating other options now just in case?" Use gentle lead-ins such as "I might be off base here, but . . ." or "This might sound like a crazy idea, but . . ." all the while reassuring your boss that you're working toward the same goal as he is.

Focus on Problem Solving

If you need to talk about a difficult issue with your boss, focus on the problem, not the people. This will help establish neutral ground.

Offer specific suggestions. For example, if your weekly team meeting has turned into a gripe session for your colleagues, volunteer to create and distribute agendas. "I know how busy you are preparing the Williams presentation, so why don't I poll everyone for agenda items for this week's meeting?" You'll help provide a structure for your boss to approve and then follow.

Gather Supporting Evidence

If you want your boss to use her authority on your behalf, give her everything she needs to build her case: assemble data, write drafts, zero in on how your request fits into larger unit or organizational goals.

For example, a manager in a consumer products company dragged her feet when her staff urged her to ask for a bigger budget. So, they gathered the necessary backup, specifying each team member's duties, and the resources needed to meet their goals. They highlighted how meeting their goals would contribute to the unit's overall strategy. With that ammunition in hand, the boss approached senior management with greater confidence.

Put It in Writing

If your boss dreads face-to-face conversations, especially performance reviews, send him e-mails and brief documents outlining your key accomplishments and areas of development. This will make it easier for him to engage in a productive conversation with you—rather than coming up with the documentation on his own.

Guidelines can also help your conflict-averse boss work with larger groups. If his glossing over disagreements inhibits your team's ability to air differences, check your perception with your teammates offline. If they also feel that he's squelching productive debates in favor of peaceful chats, raise the issue with your boss in a one-on-one meeting. Propose that a little debate might help stoke the team's creativity and that setting ground rules for such discussions would ensure that they're productive. Volunteer to take notes to help keep the creative ideas moving along to implementation.

Ease In

If you know that your boss will find a conversation awkward or unpleasant, don't rush into it. Instead, open with a neutral, nonthreatening icebreaker. Cite a recent newspaper article about a common interest. Ask about her child or pet. Once you sense that she's comfortable, ease into the discussion.

Anne Field is a business writer based in Pelham, New York.

How to Give Your Boss Feedback

by Amy Gallo

Have you ever wished you could tell your boss exactly what you think of her? That her obsessive mobile use during team meetings is demoralizing? That people roll their eyes about her compulsive control of the smallest details of every project?

You see your boss in a variety of settings—client and team meetings, presentations, one-on-ones, negotiations—which gives you insight into her strengths and weaknesses. But even if your observations could be helpful, is it your place to share them with her? Could frank feedback put your job or your relationship at risk?

Providing feedback to your boss, commonly called **upward feedback,** is a tricky process to master. But if you offer it correctly, your insight can not only help your boss, it can also improve your relationship with her.

Adapted from content posted on hbr.org on March 24, 2010

What the Experts Say

John Baldoni, a leadership consultant and author of *Lead Your Boss: The Subtle Art of Managing Up,* says that leadership is all about perception; if leaders don't know how others experience them, their performance suffers. And the higher up in an organization a leader sits, the harder it is to get honest feedback. Your input can help your boss see himself as others see him and help him to make critical adjustments in his behavior and approach.

Of course, giving your boss feedback requires careful thought; here are some principles to keep in mind.

The Relationship Comes First

The ability to give and receive upward feedback depends on the level of trust between you and your boss. If you know that she's unreceptive to feedback, is likely to react negatively, or if you have a rocky relationship, don't say anything. But "if your boss is open-minded and you have a good relationship," Baldoni says, "you owe her the straight talk." As with any feedback, your intentions must be good, and your desire to help your boss should supersede any issues you may have with her.

Wait to Be Invited

Even if you have a great relationship, don't launch into unsolicited feedback. Some bosses will request feedback at the end of your formal review, asking, "Is there anything else I can do to support you?" Or, when you first start working together, he may share his development

areas and ask you to keep an eye out for certain behaviors that he's working on. "In a perfect world, it is a manager's responsibility to make it safe to give feedback," says Baldoni.

Of course, this is not how things usually happen. If your boss doesn't directly request feedback, ask if she would like it. This might be easiest in the context of a new project or client. You can ask something such as "Would it be useful if I occasionally check in with you about how I think the project is going?" Setting it up in advance can smooth the process, but you can also give feedback in the moment. Try asking something along the lines of "Can I tell you about something I noticed in that meeting?" Emphasize that you're trying to help her so that the client, project, or company will benefit.

Share Your Perspective

Focus your feedback on what you're actually seeing or hearing, not what *you* would do as the boss. Baldoni recommends saying things such as "I noticed that you were silent when Joe disagreed with your proposal. It can be intimidating when you don't respond to criticism." By sharing your perspective, you can help your boss see how others see him. This can be invaluable to a leader who may be disconnected from people in the lower ranks.

Focusing on your perceptions also means realizing the limitations of your standpoint—you're seeing only a partial picture of your boss's performance and all the demands he's juggling. James Detert, author of the *Harvard Business Review* articles "Why Employees Are

Afraid to Speak" and "Speaking Up to Higher-Ups," says, "Subordinates by and large don't have a full appreciation of [their bosses'] reality."

Good feedback rules still apply. Your feedback should be honest, specific, and data-driven. Open with something positive and then offer constructive comments along with suggestions for improvement. Avoid accusations.

If Your Boss Bites Back

No matter how thoughtfully you've prepared and delivered your feedback, your boss may get upset or defensive. Sometimes reframing it in terms of what your boss cares most about can help, says Detert. "Point out how specific behaviors [may be] inhibiting your boss from achieving her goals."

Gauge her reaction to determine how she prefers to receive feedback and what topics are out of bounds. Perhaps she doesn't want to receive pointers on her communication style or a certain high-pressure initiative. Rather than clamming up after a negative reaction, take the opportunity to ask her about what would be useful going forward.

When in Doubt, Hold Your Tongue

If you're not sure your boss wants feedback or if the subject in question is sensitive, it's better not to speak up. Don't risk your working relationship or your job. Instead, look for opportunities to comment anonymously, such as a 360-degree feedback process. If you feel your boss's behavior is putting the company or your unit in jeopardy, follow the appropriate channels in your company—starting with

Human Resources or your employee resource manual or wiki.

Amy Gallo is a contributing editor at *Harvard Business Review*. Follow her on Twitter at @amyegallo.

Managing Multiple Bosses

by Amy Gallo

The movie *Office Space*, a comedy about work life in a typical 1990s software company, details the saga of Peter Gibbons—a man with eight different bosses. All of them, seemingly unaware of each other, pass by his desk and tell him what to do. Although the film is most certainly a satire, for some, it's not far from the truth. Many of us report to more than one boss, so learning to handle multiple managers is essential.

What the Experts Say

"As you go to a matrixed structure, you can easily have between one and seven immediate supervisors," says Robert Sutton, the author of *Good Boss, Bad Boss*. Adam Grant, coauthor of the *Harvard Business Review* article "The Hidden Advantages of Quiet Bosses," concurs. "As com-

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panies continue to flatten, organize work around specific projects, and use temporary teams to complete projects, many employees find themselves reporting to multiple bosses," he says. Although this is more likely to happen in bigger and more complex companies, it can happen in small organizations and family-owned businesses, too. Having many bosses is complicated, and, as Grant says, "If you're not careful, you can end up letting all of them down."

Here are some guidelines to make your job, and theirs, easier.

Recognize the Challenges

Although working for more than one person can present numerous challenges, there are three common ones to watch for:

1. **Overload.** With several people assigning you work, one of the greatest risks is simply having too much to do. "If you report to multiple bosses who supervise your efforts on different tasks and projects, it's all too easy for each boss to treat you as if you have no other responsibilities," says Grant.

2. **Conflicting messages.** "The more bosses you have, the more conflicting messages you get," says Sutton. Sometimes this happens out of ignorance—your bosses aren't aware of what the others are saying—or because people are pushing their own agendas. "Different bosses often have different expectations, and what

impresses one may disappoint another," says Grant.

3. **Loyalty.** "Some bosses want to know that they're your first priority. If you have more than one boss who feels this way, it's easy to get caught in the middle," says Grant. You may need to negotiate between competing demands for your loyalty.

So, how do you make it work?

Know Who Your Ultimate Boss Is

Although you may take direction from multiple managers, most of us have one person who's ultimately responsible for our careers. Ask a lot of questions about the reporting structure. Find out who completes your reviews and who contributes to them. Who makes decisions about your compensation, promotions, and so on?

Stay Connected

Reporting to more than one person can be complicated further if your bosses are in different locations. When your bosses work remotely (or when you do), you need to overcommunicate to make up for the lack of face-to-face time. Rely on technology to help you. Make your calendar viewable to those outside the office or use a web-based tool such as Google Calendar. This will allow all your bosses to know where you are, even when they can't see you. You can use the same calendar to indicate what days you're working on which projects. To simulate the drop-by-your-desk conversations, use an instant messaging

application to have brief check-ins or ask quick questions. If only one of your bosses is remote, don't inadvertently cater to the boss whom you see more often, and make sure the distant manager knows you're meeting *his* needs, too.

Be Proactive About Your Workload

Let everyone know what's on your plate. Although it may not be in your job description, it will behoove you to negotiate between your bosses. "I would err on the side of taking the initiative to coordinate between them. Most bosses prefer proactive employees," says Grant. You can create a shared document that lists all of your ongoing tasks and projects, or you can communicate these items in weekly check-in meetings.

Get Your Bosses to Communicate

Most bosses appreciate your bringing them solutions, not problems, but this is complicated when you have more than one manager. Whether you need to resolve contradictory directions, reduce your workload, or sort out inconsistent demands, the best approach is to get your bosses to talk with each other, rather than trying to represent one's agenda to the other. "Start by assuming the best. Invite them to discuss the conflicts and get them out on the table," says Sutton. Bring your bosses together in the same place—in a face-to-face meeting or on a conference call—and explain what the conflict is. Enlist them in the problem solving and push for transparency. "If you ask your bosses for advice on how to handle the disagree-

ment, they're more likely to take your perspective and see the challenges from your point of view," says Grant.

Set Boundaries

"The most important skill for staying sane while reporting to multiple bosses is the ability to set boundaries," says Grant. He points to research done by Harvard Business School professor Leslie Perlow. She found that engineers at a *Fortune* 500 company were constantly interrupted by managers and coworkers. She helped them create norms for quiet time: Three days a week, there would be no interruptions before noon so they could focus on work. If your multiple bosses frequently come to you with questions or to check in about their projects, establish protected times. As mentioned earlier, you can block out times in your calendar for work on certain projects. Before taking on a new project, remind your bosses that you'll need to assess how it fits into your overall workload. Frame this as wanting to be sure you have enough bandwidth to do a project justice rather than putting the request off.

Get Sneaky if You Have To

The aforementioned advice works best in a *healthy* organization, but yours may not reward transparency and proactive approaches. You may find that your bosses are unresponsive or unwilling to meet with you to resolve conflicts, which requires a different approach. "If you're in a fear-based environment, you have to figure out how to protect yourself. The worse the environment, the sneakier you

have to get," says Sutton. Figure out which of your bosses has the most power, and prioritize her assignments. "The smart employee doesn't ask. Instead, do your own calculation of who is more powerful and who would hurt you the least," says Sutton.

Don't Take It Personally

Sutton notes that it's easy to assume that your bosses are out to get you, but usually that's not the case. They're probably just pushing their own agendas, and you're getting caught in the middle. Try not to feel persecuted. Instead, identify the conflicts and work to resolve them.

Reap the Benefits

Despite the challenges, having more than one boss can also be an advantage. For example, you're likely to get more robust feedback. If your bosses come from different parts of the organization, you'll have access to a larger and more varied network. You probably have more autonomy because you don't have one person calling all the shots. "Like a kid playing parents off each other, ask the person who you know will give you the answer you want," says Sutton. Although this may seem underhanded, it's an effective way to align your interests with those of your bosses and the company.

Case Study: A Monday Morning To-Do List

Kim Bryant had been in the accounting industry for 15 years when she started with a new firm as a staff accountant. The company had three partners, and Kim was

initially hired to work for one of them. But soon she was asked to continue her work for that partner and also help out one of the others. "The most difficult thing about working for two partners was that both had projects that they felt were urgent and it put me in an uncomfortable situation," she says. Kim had to decide which project to work on first. When she asked one of her bosses for advice, he would say he wanted his project done first. Frequently, one partner assigned her something urgent when she was working on an upcoming deadline for the other. So Kim created a to-do list every Monday morning, prioritized by due date, and shared it with the two partners. "That allowed each partner to be aware of what I had been assigned to do," she says.

She also learned to watch their schedules, often with the help of their secretary. If Kim had been told that a project was urgent, she could gauge how soon she needed to do it based on when the partner was back in the office. She knew if she got it on his desk before he returned, she would be fine.

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Section 2
Managing Across

Do you depend on lots of people over whom you have no authority? Do you struggle to navigate your company's political landscape? To get your cross-functional team functioning? To collaborate across time zones? To motivate colleagues to meet *your* deadlines when they're juggling countless other projects?

Managing *across*—with peers, vendors, or consultants—is complex. You don't have a say in their reviews or decide if they get promoted. So you need to use other tactics, such as setting mutually beneficial goals, establishing your credibility, polishing your powers of persuasion, and tapping into your network. The articles in this section will give you these tools.

What Makes a Leader?

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Daniel Goleman**, *highlighting key ideas.*

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

Are you so intent on meeting deadlines or hitting financial targets that you're neglecting working relationships? Do you often interrupt colleagues? Fail to ask them what else is on their plates?

If you nodded "yes" to any of these questions, you may have zeroed in on what's getting in the way of your ability to work well with people at all levels, across silos, and with personalities that may be very different from your own. Managing across requires *emotional intelligence*: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Developing emotional intelligence will help you better understand your own—and others'—priorities, pressures, and work styles.

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THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence

Component	Definition	Hallmarks	Example
Self-Awareness	Knowing one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals—and their impact on others	• Self-confidence • Realistic self-assessment • Self-deprecating sense of humor • Thirst for constructive criticism	A manager knows tight deadlines bring out the worst in him. So he plans his time to get work done well in advance.
Self-Regulation	Controlling or redirecting disruptive emotions and impulses	• Trustworthiness • Integrity • Comfort with ambiguity and change	When a team botches a presentation, its leader resists the urge to scream. Instead, she considers possible reasons for the failure, explains the consequences to her team, and explores solutions with them.
Motivation	Being driven to achieve for the sake of achievement	• A passion for the work itself and for new challenges • Unflagging energy to improve • Optimism in the face of failure	A portfolio manager at an investment company sees her fund tumble for three consecutive quarters. Major clients defect. Instead of blaming external circumstances, she decides to learn from the experience—and engineers a turnaround.

Empathy	Considering others' feelings, especially when making decisions	• Expertise in attracting and retaining talent • Ability to develop others • Sensitivity to cross-cultural differences	An American consultant and her team pitch a project to a potential client in Japan. Her team interprets the client's silence as disapproval and prepares to leave. The consultant reads the client's body language and senses interest. She continues the meeting, and her team gets the job.
Social Skill	Managing relationships to move people in desired directions	• Effectiveness in leading change • Persuasiveness • Extensive networking • Expertise in building and leading teams	A manager wants his company to adopt a better Internet strategy. He finds kindred spirits and assembles a de facto team to create a prototype website. He persuades allies in other divisions to fund the company's participation in a relevant convention. His company forms an Internet division—and puts him in charge of it.

It was Daniel Goleman who first brought the term "emotional intelligence" to a wide audience with his 1995 book of that name, and it was Goleman who first applied the concept to business with his 1998 HBR article, reprinted here. In his research at nearly 200 large, global companies, Goleman found that while the qualities traditionally associated with leadership—such as intelligence, toughness, determination, and vision—are required for success, they are insufficient. Truly effective leaders are also distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.

These qualities may sound "soft" and unbusiness-like, but Goleman found direct ties between emotional intelligence and measurable business results. While emotional intelligence's relevance to business has continued to spark debate over the past six years, Goleman's article remains the definitive reference on the subject, with a description of each component of emotional intelligence and a detailed discussion of how to recognize it in potential leaders, how and why it connects to performance, and how it can be learned.

Every businessperson knows a story about a highly intelligent, highly skilled executive who was promoted into a leadership position only to fail at the job. And they also know a story about someone with solid—but not extraordinary—intellectual abilities and technical skills who was promoted into a similar position and then soared.

Such anecdotes support the widespread belief that identifying individuals with the "right stuff" to be leaders is more art than science. After all, the personal styles of superb leaders vary: Some leaders are subdued and analytical; others shout their manifestos from the mountaintops. And just as important, different situations call for different types of leadership. Most mergers need a sensitive negotiator at the helm, whereas many turnarounds require a more forceful authority.

I have found, however, that the most effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: They all have a high degree of what has come to be known as *emotional intelligence*. It's not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant. They do matter, but mainly as "threshold capabilities"; that is, they are the entry-level requirements for executive positions. But my research, along with other recent studies, clearly shows that emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won't make a great leader.

In the course of the past year, my colleagues and I have focused on how emotional intelligence operates at work. We have examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective performance, especially in leaders. And we have observed how emotional intelligence shows itself on the job. How can you tell if someone has high emotional intelligence, for example, and how can you recognize it in yourself? In the following pages, we'll explore these questions, taking each of the

components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill—in turn.

Evaluating Emotional Intelligence

Most large companies today have employed trained psychologists to develop what are known as "competency models" to aid them in identifying, training, and promoting likely stars in the leadership firmament. The psychologists have also developed such models for lower-level positions. And in recent years, I have analyzed competency models from 188 companies, most of which were large and global and included the likes of Lucent Technologies, British Airways, and Credit Suisse.

In carrying out this work, my objective was to determine which personal capabilities drove outstanding performance within these organizations, and to what degree they did so. I grouped capabilities into three categories: purely technical skills like accounting and business planning; cognitive abilities like analytical reasoning; and competencies demonstrating emotional intelligence, such as the ability to work with others and effectiveness in leading change.

To create some of the competency models, psychologists asked senior managers at the companies to identify the capabilities that typified the organization's most outstanding leaders. To create other models, the psychologists used objective criteria, such as a division's profitability, to differentiate the star performers at senior levels within their organizations from the average ones. Those individuals were then extensively interviewed and tested,

and their capabilities were compared. This process resulted in the creation of lists of ingredients for highly effective leaders. The lists ranged in length from seven to 15 items and included such ingredients as initiative and strategic vision.

When I analyzed all this data, I found dramatic results. To be sure, intellect was a driver of outstanding performance. Cognitive skills such as big-picture thinking and long-term vision were particularly important. But when I calculated the ratio of technical skills, IQ, and emotional intelligence as ingredients of excellent performance, emotional intelligence proved to be twice as important as the others for jobs at all levels.

Moreover, my analysis showed that emotional intelligence played an increasingly important role at the highest levels of the company, where differences in technical skills are of negligible importance. In other words, the higher the rank of a person considered to be a star performer, the more emotional intelligence capabilities showed up as the reason for his or her effectiveness. When I compared star performers with average ones in senior leadership positions, nearly 90% of the difference in their profiles was attributable to emotional intelligence factors rather than cognitive abilities.

Other researchers have confirmed that emotional intelligence not only distinguishes outstanding leaders but can also be linked to strong performance. The findings of the late David McClelland, the renowned researcher in human and organizational behavior, are a good example. In a 1996 study of a global food and beverage company, McClelland found that when senior managers

had a critical mass of emotional intelligence capabilities, their divisions outperformed yearly earnings goals by 20%. Meanwhile, division leaders without that critical mass underperformed by almost the same amount. McClelland's findings, interestingly, held as true in the company's U.S. divisions as in its divisions in Asia and Europe.

In short, the numbers are beginning to tell us a persuasive story about the link between a company's success and the emotional intelligence of its leaders. And just as important, research is also demonstrating that people can, if they take the right approach, develop their emotional intelligence. (See the sidebar "Can Emotional Intelligence Be Learned?")

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the first component of emotional intelligence—which makes sense when one considers that the Delphic oracle gave the advice to "know thyself" thousands of years ago. Self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drives. People with strong self-awareness are neither overly critical nor unrealistically hopeful. Rather, they are honest—with themselves and with others.

People who have a high degree of self-awareness recognize how their feelings affect them, other people, and their job performance. Thus, a self-aware person who knows that tight deadlines bring out the worst in him plans his time carefully and gets his work done well in advance. Another person with high self-awareness will

The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence at Work

	Definition	Hallmarks
Self-Awareness	the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others	self-confidence realistic self-assessment self-deprecating sense of humor
Self-Regulation	the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods the propensity to suspend judgment—to think before acting	trustworthiness and integrity comfort with ambiguity openness to change
Motivation	a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence	strong drive to achieve optimism, even in the face of failure organizational commitment
Empathy	the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions	expertise in building and retaining talent cross-cultural sensitivity service to clients and customers
Social Skill	proficiency in managing relationships and building networks an ability to find common ground and build rapport	effectiveness in leading change persuasiveness expertise in building and leading teams

be able to work with a demanding client. She will understand the client's impact on her moods and the deeper reasons for her frustration. "Their trivial demands take us away from the real work that needs to be done," she might explain. And she will go one step further and turn her anger into something constructive.

CAN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE BE LEARNED?

For ages, people have debated if leaders are born or made. So too goes the debate about emotional intelligence. Are people born with certain levels of empathy, for example, or do they acquire empathy as a result of life's experiences? The answer is both. Scientific inquiry strongly suggests that there is a genetic component to emotional intelligence. Psychological and developmental research indicates that nurture plays a role as well. How much of each perhaps will never be known, but research and practice clearly demonstrate that emotional intelligence can be learned.

One thing is certain: Emotional intelligence increases with age. There is an old-fashioned word for the phenomenon: maturity. Yet even with maturity, some people still need training to enhance their emotional intelligence. Unfortunately, far too many training programs that intend to build leadership skills—including emotional intelligence—are a waste of time and money. The problem is simple: They focus on the wrong part of the brain.

Emotional intelligence is born largely in the neurotransmitters of the brain's limbic system, which governs feelings, impulses, and drives. Research indicates that the limbic system learns best through motivation, extended practice, and feedback. Compare this with the kind of learning that goes on in the neocortex, which governs analytical and technical ability.

The neocortex grasps concepts and logic. It is the part of the brain that figures out how to use a computer or make a sales call by reading a book. Not surprisingly—but mistakenly—it is also the part of the brain targeted by most training programs aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence. When such programs take, in effect, a neocortical approach, my research with the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations has shown they can even have a *negative* impact on people's job performance.

To enhance emotional intelligence, organizations must refocus their training to include the limbic system. They must help people break old behavioral habits and establish new ones. That not only takes much more time than conventional training programs, it also requires an individualized approach.

Imagine an executive who is thought to be low on empathy by her colleagues. Part of that deficit shows itself as an inability to listen; she interrupts people and doesn't pay close attention to what they're saying. To fix the problem, the executive needs to be motivated to change, and then she needs practice and feedback from others in the company. A colleague or coach could be tapped to let the executive know when she has been observed failing to listen. She would then have to replay the incident and give a better response;

(*continued*)

(*continued*)
that is, demonstrate her ability to absorb what others are saying. And the executive could be directed to observe certain executives who listen well and to mimic their behavior.

With persistence and practice, such a process can lead to lasting results. I know one Wall Street executive who sought to improve his empathy—specifically his ability to read people's reactions and see their perspectives. Before beginning his quest, the executive's subordinates were terrified of working with him. People even went so far as to hide bad news from him. Naturally, he was shocked when finally confronted with these facts. He went home and told his family—but they only confirmed what he had heard at work. When their opinions on any given subject did not mesh with his, they, too, were frightened of him.

Enlisting the help of a coach, the executive went to work to heighten his empathy through practice and feedback. His first step was to take a vacation to a foreign country where he did not speak the language. While there, he monitored his reactions to the unfamiliar and his openness to people who were different from him. When he returned home, humbled by his week

abroad, the executive asked his coach to shadow him for parts of the day, several times a week, to critique how he treated people with new or different perspectives. At the same time, he consciously used on-the-job interactions as opportunities to practice "hearing" ideas that differed from his. Finally, the executive had himself videotaped in meetings and asked those who worked for and with him to critique his ability to acknowledge and understand the feelings of others. It took several months, but the executive's emotional intelligence did ultimately rise, and the improvement was reflected in his overall performance on the job.

It's important to emphasize that building one's emotional intelligence cannot—will not—happen without sincere desire and concerted effort. A brief seminar won't help; nor can one buy a how-to manual. It is much harder to learn to empathize—to internalize empathy as a natural response to people—than it is to become adept at regression analysis. But it can be done. "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. If your goal is to become a real leader, these words can serve as a guidepost in your efforts to develop high emotional intelligence.

Self-awareness extends to a person's understanding of his or her values and goals. Someone who is highly self-aware knows where he is headed and why; so, for example, he will be able to be firm in turning down a job offer that is tempting financially but does not fit with his principles or long-term goals. A person who lacks self-awareness is apt to make decisions that bring on inner turmoil by treading on buried values. "The money looked good so I signed on," someone might say two years into a job, "but the work means so little to me that I'm constantly bored." The decisions of self-aware people mesh with their values; consequently, they often find work to be energizing.

How can one recognize self-awareness? First and foremost, it shows itself as candor and an ability to assess oneself realistically. People with high self-awareness are able to speak accurately and openly—although not necessarily effusively or confessionally—about their emotions and the impact they have on their work. For instance, one manager I know of was skeptical about a new personal-shopper service that her company, a major department-store chain, was about to introduce. Without prompting from her team or her boss, she offered them an explanation: "It's hard for me to get behind the rollout of this service," she admitted, "because I really wanted to run the project, but I wasn't selected. Bear with me while I deal with that." The manager did indeed examine her feelings; a week later, she was supporting the project fully.

Such self-knowledge often shows itself in the hiring process. Ask a candidate to describe a time he got carried away by his feelings and did something he later regret-

ted. Self-aware candidates will be frank in admitting to failure—and will often tell their tales with a smile. One of the hallmarks of self-awareness is a self-deprecating sense of humor.

Self-awareness can also be identified during performance reviews. Self-aware people know—and are comfortable talking about—their limitations and strengths, and they often demonstrate a thirst for constructive criticism. By contrast, people with low self-awareness interpret the message that they need to improve as a threat or a sign of failure.

Self-aware people can also be recognized by their self-confidence. They have a firm grasp of their capabilities and are less likely to set themselves up to fail by, for example, overstretching on assignments. They know, too, when to ask for help. And the risks they take on the job are calculated. They won't ask for a challenge that they know they can't handle alone. They'll play to their strengths.

Consider the actions of a midlevel employee who was invited to sit in on a strategy meeting with her company's top executives. Although she was the most junior person in the room, she did not sit there quietly, listening in awestruck or fearful silence. She knew she had a head for clear logic and the skill to present ideas persuasively, and she offered cogent suggestions about the company's strategy. At the same time, her self-awareness stopped her from wandering into territory where she knew she was weak.

Despite the value of having self-aware people in the workplace, my research indicates that senior executives

don't often give self-awareness the credit it deserves when they look for potential leaders. Many executives mistake candor about feelings for "wimpiness" and fail to give due respect to employees who openly acknowledge their shortcomings. Such people are too readily dismissed as "not tough enough" to lead others.

In fact, the opposite is true. In the first place, people generally admire and respect candor. Furthermore, leaders are constantly required to make judgment calls that require a candid assessment of capabilities—their own and those of others. Do we have the management expertise to acquire a competitor? Can we launch a new product within six months? People who assess themselves honestly—that is, self-aware people—are well suited to do the same for the organizations they run.

Self-Regulation

Biological impulses drive our emotions. We cannot do away with them—but we can do much to manage them. Self-regulation, which is like an ongoing inner conversation, is the component of emotional intelligence that frees us from being prisoners of our feelings. People engaged in such a conversation feel bad moods and emotional impulses just as everyone else does, but they find ways to control them and even to channel them in useful ways.

Imagine an executive who has just watched a team of his employees present a botched analysis to the company's board of directors. In the gloom that follows, the executive might find himself tempted to pound on the table in anger or kick over a chair. He could leap up and

scream at the group. Or he might maintain a grim silence, glaring at everyone before stalking off.

But if he had a gift for self-regulation, he would choose a different approach. He would pick his words carefully, acknowledging the team's poor performance without rushing to any hasty judgment. He would then step back to consider the reasons for the failure. Are they personal—a lack of effort? Are there any mitigating factors? What was his role in the debacle? After considering these questions, he would call the team together, lay out the incident's consequences, and offer his feelings about it. He would then present his analysis of the problem and a well-considered solution.

Why does self-regulation matter so much for leaders? First of all, people who are in control of their feelings and impulses—that is, people who are reasonable—are able to create an environment of trust and fairness. In such an environment, politics and infighting are sharply reduced and productivity is high. Talented people flock to the organization and aren't tempted to leave. And self-regulation has a trickle-down effect. No one wants to be known as a hothead when the boss is known for her calm approach. Fewer bad moods at the top mean fewer throughout the organization.

Second, self-regulation is important for competitive reasons. Everyone knows that business today is rife with ambiguity and change. Companies merge and break apart regularly. Technology transforms work at a dizzying pace. People who have mastered their emotions are able to roll with the changes. When a new program is announced,

they don't panic; instead, they are able to suspend judgment, seek out information, and listen to the executives as they explain the new program. As the initiative moves forward, these people are able to move with it.

Sometimes they even lead the way. Consider the case of a manager at a large manufacturing company. Like her colleagues, she had used a certain software program for five years. The program drove how she collected and reported data and how she thought about the company's strategy. One day, senior executives announced that a new program was to be installed that would radically change how information was gathered and assessed within the organization. While many people in the company complained bitterly about how disruptive the change would be, the manager mulled over the reasons for the new program and was convinced of its potential to improve performance. She eagerly attended training sessions—some of her colleagues refused to do so—and was eventually promoted to run several divisions, in part because she used the new technology so effectively.

I want to push the importance of self-regulation to leadership even further and make the case that it enhances integrity, which is not only a personal virtue but also an organizational strength. Many of the bad things that happen in companies are a function of impulsive behavior. People rarely plan to exaggerate profits, pad expense accounts, dip into the till, or abuse power for selfish ends. Instead, an opportunity presents itself, and people with low impulse control just say yes.

By contrast, consider the behavior of the senior executive at a large food company. The executive was scrupu-

lously honest in his negotiations with local distributors. He would routinely lay out his cost structure in detail, thereby giving the distributors a realistic understanding of the company's pricing. This approach meant the executive couldn't always drive a hard bargain. Now, on occasion, he felt the urge to increase profits by withholding information about the company's costs. But he challenged that impulse—he saw that it made more sense in the long run to counteract it. His emotional self-regulation paid off in strong, lasting relationships with distributors that benefited the company more than any short-term financial gains would have.

The signs of emotional self-regulation, therefore, are easy to see: a propensity for reflection and thoughtfulness; comfort with ambiguity and change; and integrity—an ability to say no to impulsive urges.

Like self-awareness, self-regulation often does not get its due. People who can master their emotions are sometimes seen as cold fish—their considered responses are taken as a lack of passion. People with fiery temperaments are frequently thought of as "classic" leaders—their outbursts are considered hallmarks of charisma and power. But when such people make it to the top, their impulsiveness often works against them. In my research, extreme displays of negative emotion have never emerged as a driver of good leadership.

Motivation

If there is one trait that virtually all effective leaders have, it is motivation. They are driven to achieve beyond expectations—their own and everyone else's. The key

word here is *achieve*. Plenty of people are motivated by external factors, such as a big salary or the status that comes from having an impressive title or being part of a prestigious company. By contrast, those with leadership potential are motivated by a deeply embedded desire to achieve for the sake of achievement.

If you are looking for leaders, how can you identify people who are motivated by the drive to achieve rather than by external rewards? The first sign is a passion for the work itself—such people seek out creative challenges, love to learn, and take great pride in a job well done. They also display an unflagging energy to do things better. People with such energy often seem restless with the status quo. They are persistent with their questions about why things are done one way rather than another; they are eager to explore new approaches to their work.

A cosmetics company manager, for example, was frustrated that he had to wait two weeks to get sales results from people in the field. He finally tracked down an automated phone system that would beep each of his salespeople at 5 p.m. every day. An automated message then prompted them to punch in their numbers—how many calls and sales they had made that day. The system shortened the feedback time on sales results from weeks to hours.

That story illustrates two other common traits of people who are driven to achieve. They are forever raising the performance bar, and they like to keep score. Take the performance bar first. During performance reviews, people with high levels of motivation might ask to be "stretched" by their superiors. Of course, an employee

who combines self-awareness with internal motivation will recognize her limits—but she won't settle for objectives that seem too easy to fulfill.

And it follows naturally that people who are driven to do better also want a way of tracking progress—their own, their team's, and their company's. Whereas people with low achievement motivation are often fuzzy about results, those with high achievement motivation often keep score by tracking such hard measures as profitability or market share. I know of a money manager who starts and ends his day on the Internet, gauging the performance of his stock fund against four industry-set benchmarks.

Interestingly, people with high motivation remain optimistic even when the score is against them. In such cases, self-regulation combines with achievement motivation to overcome the frustration and depression that come after a setback or failure. Take the case of an another portfolio manager at a large investment company. After several successful years, her fund tumbled for three consecutive quarters, leading three large institutional clients to shift their business elsewhere.

Some executives would have blamed the nosedive on circumstances outside their control; others might have seen the setback as evidence of personal failure. This portfolio manager, however, saw an opportunity to prove she could lead a turnaround. Two years later, when she was promoted to a very senior level in the company, she described the experience as "the best thing that ever happened to me; I learned so much from it."

Executives trying to recognize high levels of achievement motivation in their people can look for one last

piece of evidence: commitment to the organization. When people love their jobs for the work itself, they often feel committed to the organizations that make that work possible. Committed employees are likely to stay with an organization even when they are pursued by headhunters waving money.

It's not difficult to understand how and why a motivation to achieve translates into strong leadership. If you set the performance bar high for yourself, you will do the same for the organization when you are in a position to do so. Likewise, a drive to surpass goals and an interest in keeping score can be contagious. Leaders with these traits can often build a team of managers around them with the same traits. And of course, optimism and organizational commitment are fundamental to leadership—just try to imagine running a company without them.

Empathy

Of all the dimensions of emotional intelligence, empathy is the most easily recognized. We have all felt the empathy of a sensitive teacher or friend; we have all been struck by its absence in an unfeeling coach or boss. But when it comes to business, we rarely hear people praised, let alone rewarded, for their empathy. The very word seems unbusinesslike, out of place amid the tough realities of the marketplace.

But empathy doesn't mean a kind of "I'm OK, you're OK" mushiness. For a leader, that is, it doesn't mean adopting other people's emotions as one's own and trying to please everybody. That would be a nightmare—it would

make action impossible. Rather, empathy means thoughtfully considering employees' feelings—along with other factors—in the process of making intelligent decisions.

For an example of empathy in action, consider what happened when two giant brokerage companies merged, creating redundant jobs in all their divisions. One division manager called his people together and gave a gloomy speech that emphasized the number of people who would soon be fired. The manager of another division gave his people a different kind of speech. He was up-front about his own worry and confusion, and he promised to keep people informed and to treat everyone fairly.

The difference between these two managers was empathy. The first manager was too worried about his own fate to consider the feelings of his anxiety-stricken colleagues. The second knew intuitively what his people were feeling, and he acknowledged their fears with his words. Is it any surprise that the first manager saw his division sink as many demoralized people, especially the most talented, departed? By contrast, the second manager continued to be a strong leader, his best people stayed, and his division remained as productive as ever.

Empathy is particularly important today as a component of leadership for at least three reasons: the increasing use of teams; the rapid pace of globalization; and the growing need to retain talent.

Consider the challenge of leading a team. As anyone who has ever been a part of one can attest, teams are cauldrons of bubbling emotions. They are often charged with reaching a consensus—which is hard enough with

two people and much more difficult as the numbers increase. Even in groups with as few as four or five members, alliances form and clashing agendas get set. A team's leader must be able to sense and understand the viewpoints of everyone around the table.

That's exactly what a marketing manager at a large information technology company was able to do when she was appointed to lead a troubled team. The group was in turmoil, overloaded by work and missing deadlines. Tensions were high among the members. Tinkering with procedures was not enough to bring the group together and make it an effective part of the company.

So the manager took several steps. In a series of one-on-one sessions, she took the time to listen to everyone in the group—what was frustrating them, how they rated their colleagues, whether they felt they had been ignored. And then she directed the team in a way that brought it together: She encouraged people to speak more openly about their frustrations, and she helped people raise constructive complaints during meetings. In short, her empathy allowed her to understand her team's emotional makeup. The result was not just heightened collaboration among members but also added business, as the team was called on for help by a wider range of internal clients.

Globalization is another reason for the rising importance of empathy for business leaders. Cross-cultural dialogue can easily lead to miscues and misunderstandings. Empathy is an antidote. People who have it are attuned to subtleties in body language; they can hear the message beneath the words being spoken. Beyond that,

they have a deep understanding of both the existence and the importance of cultural and ethnic differences.

Consider the case of an American consultant whose team had just pitched a project to a potential Japanese client. In its dealings with Americans, the team was accustomed to being bombarded with questions after such a proposal, but this time it was greeted with a long silence. Other members of the team, taking the silence as disapproval, were ready to pack and leave. The lead consultant gestured them to stop. Although he was not particularly familiar with Japanese culture, he read the client's face and posture and sensed not rejection but interest—even deep consideration. He was right: When the client finally spoke, it was to give the consulting firm the job.

Finally, empathy plays a key role in the retention of talent, particularly in today's information economy. Leaders have always needed empathy to develop and keep good people, but today the stakes are higher. When good people leave, they take the company's knowledge with them.

That's where coaching and mentoring come in. It has repeatedly been shown that coaching and mentoring pay off not just in better performance but also in increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover. But what makes coaching and mentoring work best is the nature of the relationship. Outstanding coaches and mentors get inside the heads of the people they are helping. They sense how to give effective feedback. They know when to push for better performance and when to hold back. In the way they motivate their protégés, they demonstrate empathy in action.

In what is probably sounding like a refrain, let me repeat that empathy doesn't get much respect in business. People wonder how leaders can make hard decisions if they are "feeling" for all the people who will be affected. But leaders with empathy do more than sympathize with people around them: They use their knowledge to improve their companies in subtle but important ways.

Social Skill

The first three components of emotional intelligence are self-management skills. The last two, empathy and social skill, concern a person's ability to manage relationships with others. As a component of emotional intelligence, social skill is not as simple as it sounds. It's not just a matter of friendliness, although people with high levels of social skill are rarely mean-spirited. Social skill, rather, is friendliness with a purpose: moving people in the direction you desire, whether that's agreement on a new marketing strategy or enthusiasm about a new product.

Socially skilled people tend to have a wide circle of acquaintances, and they have a knack for finding common ground with people of all kinds—a knack for building rapport. That doesn't mean they socialize continually; it means they work according to the assumption that nothing important gets done alone. Such people have a network in place when the time for action comes.

Social skill is the culmination of the other dimensions of emotional intelligence. People tend to be very effective at managing relationships when they can understand and control their own emotions and can empathize with the feelings of others. Even motivation contributes

to social skill. Remember that people who are driven to achieve tend to be optimistic, even in the face of setbacks or failure. When people are upbeat, their "glow" is cast upon conversations and other social encounters. They are popular, and for good reason.

Because it is the outcome of the other dimensions of emotional intelligence, social skill is recognizable on the job in many ways that will by now sound familiar. Socially skilled people, for instance, are adept at managing teams—that's their empathy at work. Likewise, they are expert persuaders—a manifestation of self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy combined. Given those skills, good persuaders know when to make an emotional plea, for instance, and when an appeal to reason will work better. And motivation, when publicly visible, makes such people excellent collaborators; their passion for the work spreads to others, and they are driven to find solutions.

But sometimes social skill shows itself in ways the other emotional intelligence components do not. For instance, socially skilled people may at times appear not to be working while at work. They seem to be idly schmoozing—chatting in the hallways with colleagues or joking around with people who are not even connected to their "real" jobs. Socially skilled people, however, don't think it makes sense to arbitrarily limit the scope of their relationships. They build bonds widely because they know that in these fluid times, they may need help someday from people they are just getting to know today.

For example, consider the case of an executive in the strategy department of a global computer manufacturer.

By 1993, he was convinced that the company's future lay with the Internet. Over the course of the next year, he found kindred spirits and used his social skill to stitch together a virtual community that cut across levels, divisions, and nations. He then used this de facto team to put up a corporate website, among the first by a major company. And, on his own initiative, with no budget or formal status, he signed up the company to participate in an annual Internet industry convention. Calling on his allies and persuading various divisions to donate funds, he recruited more than 50 people from a dozen different units to represent the company at the convention.

Management took notice: Within a year of the conference, the executive's team formed the basis for the company's first Internet division, and he was formally put in charge of it. To get there, the executive had ignored conventional boundaries, forging and maintaining connections with people in every corner of the organization.

Is social skill considered a key leadership capability in most companies? The answer is yes, especially when compared with the other components of emotional intelligence. People seem to know intuitively that leaders need to manage relationships effectively; no leader is an island. After all, the leader's task is to get work done through other people, and social skill makes that possible. A leader who cannot express her empathy may as well not have it at all. And a leader's motivation will be useless if he cannot communicate his passion to the organization. Social skill allows leaders to put their emotional intelligence to work.

It would be foolish to assert that good-old-fashioned IQ and technical ability are not important ingredients in strong leadership. But the recipe would not be complete without emotional intelligence. It was once thought that the components of emotional intelligence were "nice to have" in business leaders. But now we know that, for the sake of performance, these are ingredients that leaders "need to have."

It is fortunate, then, that emotional intelligence can be learned. The process is not easy. It takes time and, most of all, commitment. But the benefits that come from having a well-developed emotional intelligence, both for the individual and for the organization, make it worth the effort.

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The Discipline of Teams

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Jon R. Katzenbach** *and* **Douglas K. Smith,** *highlighting key ideas.*

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

Managing across is especially challenging when you're leading a group of colleagues. You're not their boss, but on this project, you're their leader. How can you get them to focus on *your* team's work when they also need to tend their own small fires—or meet *their* bosses' demands?

When you instill in your group the **discipline of teams,** your struggles will diminish. You'll be helping your team create a shared vision and then realize that vision with individual and mutual accountability.

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THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

A team's essential discipline includes these characteristics:

1. **A meaningful common purpose the team helps shape.** Most teams are responding to an initial corporate mandate. But to be successful, your team must "own" this purpose by developing its own spin on it. For example, if one of your company's strategic priorities is to increase customer retention, how might your web team translate that into its common purpose? By committing itself to becoming the online destination of choice for B2C customers in your industry.

2. **Specific performance goals that flow from the common purpose.** Developing compelling and measurable goals will inspire and challenge your team, and inject a sense of urgency. Shared goals also have a leveling effect. They require everyone to focus on their collective effort rather than on any differences in their titles or status.

   For example, your web team might set the following goals on its way to becoming the online destination of choice for its B2C customers: 1) Increase first-time visitors to the site by 50% over last year; 2) grow repeat site visitors by 25% over last year; 3) boost e-commerce sales by 15% over last year.

3. **A strong commitment to how the work gets done.** Your team must agree on who will do what jobs, how you will establish and honor schedules, and how you will make and modify decisions. On a genuine team, everyone does equivalent amounts of real work; all members—even you as leader—contribute in concrete ways to the team's collective work.

   Developing these rules of conduct at the outset will help your team achieve its purpose and goals. The most critical rules pertain to attendance (for example, "if you can't make a meeting, send notes or a representative who can speak for you"); focus ("no checking e-mail during meetings"); discussion ("no sacred cows"); confidentiality ("the only things to leave this room are what we agree on"); analytic approach ("base decisions on data, not assumptions"); end-product orientation ("everyone gets assignments and does them"); constructive confrontation ("no finger pointing"); and, often the most important, contributions ("everyone does real work").

4. **Mutual accountability.** You can't force trust and commitment. The process of creating and agreeing upon purpose and goals helps your team members forge their accountability to one another—not just to you, the leader.

   For example, as your web team makes progress toward its three goals, everyone becomes

increasingly eager to contribute to the team's success. Individuals volunteer their own and others' areas of expertise: The person with the best eye for visual detail prepares the PowerPoint presentation for the next unit meeting; the one who has the strongest relationship with your IT director spearheads delicate conversations about prioritizing the team's technology needs.

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Managing Remote Relationships

by Karen Dillon

After you've dialed someone into a meeting, do you find it difficult to meaningfully involve her in the conversation—and make her *feel* involved? I've been there hundreds of times. I've even caught myself rolling my eyes as the person on the other end of that star-shaped phone breathed too loudly, spoke at the wrong time, or worst of all, didn't stop talking when everyone else was willing her to do so.

But then I began working on overseas assignments, and it was *my* voice in the dreaded "box"—so I started to see things differently. It's horrible trying to call in when people are chitchatting and making noises with their chairs. And you can never quite read the unspoken tone of the meeting. You talk too much because you want people to know you're there and at full attention. Or you talk too little because you can't figure out when it's appropriate to break in.

Though many of us work with remote colleagues and partners—or work remotely ourselves—we struggle to manage relationships with people we don't run into at the coffee station every day. That doesn't have to be the case. You *can* build strong connections. Here's what's worked in my experience.

If You're Working with Someone Remote . . .

Talk openly about the challenges

Whether you're managing a remote employee, working peer-to-peer, or partnering with someone at another company, it helps to frankly discuss the challenges as you both see them. Clarify expectations up front, and the remote worker will become more productive—and happier. When I managed a West Coast employee from an East Coast office, for example, she initially thought I expected her to immediately jump on phone calls and e-mail queries. What I actually wanted was for her to be a vibrant contributor of ideas and work; to be aware of what her East Coast colleagues were working on, helping them when possible; and to have a clear sense of how she fit into the organization. Until we directly discussed that, she slavishly sat at her desk while I imagined she was out mining her area for ideas and people. We swiftly resolved this misunderstanding with a single conversation.

Without peers in the next cubicle to informally guide them, remote employees will make basic mistakes early on, despite their good intentions, so it's also crucial to be candid with them. Perhaps they've excessively charged

expenses to a corporate account, for example, or spent too much time on a low-priority project. Let them know right away. Of course, it's best practice to offer timely feedback to *all* employees, but it's especially important for remote workers. Help them correct course before a few innocent, early errors become a troublesome pattern of behavior.

Err on the side of overcommunicating

Set up regular times to catch up on the phone. As an on-site manager, I decided every two weeks felt about right for formal check-ins with my remote colleagues, with the proviso that we could talk whenever an issue arose. I was always grateful to people who came to those conversations with an agenda and a list of questions or comments (ideally sent in advance). That meant I didn't have the burden of guessing what their needs might be. It was, however, my responsibility to keep them up to date and give them information that would help them work effectively with people on-site (for example, "Joe's in meetings all day—best time to catch him is first thing in the morning"). Otherwise, they wouldn't know the right questions to ask.

Keep a running list of things to share with your remote colleagues or partners; don't assume they're copied on important announcements about your company or division. When I began working off-site, I was surprised at how much I couldn't pick up simply by keeping up with e-mail. People were hired. Projects were canceled. Desirable assignments were handed out. And I missed it all.

Sometimes even little details are critical to share—the fact that someone has had a death in the family,

for example, or is under the gun for a big project deadline and won't likely be responsive this week unless it's critical. Communicate decisions large and small. E-mail, scheduled phone calls—figure out what works for your situation, and make a commitment to follow whatever protocol you mutually agree is best.

Remember time zones

It's simple, but easy to forget. Suppose you're based at your company's headquarters in New York and you have a remote colleague in Paris. You might not dive into your day until 9 a.m. your time—and that's 3 p.m. for the guy in France. So you've got about two hours of reliable overlap. If multiple people in New York want time from him, those two hours will be packed. You're sharing that window with others, so be thoughtful about what you're asking for during that time.

And respect your remote colleagues' after-hours time. When I was working in Paris for a company with a New York headquarters, I regularly fielded calls at 11 at night—5 p.m. EST. People forgot to call me until it became urgent at the end of *their* day to finish something. Set up reminders in your calendar to get in touch with remote colleagues while they're still on the clock, and don't ask them to join late calls if you can easily brief them the next day. Be clear about which meetings they can skip. They'll be much happier to take an occasional urgent call at 11 p.m. if most of your business is conducted at times that suit you both.

When you can, take *advantage* of time differences. As a manager, I loved assigning work to someone in an ear-

lier time zone because when I came in the next morning, it would be in my inbox, ready for my attention.

Use technology to collaborate

Technology makes it easy to work with remote colleagues or partners. All it takes is a laptop to videoconference—you can bring it into any room and include someone in a meeting. With Google Docs, you and colleagues located elsewhere can simultaneously work on a file and watch one another's color-coded edits or comments appear in real time. Dropbox allows you to work on documents and then post them in a secure, cloud-based system others can easily access through the Internet.

Some companies, like Nokia, rely on instant messaging to keep remote (and local) employees in the loop. Others, like Royal Dutch Shell, host online events to get colleagues comfortable collaborating across time zones and geographical boundaries. (Shell conducted a three-day "jam" that brought together 8,200 employees from 117 countries to develop new ways to use technology to work with each other.) There's no need for someone in a satellite office to *feel* remote if you take advantage of the tools that are readily available to companies of all sizes.

If You're the Remote Colleague . . .

Make sure you're up to the challenge—and take responsibility

To integrate with a team that's located somewhere else, you have to be fearless about picking up the phone, asking to be briefed, and telling people when conference

calls won't work in your time zone. You have to keep on top of a schedule when no one is around to remind you of important meetings or events. Self-starters required.

Make it clear to people that you're *present*, intellectually and physically, and dedicated to packing a lot into your day. When you speak up in a conversation, participate in a brainstorming session, or respond to an e-mail query, make sure it's a thoughtful contribution—not just a token gesture to prove that you're paying attention. Think about your colleagues and their projects and challenges, even when you're not being asked to do so. One of the most successful remote employees I've ever managed would periodically come back from an inspiring business lunch with a great connection for another colleague or send a link to a thought-provoking article that might aid a peer. She felt like a part of a team that way, not just someone covering a different territory.

Even after you've established positive relationships and earned your colleagues' trust, recognize that the burden is often on you, the remote employee, to make things work. Show your colleagues what you bring to the table. Volunteer to help with projects when you have relevant ideas or expertise. Follow social media buzz on your company or industry—and then share updates with colleagues. If you always think of yourself as part of a team, not a soloist, you'll naturally consider how your work can help others.

Partner with the home office

Work closely with the home office to establish expectations. Should you match your colleagues' hours? Is it OK

to be out for appointments without telling your manager? What matters more—being available or being entrepreneurial? And so on. Actually ask those questions; don't just assume you know the answers. Without that information, you might get paranoid that you're seen as a slacker or actually not doing enough—and way, way overcompensate.

Develop and maintain your network. Justin Mass, a senior learning technologist at Adobe, volunteers for cross-functional projects that increase his exposure to his HQ colleagues. He's worked to become known as a guy who raises his hand before being asked, and that's helped him create strong connections throughout the company.

If possible, have your company occasionally fly you to HQ or other key offices. Fill your time with meetings—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—to build relationships. Ask people about themselves and their work—you can glean a lot about what's going on in the organization and where the opportunities are. (Keep it professional, of course. This isn't the time to have a few too many beers or complain about your manager.) You'll be exhausted after all these meetings, but you'll have made the most of your short amount of time onsite.

If you're a new hire, you'll need to build a foundation: Ask for a visit to the home office to put names to faces, get a sense of the culture in the building, and get face time by attending a meeting or two. But not too soon! For your first few months on the job, you'll be learning many things, so time your visit (if you can make just one) for when you're in a position of having good questions to ask, not just passively absorbing information. When you do make your trip,

introduce yourself to people you'll need to interact with. Find out from team members who else you should reach out to, and ask if they'd be willing to help you connect.

It's virtually impossible to navigate a company's spoken and unspoken "rules" without a guide. You can't simply assume that the culture is casual because, say, dogs are allowed in the office on Fridays. That same company might be rigid about protocol. It takes a little digging to figure out which people in the organization get things done. Have someone in the know walk you through the org chart and explain the company's circles of influence to you. Ask pointed questions: Who is the right contact for that group? What works best here—e-mail, phone calls, or IM? Are there informal power brokers I should make contact with? That kind of thing.

Start Skyping

Adobe's Mass is the only member of his team who works entirely from a home office, yet he collaborates with colleagues in California and India every day. Videoconferencing has been critical to his success. Every chance to be seen on video, he says, is a chance to improve your visibility with your team. You become more than a disembodied voice.

While his company has installed high-end video technology in his home office, he notes that Skype, which is free to anyone, also does the job. Of course, being visible also makes you more accountable. "I think of every video meeting as an opportunity for my team to see me in action," Mass says. "I have to bring my A game."

He actually thinks like a movie director shooting a scene when he considers how he's going to be perceived by his colleagues on the other end of the camera. He dresses professionally and keeps his desk clean. He's even painted his walls the same neutral manila as those at headquarters so his workspace doesn't "look like some strange foreign office." He makes a point to sit forward in his chair, engaged, as if he were at the same conference table. He looks at the camera. Never pushes the mute button and just listens in. Never multitasks.

Mass's advice for others wanting to make videoconferencing work? Do a trial video chat with a friend. Study the thumbnail image of yourself on screen, and ask your friend for feedback. "See how your colleagues will see you," he says. "What's in the background? How are you showing yourself? Are you slumping in your chair? Are you taking notes?"

If your colleagues aren't ready for Skype, be thoughtful about the conference call. Ask your manager what's expected of you (Am I just getting briefed? Am I part of the brainstorming team? Do you need me to report on what I've been up to?). Once I was caught off guard on a conference call by a manager asking us each to "go around the horn" and give updates. What he *really* meant was, "If there's anything of burning importance, now's your chance." But absent any body language or other visual cues to put his request in context, I panicked and assumed I needed to show how productive I'd been. When I finished my monologue, a few long minutes later, it was obvious I'd gotten it wrong, and we swiftly moved on to

other topics. If you don't have a chance to clarify expectations in advance, it may be better to listen quietly and then contribute follow-up thoughts by e-mail or phone. Ask your manager to occasionally put you on the agenda to discuss what you're working on, share your observations, or report on a project.

Since remote colleagues and partners are likely to be a permanent feature of any growing company, it's important to manage these relationships well. And it's worth the effort. If you're a hiring manager, who says the right person for the job you've posted lives within driving distance? And if you're a remote worker, you can get a lot of work done, in fewer hours than your HQ colleagues, if you use your time wisely.

It's possible to make off-site work relationships both productive and powerful—I've found that some of my remote colleagues over the years have been great allies and sounding boards. But the key to success, on both sides of the relationship, is utter transparency and thinking *ahead* about what your colleagues most need from you.

Karen Dillon is the former editor of *Harvard Business Review* and a coauthor, with Clayton Christensen and James Allworth, of the book *How Will You Measure Your Life?* (HarperBusiness, 2012).

A Smarter Way to Network

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Rob Cross** *and* **Robert Thomas,** *highlighting key ideas.*

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

To maximize your and your team's performance, you need resources, information, and expertise from people across your organization. They don't report to you, but they can make—or break—your project.

So you must influence them. How? Build a better network, using these steps:

1. **Analyze:** Identify the benefits each of your existing network connections now provides. Does one person give you valuable information? Does another have expertise you need but lack?

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2. **De-layer:** Weed out connections that aren't helping you, such as people who burn too much of your time.
3. **Diversify:** Fill the fresh openings in your network with people who can deliver the additional benefits you and your team need to accomplish your work.

Construct a strong network, and you'll have a wider, richer web of connections to draw on when the next crisis or opportunity lands on your desk.

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

When you need help from colleagues up, down, and across the organization, every network choice you make matters. Use these steps to make your selections:

1. Analyze

Identify the individuals currently in your network.

Determine:

- **Where they're located.** Are they on your team? In your unit? Outside your organization? Are they higher-ups? Peers? Frontline workers? You want a diverse but select web of high-quality relationships with people who hail from several different spheres and levels in your organization.
- **What benefits they're providing.** Do they offer information, expertise, or best practices that can

help you lead projects more effectively? Are they formally powerful people who can provide political "juice"? For instance, can they remind lazy members of a task force you're on how important their project is to the organization? Are they informally influential people who can win you needed support among the rank-and-file?

2. De-layer

Make tough decisions about relationships to back away from. Eliminate or minimize contact with people who sap your energy or offer benefits that others in your network already provide. By de-layering, you make room for people who can help you complete projects.

3. Diversify

Fill the new openings in your network with the right people, using this technique:

- Articulate three business goals you plan to achieve this year.
- List the people who could help you reach these goals—and how. Is it their expertise? Their control over resources? Their political support?
- Actively build relationships with these individuals.

  Example: Joe, an investment banker, needed to expand his global client pool. First he identified counterparts in his company's Asian and European operations who had relationships with clients he had targeted. Then he scheduled

> regular calls with his colleagues to synchronize their selling efforts. In some cases, these calls helped him identify opportunities he could pitch proactively, such as potential clients who were interested in his department's offerings. In others, the calls helped him and his peers appear more coordinated when their bank was competing against other banks for the same clients.

One of the happiest, most successful executives we know is a woman named Deb. She works at a major technology company and runs a global business unit that has more than 7,000 employees. When you ask her how she rose to the top and why she enjoys her job, her answer is simple: people. She points to her boss, the CEO, a mentor who "always has her back"; Steve, the head of a complementary business, with whom she has monthly brainstorming lunches and occasional gripe sessions; and Tom, a protégé to whom she has delegated responsibility for a large portion of her division. Outside the company, Deb's circle includes her counterparts in three strategic partnerships, who inspire her with new ideas; Sheila, a former colleague, now in a different industry, who gives her candid feedback; and her husband, Bob, an executive at a philanthropic organization. She also has close relationships with her fellow volunteers in a program for at-risk high school students and the members of her tennis group and book club.

This is Deb's social network (the real-world kind, not the virtual kind), and it has helped her career a lot. But not because the group is large or full of high-powered

contacts. Her network is effective because it both supports and challenges her. Deb's relationships help her gain influence, broaden her expertise, learn new skills, and find purpose and balance. Deb values and nurtures them. "Make friends so that you have friends when you need friends" is her motto.

"My current role is really a product of a relationship I formed over a decade ago that came back to me at the right time," she explains. "People may chalk it up to luck, but I think more often than not luck happens through networks where people give first and are authentic in all they do."

Over the past 15 years, we've worked with many executives like Deb, at more than 300 companies. What began as organizational research—helping management teams understand and capitalize on the formal and informal social networks of their employees—has since metamorphosed into personal programs, which teach individual executives to increase their effectiveness by leveraging their networks.

The old adage "It's not what you know, it's who you know" is true. But it's more nuanced than that. In spite of what most self-help books say, network size doesn't usually matter. In fact, we've found that individuals who simply know a lot of people are less likely to achieve standout performance, because they're spread too thin. Political animals with lots of connections to corporate and industry leaders don't win the day, either. Yes, it's important to know powerful people, but if they account for too much of your network, your peers and subordinates often perceive you to be overly self-interested, and you may lose support as a result.

The data we've collected point to a different model

for networking. The executives who consistently rank in the top 20% of their companies in both performance and well-being have diverse but select networks like Deb's—made up of high-quality relationships with people who come from several different spheres and from up and down the corporate hierarchy. These high performers, we have found, tap into six critical kinds of connections, which enhance their careers and lives in a variety of ways.

Through our work advising individual managers, we've also identified a four-step process that will help any executive develop this kind of network. But first, let's take a look at some common networking mistakes.

Getting It Wrong

Many people take a misguided approach to networking. They go astray by building imbalanced networks, pursuing the wrong kind of relationships, or leveraging relationships ineffectively. (See the sidebar "Are You Networking Impaired?") These people might remain successful for a time, but often they will hit a plateau or see their career derailed because their networks couldn't prompt or support a critical transition.

Consider Dan, the chief information officer of one of the world's largest life-sciences organizations. He was under constant pressure to find new technologies that would spur innovation and speed the drug commercialization process at his company, and he needed a network that would help him. Unfortunately, more than 70% of his trusted advisers were in the unit he had worked in before becoming CIO. Not only did they reinforce his bias

toward certain solutions and vendors, but they lacked the outside knowledge he needed. "I had started to mistake friendship, trust, and accessibility for real expertise in new domains," he told us. "This didn't mean I was going to dump these people, as they played important roles for me in other ways. But I needed to be more targeted in who I let influence my thinking."

Another overarching mistake we often see in executives' networks is an imbalance between connections that promote career advancement and those that promote engagement and satisfaction. Numerous studies have shown that happier executives are higher-performing ones.

Take Tim, the director of a large practice area at a leading professional services firm. On the surface he was doing well, but job stress had taken its toll. He was 40 pounds overweight, with alarmingly high cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and prone to extreme mood swings. When things went well at work, he was happy; when they didn't, he wasn't pleasant to be around. In fact, Tim's wife finally broke down and told him she thought he had become a career-obsessed jerk and needed to get other interests. With her encouragement, he joined Habitat for Humanity and started rowing with their daughter. As a result, his social network expanded to include people with different perspectives and values, who helped him focus on more healthful and fulfilling pursuits. "As I spent more time with different groups, what I cared about diversified," he says. "Physically, I'm in much better shape and probably staved off a heart attack. But I think I'm a better leader, too, in that I think about problems more broadly, and I'm more resilient. Our peer feedback systems are

ARE YOU NETWORKING IMPAIRED?

In our work, we have identified six common managerial types who get stuck in three kinds of network traps. Do any of the descriptions below fit you?

The wrong structure

THE FORMALIST focuses too heavily on his company's official hierarchy, missing out on the efficiencies and opportunities that come from informal connections.

THE OVERLOADED MANAGER has so much contact with colleagues and external ties that she becomes a bottleneck to progress and burns herself out.

The wrong relationships

THE DISCONNECTED EXPERT sticks with people who keep him focused on safe, existing competencies,

also clearly indicating that people are more committed to the new me."

Getting It Right

To understand more about what makes an effective network, let's look again at Deb. She has a small set of core contacts—14 people she really relies on. Effective core networks typically range in size from 12 to 18 people. But what really matters is structure: Core connections must

rather than those who push him to build new skills.

THE BIASED LEADER relies on advisers much like herself (same functional background, location, or values), who reinforce her biases, when she should instead seek outsiders to prompt more fully informed decisions.

The wrong behavior

THE SUPERFICIAL NETWORKER engages in surface-level interaction with as many people as possible, mistakenly believing that a bigger network is a better one.

THE CHAMELEON changes his interests, values, and personality to match those of whatever subgroup is his audience, and winds up being disconnected from every group.

bridge smaller, more-diverse kinds of groups and cross hierarchical, organizational, functional, and geographic lines. Core relationships should result in more learning, less bias in decision making, and greater personal growth and balance. The people in your inner circle should also model positive behaviors, because if those around you are enthusiastic, authentic, and generous, you will be, too.

More specifically, our data show that high performers have strong ties to:

1. people who offer them new information or expertise, including internal or external clients, who increase their market awareness; peers in other functions, divisions, or geographies, who share best practices; and contacts in other industries, who inspire innovation;
2. formally powerful people, who provide mentoring, sense-making, political support, and resources; and informally powerful people, who offer influence, help coordinating projects, and support among the rank and file; and
3. people who give them developmental feedback, challenge their decisions, and push them to be better. At an early career stage, an employee might get this from a boss or customers; later, it tends to come from coaches, trusted colleagues, or a spouse.

Meanwhile, the most satisfied executives have ties to:

1. people who provide personal support, such as colleagues who help them get back on track when they're having a bad day or friends with whom they can just be themselves;
2. people who add a sense of purpose or worth, such as bosses and customers who validate their work, and family members and other stakeholders who show them work has a broader meaning; and

3. people who promote their work/life balance, holding them accountable for activities that improve their physical health (such as sports), mental engagement (such as hobbies or educational classes), or spiritual well-being (music, religion, art, or volunteer work).

How does one create such a varied network? We recommend a four-point action plan: analyze, de-layer, diversify, and capitalize.

Analyze

Start by looking at the individuals in your network. Where are they located—are they within your team, your unit, or your company, or outside your organization? What benefits do your interactions with them provide? How energizing are those interactions?

The last question is an important one. Energizers bring out the best in everyone around them, and our data show that having them in your network is a strong predictor of success over time. These people aren't necessarily extroverted or charismatic. They're people who always see opportunities, even in challenging situations, and create room for others to meaningfully contribute. Good energizers are trustworthy and committed to principles larger than their self-interest, and they enjoy other people. "De-energizers," by contrast, are quick to point out obstacles, critique people rather than ideas, are inflexible in their thinking, fail to create opportunities, miss commitments, and don't show concern for others.

FOUR STEPS TO BUILDING A BETTER NETWORK

Analyze

- Identify the people in your network and what you get out of interacting with them

De-layer

- Make some hard decisions to back away from redundant and energy-sapping relationships

Diversify

- Build your network out with the right kind of people: energizers who will help you achieve your goals

Capitalize

- Make sure you're using your contacts as effectively as you can

Unfortunately, energy-sapping interactions have more impact than energizing ones—up to seven times as much, according to one study. And our own research suggests that roughly 90% of anxiety at work is created by 5% of one's network—the people who sap energy.

Next, classify your relationships by the benefits they provide. Generally, benefits fall into one of six basic categories: information, political support and influence, personal development, personal support and energy, a sense of purpose or worth, and work/life balance. It's im-

portant to have people who provide each kind of benefit in your network. Categorizing your relationships will give you a clearer idea of whether your network is extending your abilities or keeping you stuck. You'll see where you have holes and redundancies and which people you depend on too much—or not enough.

Let's use Joe, a rising star in an investment bank, as a case study. He had 24 close advisers—on the surface, a more than healthy number. But many of the people he relied on were from his own department and frequently relied on one another. If he eliminated those redundancies, his network shrank to five people. After giving it some thought and observing his peers' networks, he realized he was missing links with several important types of people: colleagues focused on financial offerings outside his own products, who could help him deliver broader financial solutions to customers; coworkers in different geographies—particularly London and Asia—who could enhance his ability to sell to global clients; and board-level relationships at key accounts, who could make client introductions and influence purchasing decisions. His insularity was limiting his options and hurting his chances of promotion to managing director. He realized he would need to focus on cultivating a network rather than allowing it to organically arise from the day-to-day demands of his work.

De-layer

Once you've analyzed your network, you need to make some hard decisions about which relationships to back away from. First, look at eliminating or minimizing contact with people who sap you of energy or promote

unhealthful behaviors. You can do this by reshaping your role to avoid them, devoting less time to them, working to change their behavior, or reframing your reactions so that you don't dwell on the interactions.

John, an academic, realized that two university administrators in his network were causing him a great deal of anxiety. This had so soured his view of his school that he was considering leaving. He therefore decided to devote less time to projects and committees that would involve the negative contacts and to avoid dwelling on any sniping comments they subjected him to. Within a year he was much more productive and happy. "By shifting my role and how I reacted to the idiots, I turned a negative situation around," John says. "In hindsight it was an obvious move—rather than leave a place I loved—but emotions can spiral on you in ways you don't recognize."

The next step is to ask yourself which of the six categories have too many people in them. Early-stage leaders, for example, tend to focus too much on information and not enough on personal development and might want to shed some of the contacts who give them the former to make more time for those who give them the latter.

Beyond this, consider which individuals—and types of people as determined by function, hierarchy, or geography—have too much of you, and why. Is the cause structural, in that work procedures require you to be involved? Or is your own behavior causing the imbalance? What can you change to rectify the situation? Too often we see leaders fail because they accept or create too many collaborative demands.

Paul, the head of research in a consumer products company, had a network of almost 70 people just at work.

But he got many complaints from people who said they needed greater access to him. His productivity, and his unit's, was suffering. When he analyzed his network, he realized that he was missing "people and initiatives one or two levels out." To address this, he decided to delegate—stepping away from interactions that didn't require his presence and cultivating "go to" stand-ins in certain areas of expertise. He also changed his leadership style from extraordinarily accessible to helpful but more removed, which encouraged subordinates to solve their own problems by connecting with people around him. "As a leader you can find yourself in this bubble of activity where you feel like a lot is happening moving from meeting to meeting," Paul says. "You can actually start to thrive on this in some ways. I had to move past this for us to be effective as a unit and so that I could be more forward-thinking."

Diversify

Now that you've created room in your network, you need to fill it with the right people. Simple tools like work sheets can help you get started. For example, you might make a list of the six categories of relationships and think about colleagues who could fill the holes you have in each. Remember to focus on positive, energetic, selfless people, and be sure to ask people inside and outside your network for recommendations.

You should also think about how you could connect your network to your professional and personal goals. Here's another simple exercise: Write down three specific business results you hope to achieve over the next year (such as doubling sales or winning an Asia-based client) and then list the people (by name or general role) who

could help you with them, thanks to their expertise, control over resources, or ability to provide political support. Joe, the investment banker, identified counterparts in the Asian and European operations of his company who had relationships with the clients he was focused on and then scheduled regular calls with them to coordinate efforts. "In a couple of cases this helped me identify opportunities I could pitch proactively. In others it just helped us appear more coordinated when we were competing against other banks," he says. One of the big challenges for Paul, the consumer products executive, was managing a new facility and line of innovation in China. Because none of his trusted advisers had ever even been to that country, he reached out to the head of R&D at a major life-sciences organization that had undertaken a similar effort.

Capitalize

Last, make sure you're using your contacts as effectively as you can. Are there people you rely on in one sphere, such as political support, that you could also use to fill a need in another, such as personal development? Could you get more out of some relationships if you put more energy into them? Our research shows, for instance, that high performers at all levels tend to use their information contacts to gain other benefits, such as new ideas. Reciprocal relationships also tend to be more fruitful; the most successful leaders always look for ways to give more to their contacts.

Alan, a top executive at a global insurance company, realized that although he had a good network, he was still making decisions in relative isolation. He failed to

elicit insights from others and, as a result, wasn't making enough progress toward his goals. So he started inviting his more-junior contacts, who were informal opinion leaders in his company, to lunch and asking them open-ended questions. These conversations led him to streamline decision making and uncover innovation deep within the firm's hierarchy. "When I met with one lady, I was stunned at a great new product idea she had been pushing for months," Alan says. "But she hadn't been able to get the right people to listen. I was able to step in and help make things happen. To me the right way to be tapping into people is in this exploratory way—whether it is about strategic insights or just how they think I'm doing on some aspect of my job. That's how I get to new ways of thinking and doing things, and I know it makes me much more effective than people who are smarter than me."

A network constructed using this four-point model will build on itself over time. In due course, it will ensure that the best opportunities, ideas, and talent come your way.

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How to Deal with Office Politics

by Linda A. Hill and Kent Lineback

"I don't care who they are. I won't buddy up to people I don't like and respect just because I want something from them."

These are the words of a *Fortune* 500 senior manager, but we hear similar comments from managers at all levels, in all types of companies. Perhaps you feel the same way.

Do you dismiss most of the give-and-take in organizations as "office politics"—ego-driven, manipulative, dysfunctional game playing? Do you tend to focus on your own group and deal with others only when you like them personally or the immediate work requires it? If this describes your approach, you're probably making yourself and your group less effective than you should be.

Every organization has a political environment—that is, one where human relationships matter—and yours is no exception. To obtain the resources, influence, and at-

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tention you and your group need, you must be able to function in such a setting by actively engaging others, whether you like them or not.

The good news: You can do that without succumbing to mean and self-interested tactics. The secret is to *build ongoing relationships for mutual advantage.*

Here's how to navigate your political environment positively and professionally:

- **Focus on the good of the enterprise.** A big-picture view will help you do what's best for your group. Recognize your interdependence with other units, and consider how your goals and theirs align. If customer service reps say a forthcoming product will require a lot of extra support, get their input on ways to make it more user-friendly. They'll be happier with fewer calls to answer, and you'll have a better product to sell. You'll become allies, without even a hint of schmoozing. And don't be afraid to share customers with other divisions. It shows that you're a team player—and your customers will appreciate the seamless service.

- **Keep disagreements professional.** Focus on issues, not personalities. Suppose you work at an insurance company, for example, and people in the underwriting department resist your plan to offer a new type of homeowner's policy. Assume they have legitimate concerns and try to understand and accommodate them. Accusing colleagues of "not knowing the market" or being "stuck in the last century" certainly won't win them over or al-

low you to find an approach that meets everyone's needs. And complaining about them behind their backs will surely come back to bite you.

- **Share information.** When it comes to information, you get what you give, and what you know depends on who you know. Say your IT director has just filled three positions that have been open for months. Alert your colleagues in product development so they can update their list of tech priorities. If you look for ways to make their lives easier, they'll probably return the favor when they get an inside scoop that affects your work.

- **Relay good news about your team members.** They'll likely appreciate the public recognition, and it'll help the rest of the organization see the value they add. Did your group finish a critical project early *and* under budget? Send an e-mail to managers you work with closely, and copy the individuals whose praises you're singing. Don't assume that everyone will automatically notice your group's success. If you don't mention it, who will?

- **Above all, focus your relationships on what's best for "us."** If you want an exception to your company's pricing policy and need a colleague's help, identify her goals and find a way you can support her and her group, too. And talk to her about what you want to achieve; perhaps there's a way to serve both your purposes simultaneously. Let "connect and collaborate" be your mantra.

We're not saying that organizations are ideal worlds where everyone always wants the best for everyone else. They're often maelstroms of conflicting goals, divergent interests, and fierce struggles for scarce resources. And organizational bullies *do* exist. They play games and pick fights. They define their success by the interpersonal battles they win, not the results they accomplish for the organization. How do you deal with them? Not by hiding.

Bullies are actually a key reason *not* to withdraw to your own corner of the organization. You can counter their tactics with the help of allies. If someone spreads half-truths about you or quotes you or your people out of context, it's much easier to set the record straight if you've developed influence through strong relationships.

Raise the bar by conducting yourself according to standards that matter to you. Be honest, courteous, and dependable—no matter how others act. If you propose an idea that someone belittles, don't retaliate by pointing out flaws in his idea. That just creates a poisonous atmosphere. Instead, try to get at what's behind the aggressive behavior. Maybe that person feels threatened by you. Look for ways to lower his defenses—ask for his advice, invite him to brainstorming sessions, and so on. You may find that he's suddenly more collaborative and less combative.

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Make Your Enemies Your Allies

by Brian Uzzi and Shannon Dunlap

John Clendenin was fresh out of business school in 1984 when he took on his first managerial position, in Xerox's parts and supply division. He was an obvious outsider: young, African-American, and a former Marine, whose pink shirts and brown suits stood out amid the traditional gray and black attire of his new colleagues. "I was strikingly different," he recalls. And yet his new role required him to lead a team including employees who had been with Xerox for decades.

One of his direct reports was Tom Gunning, a 20-year company veteran who believed Clendenin's job should have gone to him, not to a younger, nontechnical newcomer. Gunning also had a cadre of pals on the team. As a result, Clendenin's first days were filled with strained

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smiles and behind-the-back murmurs. Though he wasn't looking for adversaries, "I knew these guys were discontented about me coming in," Clendenin remembers.

He was right to be wary. Anyone who has faced a rival at work—a colleague threatened by your skills, a superior unwilling to acknowledge your good ideas, or a subordinate who undermines you—knows such dynamics can prove catastrophic for your career, and for your group or organization. When those with formal or informal power are fighting you, you may find it impossible to accomplish—or get credit for—any meaningful work. And even if you have the upper hand, an antagonistic relationship inevitably casts a cloud over you and your team, sapping energy, stymieing progress, and distracting group members from their goals.

Because rivalries can be so destructive, it's not enough to simply ignore, sidestep, or attempt to contain them. Instead, effective leaders turn rivals into collaborators—strengthening their positions, their networks, and their careers in the process. Think of these relationships not as chronic illnesses you have to endure but as wounds that must be treated in order for you to lead a healthy work life.

Here we share a method, called the 3Rs, for efficiently and effectively turning your adversaries into your allies. If you execute each step correctly, you will develop new "connective tissue" within your organization, boosting your ability to broker knowledge and drive fresh thinking. The method is drawn from our own inductive case studies—including interviews with business leaders such as John Clendenin, who agreed to let us tell his story in this article—and from empirical research conducted

by Brian and others investigating the physiology of the brain, the sociology of relationships, and the psychology of influence.

Emotions and Trust

Many well-intentioned efforts to reverse rivalries fail in large part because of the complex way trust operates in these relationships. Research shows that trust is based on both reason and emotion. If the emotional orientation toward a person is negative—typically because of a perceived threat—then reason will be twisted to align with those negative feelings. This is why feuds can stalemate trust: New facts and arguments, no matter how credible and logical, may be seen as ploys to dupe the other side. This effect is not just psychological; it is physiological. When we experience negative emotions, blood recedes from the thinking part of the brain, the cerebral cortex, and rushes to its oldest and most involuntary part, the "reptilian" stem, crippling the intake of new information.

Most executives who decide they want to reverse a rivalry will, quite understandably, turn to reason, presenting incentives for trustworthy collaboration. But in these situations, the "emotional brain" must be managed before adversaries can understand evidence and be persuaded.

When John Clendenin looked at Tom Gunning at Xerox, he immediately saw grounds for a strong partnership beyond a perfunctory subordinate-superior relationship. Gunning had 20 years' worth of organizational and technical knowledge, and contacts around the company, but he lacked the leadership skills and vision that Clendenin possessed. Conversely, Clendenin understood management but

needed Gunning's expertise and connections to successfully navigate his new company. Unfortunately, Gunning's emotions were getting in the way. Clendenin needed to employ the 3Rs.

Redirection

Step 1 is to redirect your rival's negative emotions so that they are channeled away from you. Clendenin decided to have a one-on-one meeting with Gunning, but not in his office, because that would only remind Gunning of the promotion he'd lost. Instead, he found out where Gunning liked to eat and took him there for lunch. "I was letting him know that I understood his worth," Clendenin says of this contextual redirection.

He followed this with a plain statement of redirection, telling Gunning that a third entity beyond the control of both men was the root cause of their situation. "I didn't put you in this position," Clendenin said. "Xerox put us both in this position."

Many executives scoff when they first hear this story, believing Clendenin's actions to be too transparent. But redirection doesn't have to be hidden. With stage magic, for example, audience members understand that redirection is happening, but that doesn't lessen their acceptance or spoil the payoff of the technique. Other personal interactions work similarly. For instance, we accept flattery even if we recognize it as such.

Another common redirection tactic is to introduce a discussion of things you and your rival have in common, or casually portray a source of tension—a particular initiative, employee, or event—in a more favorable light. It sounds

obvious. But redirection will shift negative emotions away from you and lay the groundwork for Step 2: reciprocity.

Reciprocity

The essential principle here is to *give before you ask.* Undoing a negative tie begins with giving up something of value rather than asking for a "fair trade." If you give and then ask for something right away in return, you don't establish a relationship; you carry out a transaction.

When done correctly, reciprocity is like priming the pump. In the old days, pumps required lots of exertion to produce any water. You had to repeatedly work a lever to eliminate a vacuum in the line before water could flow. But if you poured a small bucket of water into the line first, the vacuum was quickly eliminated, enabling the water to flow with less effort. Reciprocity with a rival works in much the same way.

Reflect carefully on *what* you should give and, ideally, choose something that requires little effort from the other party to reciprocate. Clendenin moved from redirection to reciprocity at the lunch by promising to support Gunning's leadership development and future advancement at Xerox. But, recognizing that mere promises of future returns wouldn't be enough to spark collaboration, he also offered Gunning something concrete: the chance to attend executive-level meetings. This was of immediate value, not a distant, murky benefit. Gunning could gain visibility, credibility, and connections.

The arrangement also ensured reciprocity. Gunning's presence at the meetings furnished Clendenin with on-hand technical expertise and organizational knowledge

while giving him "reputation points" with Gunning's contacts. Thus, his offer created the purest form of reciprocity; if Gunning attended the meetings, Clendenin would never have to explicitly request a quid pro quo.

Reciprocity involves considering ways that you can immediately fulfill a rival's need or reduce a pain point. Live up to your end of the bargain first, but figure out a way to ensure a return from your rival without the person's feeling that pressure. Another example comes from Brian's colleague Adam Galinsky, who advises leaders in contentious restructurings and business closings to generate goodwill among outgoing employees by offering professional references or placements at other companies as long as the employees continue to meet or exceed expectations until their office closes. The employees see immediate value, and although they don't consciously pay back the organization, the firm nonetheless benefits by maintaining continuity in its workforce until the scheduled closure.

Similarly, a colleague who helps an adversary complete a project, or a subordinate who stays overtime to finish a task for a difficult boss, not only helps that individual but can reap rewards when other teammates or superiors benefit from that effort, too. Here the judicious giving before asking sets a foundation for reciprocity with third parties, whose buy-in can positively assist in reshaping the adversarial relationship. (See the sidebar "Rivalries Don't Exist in a Vacuum.")

Rationality

Step 3, rationality, establishes the expectations of the fledgling relationship you've built using the previous

RIVALRIES DON'T EXIST IN A VACUUM

Even when a leader executes the 3Rs flawlessly to end a rivalry, his work isn't necessarily done.

That's because the relationship is often about more than just the two individuals. We all know people who seek to play to their advantage antagonism between others; some third parties might even view a blossoming partnership with trepidation or envy, triggering new negative emotions and rivalries.

You can head off this problem, as Clendenin did, by framing your work as beneficial not just to you and your adversary but to the whole organization, which makes the reversal of rivalry in everyone's interest. When Clendenin brought Gunning into those executive-level meetings, he made it clear that Gunning was going to be a "poster child" for a new age at Xerox, in which talented, long-term employees could find new paths to leadership in a time of corporate transition. Even if the conflictmongers didn't care about Clendenin's and Gunning's success, it would be far more difficult for them to sabotage an effort that was obviously good for the company.

steps so that your efforts don't come off as dishonest or as ineffective pandering. What would have happened if Clendenin had left the lunch without explaining how he wanted to work with Gunning going forward? Gunning might have begun to second-guess his new boss's

intentions and resumed his adversarial stance. If a rival is worried about the other shoe's dropping, his emotional unease can undermine the trust you've built.

To employ rationality, Clendenin told Gunning that he needed him, or someone like him, to reach his goals at Xerox. This made it clear that he saw Gunning as a valuable, but not indispensable, partner. Another, softer approach might have involved Clendenin's giving Gunning "the right of first refusal" to collaborate with him, making the offer seem special while judiciously indicating that there were others who could step in. Just to be clear, Clendenin was not asking Gunning for a specific favor in exchange for the one he'd granted in Step 2. He was simply saying that he wanted him to become an ally.

Clendenin also reinforced the connection between the three steps by making his offer time-limited, which raised the perception of the value of the deal without changing its content. He told Gunning he needed an answer before they left the restaurant. "I needed to nip this in the bud," Clendenin recalls. "He knew I didn't care if we sat in that restaurant until midnight if we had to."

When rationality follows redirection and reciprocity, it should push your adversary into considering the situation from a reasoned standpoint, fully comprehending the expectations and benefits, and recognizing that he is looking at a valued opportunity that could be lost. Most people are highly motivated to avoid a loss, which complements their desire to gain something. Rationality is like offering medicine after a spoonful of sugar: It ensures that you're getting the benefit of the shifted negative emotions, and any growing positive ones, which would otherwise diffuse over time.

And it avoids the ambiguity that clouds expectations and feedback when flattery and favors come one day, and demands the next.

Of course, Clendenin and Gunning did not walk out of the restaurant as full-blown collaborators. But both accepted that they should give each other the benefit of the doubt. Over the following weeks, this new mind-set allowed them to work as allies, a process that deepened trust and resource-sharing in a self-reinforcing cycle. So a potentially debilitating rivalry was transformed into a healthy working relationship and, in time, a strong partnership. Several years later, when Clendenin moved to another Xerox unit, he nominated Gunning as his replacement—and Gunning excelled in the position. The foundation for that remarkable shift had been established during the span of a single lunch.

Adapting the 3Rs

A key advantage of the 3Rs is that the method can work to reverse all kinds of rivalries, including those with a peer or a superior. Later in Clendenin's tenure at Xerox, he noticed an inefficiency in the company's inventory systems. At the time, Xerox was made up of semiautonomous international units that stockpiled excess inventory to avoid shortages. Clendenin proposed that the units instead share their inventories through an intrafirm network that would improve resource use and lower carrying costs for the company as a whole. Although the idea was objectively good for Xerox, it threatened the power of some unit vice presidents, so when Clendenin floated his idea, they shot it down.

WHAT IF THE 3RS FAIL?

The 3Rs are effective, but they aren't a guarantee. What should you do if the strategy isn't working?

Strive for collaboration indirectly—for example, by working well with a third party whom your rival trusts. A common ally can highlight to him the benefits of working with you.

Remember that timing matters. People in power need a reason to interact. This was certainly the case with John Clendenin's inventory-management pitch to the Xerox VPs: At first rebuffed, he was able to refloat his idea when the CEO called for a new strategy.

Recognize when to look elsewhere. Sometimes the effort needed to reverse a rivalry is so great, and the returns so low, for you and your company that you're better off deploying the same resources in another relationship.

A short time later, however, following an unexpected announcement by the CEO that the company needed better asset management, Clendenin found a way to reintroduce his proposal to the VPs. Because he knew they viewed him as an unwelcome challenger—or rival—he used the 3Rs.

His first move was to redirect their negative emotions away from him by planning a lunch for them at the regional office and serving them himself. This showed deference. He

also presented himself not as an individual pushing a proposal but as someone who could expedite organizational change, shifting the reference point of his rivals' tension. "With all of those egos and personalities, I never said, 'This is my idea,'" Clendenin recalls. "I always said 'we.'"

Applying the reciprocity principle of give before you ask, he requested nothing from them at the meeting. Instead, he facilitated a discussion about the CEO-led initiative. Inventory management was, unsurprisingly, a problem cited by many of the VPs, and Clendenin's facilitation brought that to light. He then took on the luster of the person who had illuminated a generic problem, rather than someone who wanted to lessen the VPs' autonomy.

That allowed him to present the rationality of his original idea. All of a sudden, it looked like an opportunity, rather than a threat, to the formerly antagonistic group. Clendenin indicated that he would be willing to coordinate a new system more cheaply than anyone else in the market could offer, while also noting that he might not have time to do so in the future, which raised the perceived value of his offer. The VPs agreed to execute the plan in stages and put Clendenin in charge. The initiative grew in small but steady steps, eventually saving Xerox millions. Equally important, Clendenin's embrace by his rivals positioned him as a broker in the company and burnished his reputation as an institution builder.

John Clendenin understood that rivalries help no one; indeed, success often depends on not just neutralizing your foes but turning them into collaborators. By using the 3Rs to build trust in his network, Clendenin made sure everyone in his network thrived—including himself, Gunning, their

team, the VPs, and Xerox—forming the basis for long-term ties and shared success. Years later, Clendenin started his own international logistics company. His partner in this new endeavor was his old rival, Tom Gunning, and the lead investors were none other than the unit VPs from Xerox who had once shot down his ideas.

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The Necessary Art of Persuasion

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Jay A. Conger,** *highlighting key ideas.*

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

When you're operating outside clear reporting lines, your colleagues may not immediately see why they should collaborate with you. That's when your powers of persuasion come into play. It's not manipulation. Effective persuasion is a learning and negotiating process for leading your colleagues to a *shared solution* to a problem.

Reprint #4258

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

The process of persuasion has four steps:

1. **Establish credibility.** Your credibility grows out of two sources: **expertise** and **relationships**. If you have a history of well-informed, sound judgment, your colleagues will trust your expertise. If you've demonstrated that you can work in the best interest of others, your peers will have confidence in your relationships.

   If you're weak on the expertise side, bolster your position by:

   - Learning more through formal and informal education—for example, conversations with in-house experts
   - Hiring recognized outside experts
   - Launching pilot projects

   Example: Two developers at Microsoft envisioned a controversial new software product, but both were technology novices. By working closely with technical experts and market testing a prototype, they persuaded management that the new product was ideally suited to the average computer user. It sold half a million units.

To fill in the relationship gap, try:

- Meeting one-on-one with key people
- Involving like-minded coworkers who have good support with your audience

2. **Frame goals on common ground.** Tangibly describe the benefits of your position. The fastest way to get a child to the grocery store is to point out the lollipops by the cash register. That's not deception—it's persuasion. When no shared advantages are apparent, adjust your position.

   Example: An ad agency executive persuaded skeptical fast-food franchisees to support headquarters' new price discounts. She cited reliable research showing how the pricing scheme improved franchisees' profits. They supported the new plan unanimously.

3. **Vividly reinforce your position.** Ordinary evidence won't do. Make numerical data more compelling with examples, stories, and metaphors that have an emotional impact.

   Example: The founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics made a speech comparing salespeople's weekly meetings to gatherings among Christians resisting Roman rule. This drove home the importance of a mutually supportive sales

force and imbued the work with a sense of heroic mission.

4. **Connect emotionally.** Adjust your own emotional tone to match your audience's ability to receive your message. Learn how your colleagues have interpreted past events in the organization and sense how they will probably interpret your proposal. Test key individuals' possible reactions.

   Example: A Chrysler team leader raised the morale of employees disheartened by foreign competition when he persuaded senior management to bring a new car design in-house. He showed both groups slides of his hometown, devastated by foreign mining competition. Dramatic images of his boarded-up high school and the town's crumbling ironworks shone a sobering light on the aftereffects of outsourcing. His patriotic and emotional appeal resonated with his audiences.

Jay A. Conger is a professor of organizational behavior at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business in Los Angeles, where he directs the Leadership Institute. He is the author of *Winning 'Em Over: A New Model for Managing in the Age of Persuasion* (Simon & Schuster, 2001).

Three Ways *Not* to Persuade

by Jay A. Conger

In my work with managers as a researcher and as a consultant, I've had the unfortunate opportunity to see executives fail miserably at persuasion. Here are three of the most common mistakes people make:

1. **They attempt to make their case with an up-front, hard sell.** I call this the John Wayne approach. Managers strongly state their position at the outset, and then through a process of persistence, logic, and exuberance, they try to push the idea to a close. In reality, setting out a strong position at the start of a persuasion effort gives potential opponents something to grab onto—and fight against. It's far better

Excerpted from "The Necessary Art of Persuasion," by Jay A. Conger, *Harvard Business Review*, February 2000 (product #4258)

to present your position with the finesse and reserve of a lion tamer, who engages his "partner" by showing him the legs of a chair. In other words, effective persuaders don't begin the process by giving their colleagues a clear target in which to set their jaws.

2. **They resist compromise.** Too many managers see compromise as surrender, but it is essential to constructive persuasion. Before people buy into a proposal, they want to see that the persuader is flexible enough to respond to their concerns. Compromises can often lead to better, more sustainable shared solutions.

   By not compromising, ineffective persuaders unconsciously send the message that they think persuasion is a one-way street. But persuasion is a process of give-and-take. Kathleen Reardon, a professor of organizational behavior at the University of Southern California, points out that a persuader rarely changes another person's behavior or viewpoint without altering his or her own in the process. To persuade meaningfully, we must not only listen to others but also incorporate their perspectives into our own.

3. **They assume persuasion is a one-shot effort.** Persuasion is a process, not an event. Rarely, if ever, is it possible to arrive at a shared solution on the first try. More often than not, persuasion involves listening to people, testing a posi-

tion, developing a new position that reflects input from the group, more testing, incorporating compromises, and then trying again. If this sounds like a slow and difficult process, that's because it is. But the results are worth the effort.

Jay A. Conger is a professor of organizational behavior at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business in Los Angeles, where he directs the Leadership Institute. He is the author of *Winning 'Em Over: A New Model for Managing in the Age of Persuasion* (Simon & Schuster, 2001).

Harnessing the Science of Persuasion

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Robert B. Cialdini,** *highlighting key ideas.*

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

Do you have it—the power to capture your audience, sway undecideds, convert opponents? In matrixed organizations, persuasion trumps formal power. It's essential to getting things done through others.

Persuasion works by appealing predictably to deeply rooted human needs. We can all learn to secure consensus, cut deals, win concessions—by artfully applying six scientific principles of winning friends and influencing people.

Reprint #R0109D

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

Persuasion Principles

Principle	Example	Business Application
Liking: People like those like them, who like them.	At Tupperware parties, guests' fondness for their host influences purchase decisions twice as much as regard for the products.	**To influence people, win friends** through: • *Similarity*: Create *early* bonds with new peers,bosses, and direct reports by informally discovering common interests—you'll establish goodwill and trustworthiness. • *Praise*: Charm *and* disarm. Make positive remarks about others—you'll generate more willing compliance.
Reciprocity: People repay in kind.	When the Disabled American Veterans enclosed free personalized address labels in donation-request envelopes, response rate doubled.	**Give what you want to receive.** Lend a staff member to a colleague who needs help; you'll get *his* help later.
Social Proof: People follow the lead of similar others.	More New York City residents tried returning a lost wallet after learning that other New Yorkers had tried.	**Use peer power** to influence horizontally, not vertically; e.g., ask an esteemed "old timer" to support your new initiative if other veterans resist.
Consistency: People fulfill written, public, and voluntary commitments.	92% of residents of an apartment complex who signed a petition supporting a new recreation center later donated money to the cause.	**Make others' commitments active, public, and voluntary.** If you supervise an employee who should submit reports on time, get that understanding in writing (a memo); make the commitment public (note colleagues' agreement with the memo); and link the commitment to the employee's values (the impact of timely reports on team spirit).

Authority: People defer to experts who provide shortcuts to decisions requiring specialized information.	A single *New York Times* expert-opinion news story aired on TV generates a 4% shift in U.S. public opinion.	**Don't assume your expertise is self-evident.** Instead, establish your expertise *before* doing business with new colleagues or partners; e.g., in conversations before an important meeting, describe how you solved a problem similar to the one on the agenda.
Scarcity: People value what's scarce.	Wholesale beef buyers' orders jumped 600% when they alone received information on a possible beef shortage.	**Use exclusive information to persuade.** Influence and rivet key players' attention by saying, for example: "…Just got this information today. It won't be distributed until next week."

Robert B. Cialdini is the Regents' Professor of Psychology at Arizona State University and the author of *Influence: Science and Practice* (Allyn & Bacon, 2001). Further regularly updated information about the influence process can be found at http://www.influenceatwork.com/.

How to Get Your Colleagues' Attention

by Amy Gallo

Do you have to personally escort colleagues to your project meetings to make sure they show up? Does every "urgent" e-mail require phone or face-to-face follow-up to get a timely response? Do you have to hound your marketing partners to prioritize your products when they're launching new campaigns? These key tasks depend on your ability to **frame your message**—to make crystal clear what you need your colleagues to do, when, and, perhaps most important, why.

When you frame your message effectively, your audience will immediately understand the issue at hand and why it deserves their attention.

Here's how to frame your message to get the results you want, whether you're making a presentation, sending an e-mail, or talking in private with your boss:

- **Start with what you want.** Busy colleagues don't want to wait while you build to the punch line. Provide the most important information up front and ask for what you need.

  Example: "John, I need your advice about the product launch. I've gotten some new marketing data that may influence which message we lead with. I've come up with two alternatives, and I'd like your help deciding which to go with."

- **Set the scene.** Don't dive too deep into details, but provide enough context so your audience can follow along.

  Example: "To refresh your memory, the event we have planned is a question-and-answer panel on how to connect with today's modern moms. So far we've got five participants signed up to speak, including two CEOs of our top customers. Our goal is to reach as many marketers in the New York area as we can. We've sent out 2,500 invites and the initial response has been positive."

- **Explain the complication.** This is the specific reason for the meeting or your e-mail. What prompted you to deliver the message?

  Example: "As of today, the vendor is two weeks late with the prototypes. If there are further delays, we risk missing the deadline we set with

the marketing team. We are somewhat stuck because the vendor knows we can't start over at this point with someone new. We need to figure out how to motivate the vendor and adjust our schedule so we can meet marketing's deadline."

- **Connect to the big picture.** Why should your audience care? Point out what is relevant to them and how it links to their broader goals.

  Example: "While eliminating the call checklist may seem like a small issue, it has important implications. It will encourage reps to engage with customers in a more informal way, which has been shown to increase customer satisfaction. This is a critical step toward meeting our unit's goal of 65% customer retention."

- **Make it memorable.** People hear news and information all day. Give them something to latch on to such as a metaphor, a key statistic, or a sound bite.

  Example: "Our customers feel this is an urgent issue and have told us so repeatedly. The longer we wait to respond, the more it will seem that the house is on fire and we're busy rearranging the furniture instead of calling 911."

- **Refocus your audience's attention.** It's easy for audiences to get distracted by secondary issues, so you must help them concentrate on the central objective. This is especially useful when you need

to keep a large group on track or motivate people toward a common goal.

Example: "Susan, I see that you're concerned about getting the templates to design by our agreed-upon deadline. We need to make sure that happens. But let's agree on the right approach first—to be sure we're handing off a good product—and then we can work backwards to make sure we meet our deadlines."

- **End with a call to action.** Once you've set the context, reiterate what it is you need from your audience.

  Example: "Today I need to get your feedback on the presentation. I'd like to know specifically how we should tweak our high-level message to ensure it resonates with the leadership team."

Amy Gallo is a contributing editor at *Harvard Business Review*. Follow her on Twitter at @amyegallo.

Collaborating Across Generations

by Tamara Erickson

If you work with people from every generation, as many of us do these days, how do you communicate with them? And how do you get them to support and participate in your initiatives? By understanding their priorities and positioning your ideas and requests accordingly. To help with that challenge, here's a snapshot of each generation, along with tips for working effectively across the ages.

Group	Defining characteristics	How to work with them
Boomers (born between 1946 and 1960)	• Hold a deeply competitive world view; see most scenarios as win-lose • Are hardworking and driven • Value individual achievement and recognition • Question authority and hierarchy, yet feel pressure to follow established rules and procedures • Are idealistic, but have by and large put "lofty" personal goals on the back burner for the past 30 years • Are often parents of Gen Ys and inclined to enjoy members of this generation • Enjoy mentoring others and the idea of leaving a legacy	OVERALL: • **Emphasize winning:** Explain how your idea either represents a "win" or will make the organization (or individual) more competitive. For instance, if you're offering a Boomer a new position in the company, comment on how you've chosen her over numerous other candidates. Or if you're proposing a new marketing investment, discuss how it will thwart a competitor's program. • **Seek their counsel:** Appeal to their desire to pass on their knowledge. You might ask a Boomer for advice on how to get her boss's attention, for example, or for help analyzing a problem that keeps cropping up.
		IF YOU'RE A GEN XER: • **Spell out your career goals:** Clearly convey your aspirations to any Boomers with influence on your career well before you're up for a promotion or new role. Don't assume they'll automatically know where you'd like to end up long term or what kind of development path you'd prefer. Their well-intentioned ideas may be quite different from your own. • **Overcommunicate:** Be transparent in your approach to projects or problem solving. You're more likely than your Boomer colleagues to consider multiple options. Explain how and when you'll make decisions so Boomers will recognize the time

Group	Defining characteristics	How to work with them
		you're spending as due diligence, not misconstrue it as indecision or procrastination. • **Partner with them:** Tap their experience and networks. For example, invite a Boomer to join your skunkworks team. When you're ready to pitch the best ideas to your executive board, she can help socialize the top contenders with her peers, which may help speed buy-in. She can also raise potential concerns early on—helping you dodge delays at the implementation phase.
		IF YOU'RE A GEN Y: • **Ask them for mentoring:** Pair your enthusiasm for learning with a Boomer's expertise and desire to give back. For example, share your most pressing project management problems with him and discuss potential solutions. In return, offer him tutorials on social media or time-saving technologies. • **Make sure your written communication is professional:** Boomers are more likely than others to base judgments on the way you present your ideas. Express your recommendations concisely, using correct grammar and spelling. Describe the financial benefits of your suggestions when possible.
Gen Xers (born between early 1960s and late 1970s)	• Are self-reliant • Don't trust any institution (corporations,	OVERALL: • **Weigh your options:** Most Xers want to know that you've considered

(*continued*)

Group	Defining characteristics	How to work with them
	marriage, and so on) to take care of them forever • Like to keep their options open • Are irreverent • Think outside the box and are comfortable changing the rules as necessary • Accept the validity of diverse points of view • Have close relationships within a small group of friends (their "tribe") • Place high priority on being good parents	contingencies. Earn their respect and buy-in by including a discussion of "what if" when you present ideas to them. For instance, identify the two or three events or trends that would be most likely to disrupt your proposed course of action—and the response you would recommend taking if each one were to occur. • **Let them choose:** Whenever possible, present a menu of solutions and engage the Xer (whether she is your boss, colleague, or subordinate) in the process of choosing the best one. You might, for example, ask her what weight she would give to various decision criteria.
		IF YOU'RE A BOOMER: • **Employ their innovative thinking:** Ask an Xer to help solve a problem or reality-check your solution to make sure you're viewing the challenge from every possible angle. For example, invite him to test the validity of your strategy statement by posing a broad range of scenarios you might not have considered on your own. • **Harness their ability to integrate multiple points of view:** Invite an Xer to lead a complex group discussion—for instance, an after-action review. She's likely to ensure that everyone is heard so you'll have a fuller picture of what worked well and what needs improvement.

Group	Defining characteristics	How to work with them
		IF YOU'RE A GEN Y: • **Explore common ground:** Make the most of your shared passion for discovering new ways of working. For example, ask an Xer to help you analyze and improve your cross-functional team's processes. Or work together to find opportunities to leverage new technology in the organization. • **Respect the dues they've paid:** Most Xers have worked their way up a long career track and may feel threatened by the perception that you want to "leapfrog" past them. When you express your desire for more challenging work, be clear that you're not looking to take their seat.
Gen Ys (born between 1980 and the mid-1990s)	• Expect to live life fully each day • Are optimistic and confident • Prefer to work on their schedule, not yours • Are hungry to learn; expect regular coaching • Get things done using in-the-moment coordination rather than long-range planning • Work collaboratively • Have limited awareness of corporate hierarchy and protocol • Are comfortable expressing opinions freely and bluntly • Enjoy and respect their parents and tend to retain close relationships with them	OVERALL: • **Ramp up the challenge:** Give stretch assignments to maintain their interest. For example, ask a Gen Y to prepare a draft proposal for a client. You'll free up more of your time for other priorities, and he'll feel that he's making career progress. Or specify an outcome you need to achieve, but leave the approach to his discretion. Encourage him to find ways to do it better. Tell him, for instance, that the sales team needs to understand and get excited about a new product's features by the planned launch date, but invite him to propose the communication and training plan.

(*continued*)

Group	Defining characteristics	How to work with them
		• **Put their work into context:** Explain how what they do affects the larger organization. For example, invite a Gen Y to your next marketing meeting so she can see how the daily sales dashboard she's setting up will help your group accurately track the impact of different campaigns. • **Provide frequent feedback:** Take every opportunity to teach them. After a brainstorming session, for instance, pull your Gen Y direct report aside to note how useful it was for him to help facilitate. Give him a few specific suggestions on how he could do it even more effectively next time.
		IF YOU'RE A BOOMER: • **Clarify how you'll communicate with each other**: Agree on "rules" everyone feels comfortable with. For example: How frequently will you exchange e-mails or text messages? Will you share questions and thoughts as they come to mind or save them for a weekly status meeting? Work together to accommodate your different preferences. • **Tap their technological prowess:** Gen Ys are great sources of tech support, often without realizing it. Task a Gen Y with test-driving new software, for example, or looking for shortcuts in the sales-reporting process.

Group	Defining characteristics	How to work with them
		IF YOU'RE A GEN XER: • **Invite Boomers to teach them:** If you have a number of Gen Ys reporting to you, facilitate mentoring relationships between them and Boomers, who enjoy teaching and tend to click with Ys (more so than many Xers). Don't assume that all demands for coaching must be met by the Ys' managers—spread the responsibilities among other experienced colleagues. • **Clear up ambiguities:** Ys often ask their managers, typically Xers, for things in terms that can be easily misunderstood. For example, "I'd like a bigger job" may simply mean that a Y wants something more challenging, not necessarily that she's angling for a promotion. If a Y says, "I'd like to do multiple jobs this year," she's probably talking about a variety of tasks, not formal job assignments. "Feedback" often means teaching, not critique or blanket praise. If you're not 100% sure what a Y means, ask her to clarify.

Tamara Erickson wrote a trilogy of books on the generations: *Retire Retirement, Plugged In,* and *What's Next, Gen X?*. She was named one of the 50 leading management thinkers in 2009 and 2011 by Thinkers50.

When the Direct Approach Backfires, Try Indirect Influence

by Martha Craumer

How do you get people who don't work for you to *work for you*?

When direct management techniques don't work—especially with those over whom you have no authority—you may have better luck with these, more subtle, approaches.

1. **Talk less, listen more.** When you try to persuade people, you can spend too much time explaining your position, and not enough time asking questions, listening, and understanding other points of view.

Adapted from reprint #U0608D

Your colleagues are less likely to resist when they feel you've taken the time to acknowledge their concerns. In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey says that the greatest need of human beings—after physical survival—is to be understood, affirmed, and appreciated. He explains that "empathic listening gets inside another person's frame of reference. You look out through it, you see the world the way they [do], you understand their paradigm, you understand how they feel." It's human nature to want to work with, not against, someone who "gets" us. Ask about your colleagues' challenges or people they're struggling with. This information will help you identify common goals and solutions. And you'll be building stronger working relationships.

2. **Make 'em like you.** It's hard to say no to someone you like. So how can you increase your likability? Play up similarities. We tend to like people who share our background, interests, style of dress, etc.

   We also like people who like us. We're suckers for compliments. If your colleague does a good job leading a meeting, tell him what you liked about the way he ran it. Be specific. Ask another colleague about her weekend and listen—perhaps you'll discover a shared passion for hiking or reading. Then when you

need their help, your colleagues will be more likely to offer their expertise.

3. **Make 'em laugh.** Ever wonder why so many speakers open their presentations with a joke? Humor is disarming. It makes people root for us. It's hard to feel bad when you're laughing—and hard to dislike a person who makes you laugh.

   Humor makes you appear calm, approachable, and in control. It helps your audience feel more relaxed and receptive to change, new ideas, and your influence. Use humor to help soften a harsh message and make it easier to speak freely about the challenge at hand.

   But use humor with care. Inside jokes and cultural allusions can be off-putting. And, of course, humor should never be at the expense of the person you're trying to influence—nor should it make light of her issues or concerns.

4. **Do a favor—even a small one.** Doing something for someone gives you enormous power and influence over them. In his book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Robert Cialdini discusses the unwritten rule of reciprocity and how it obligates us to repay what another person has given us.

   Cialdini cites a research study involving two groups of subjects and a "plant"—a man named Joe—who was posing as a fellow subject. Each member of the first group received a small

"favor" from Joe—a Coke that he picked up for them while out of the room. The second group received no favor. Then, Joe told each group he was selling raffle tickets. The subjects who received a Coke from Joe bought twice as many tickets as the subjects who received nothing. The reciprocity rule overwhelmed all other factors—including whether they even liked Joe. The ticket buyers felt an irresistible need to repay him.

The more you raise your hand to help others, the more likely they'll do the same for you. Volunteer to take notes at a colleague's brainstorming session. Help set out lunch for a big client meeting. Offer to listen to your teammate's dry run of a big presentation.

5. **Feed 'em.** Pick up an extra coffee for the programmer who's been developing a data feed for your new website. Bring fresh fruit or candy bars to your project launch meeting. Pick one day every two weeks to take a colleague to lunch. Don't ask your buddy—invite people whom you don't often get to see outside of all-staff meetings, to help deepen your relationships and extend your network. It's simple, but true: we like to be fed.

Martha Craumer is a freelance writer based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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