



Restore Your Spirit, Soar at Work!

A friend recently complained about her work and how she was getting “sick and tired” of it all. Indeed, this sentiment seems increasingly common in the workforce.

Do you feel that you can identify with our friend, feeling frustrated and dissatisfied? Perhaps you find that you are losing focus and feeling disillusioned at and with work. Maybe you have a dream but you are feeling stuck because you are not pursuing your dream. Or perhaps, you are just feeling unhappy or resigned but not quite sure exactly why.

Most people lose spirit and momentum in life because they simply do not take time to examine their life and reflect. There are 2 common reasons for this, either because they are so caught up with the everyday that they forget to reflect on how it all adds to their one single life, or quite often they don't do the soul-searching and reflection because it takes effort and they are afraid of what the results may yield.

It is our belief that a person's overall well-being and success is determined by the level of congruence between his/her mental, emotional, spiritual and physical dimensions. We cannot be the best that we can be unless we know:

1. who we are
2. where we are
3. where we want to go.

This article aims to provide some simple suggestions on how to take a stock-take of your life and perhaps gently guide you back on track.

1. Acknowledge Your Feelings

Feelings are feedback on things that happen to us. You cannot choose your feelings but you can choose your thoughts and actions. What is important is how you choose to respond to the things that happen to you. Some people choose to suppress, resist or ignore their feelings or conversely act on them impulsively without thought, while others choose to understand and work on them. Why take

the time to work on feelings? Research reviewed by psychologist Daniel Goleman has shown the importance of emotional competencies in senior leaders. The core qualities include self-awareness, self-control and empathy. Getting in touch with your emotions will help develop these qualities in you.

So take the first step to acknowledge feelings, understand and work on them. For example, if your colleague or subordinate gets promoted over you, what do you gain as a person by focusing on how unfair it is? Say to yourself “I’m feeling upset and hurt by this situation and it’s a challenge for me to stay focused, but I’m sure I’ll learn something from this. Quite apart from this particular situation, what are my weaknesses that are holding me back from career progression?” Better yet, ask those colleagues you trust for their honest opinion. Be cautious of those who tell you what you want to hear.

2. Know Who You Really Are

We have been raised in an environment where careers, money earned and social status have greater importance than our personal desires. Each of us is unique. Even twins are different in many ways. Do you know what motivates and inspires you? Perhaps you have hopes and dreams that you have buried in your subconscious and have not taken action on. What are your qualities, beliefs, values, desires? Unless you truly know who you are, you will not know the cause of your unhappiness. So start examining your thoughts and feelings to become aware of who you truly are. For instance, have you been asked by your boss or employer to do something that bothers you? Instead of just acting on instructions, go through the process of asking yourself what it is that is actually disturbing you? Is it merely the approach or method that you disagree with and you could propose a better approach? Or is it something that runs against the grain of your values and beliefs? Knowing what troubles or inspires you is a critical step towards self-awareness. It enables you to understand yourself better and puts you in a better position to make decisions.

“Of all knowledge the wise and good seek most to know themselves”.

~ Shakespeare

3. Stop Ruminating & Identify What's Working For You

Do you think a lot about your problems, your fears and your future? Take things a day at a time and focus on your present. Remember that while having a forward-looking mindset is important for growth and progression, focusing too much on your problems and the future can lead you to feel dissatisfied with your life. Start asking yourself what is working right for you. You will begin to appreciate what you have and the things that are working well in your life. Soon, you'll realize how small your problem is.

4. List Your Accomplishments

Have you forgotten your accomplishments? Maybe you are fixated with your disappointment or setback that you fail to see your accomplishments. Human beings often focus on what's wrong, rather than what's right.

Take notice of your accomplishments, no matter how small it may be, and take pride in it. Be kind to yourself and allow yourself to love yourself. After all, honest self-appraisal of your strengths and weaknesses provides a more balanced perspective of yourself and is more productive. At work, we may face situations where we have made mistakes. Rather than allow ourselves or anyone else to simply run down our self-esteem, ask yourself and a trusted colleague the areas you did well or showed progress in, as well as the areas requiring improvement. Do bear in mind that third party evaluations have value as they may point out our blind spots, but ultimately we are responsible for drawing our own conclusions as to our own strengths and areas of improvement. Unless we truly know both our strengths and weaknesses, we are likely to succumb to the comments and negative opinions of others.

5. Find Meaning In What You Do

Other than financial rewards or career advancement, do you feel that there is no meaning or purpose in your job? All jobs are meant to serve humanity in some way hence there is ultimately some meaning and purpose to it. However, is it the meaning and purpose you seek deep inside? Unless we start finding meaning or purpose in our job, we will never find fulfillment in what we do. That begs the question of whether you know what it is that fuels your sense of meaning and

purpose? With a little imagination, create a meaning statement by writing down in a short paragraph the important things about your job. Then write your contributions and how it serves others or the universe. After completing it, ask yourself whether you “buy” what you have written. Does it resonate within you or does it sound like hollow rationalization? If the latter, ask yourself what parts sound feeble or hollow, and why? This exercise, if taken seriously, will give you an opportunity to evaluate what about your work fulfills you and what doesn’t. In turn, this gives you the opportunity to plan your career path in line with the meaning you seek.

6. Establish Good Relationships

We are all social creatures and we need others to thrive. Every job requires human interaction to some extent so relationship management skills can be considered a core competence at work. Invest in learning sound social skills and practice by making the effort to establish good relationships. Having relationships that are beyond the superficial can boost our self-esteem and increase our sense of self-worth. Create a list of things you value in relationships and work on bringing these same qualities to all your relationships. Valuing others the way we ourselves want to be valued is the soundest way to build real relationships. For instance, gossiping is often perceived to be the “social glue” that bonds colleagues in a workplace. But gossip can be corrosive and counter-productive. If you would you not like to be the subject-matter of gossip, why do it to someone else.

7. Have Fun!

We are all becoming too serious in our life and as a result we become critical to ourselves. We fret over our shortcomings and put ourselves down. Humor is good for our being so don’t be too hard on yourself. Add a little humor the next time you make a mistake. We have enough stress in our lives so lighten up, laugh and have fun! Begin to realize that we need to have fun in our lives or we may just loose the natural child in us. A two hour comedy movie, an evening walk or even grocery shopping can be therapeutic for some. For the very busy, here are some simple ways to take a moment to smell the roses even while at work:

- i. Share good jokes between colleagues
- ii. Organise outings or even an exercise class together;

iii. Lunch in and share a light-hearted discussion over a meal..

The added advantage is that you build stronger bonds with your colleagues so that they know you better as a person, not just in the work context.

Only you can take action to restore your own spirit. Begin by going through each pointer to decide what you can do about it. Do not expect a transformation overnight. Start applying these practical strategies in your daily life and you'll be on your way to discovering more about yourself, loving more about yourself and becoming the person you want to be.

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