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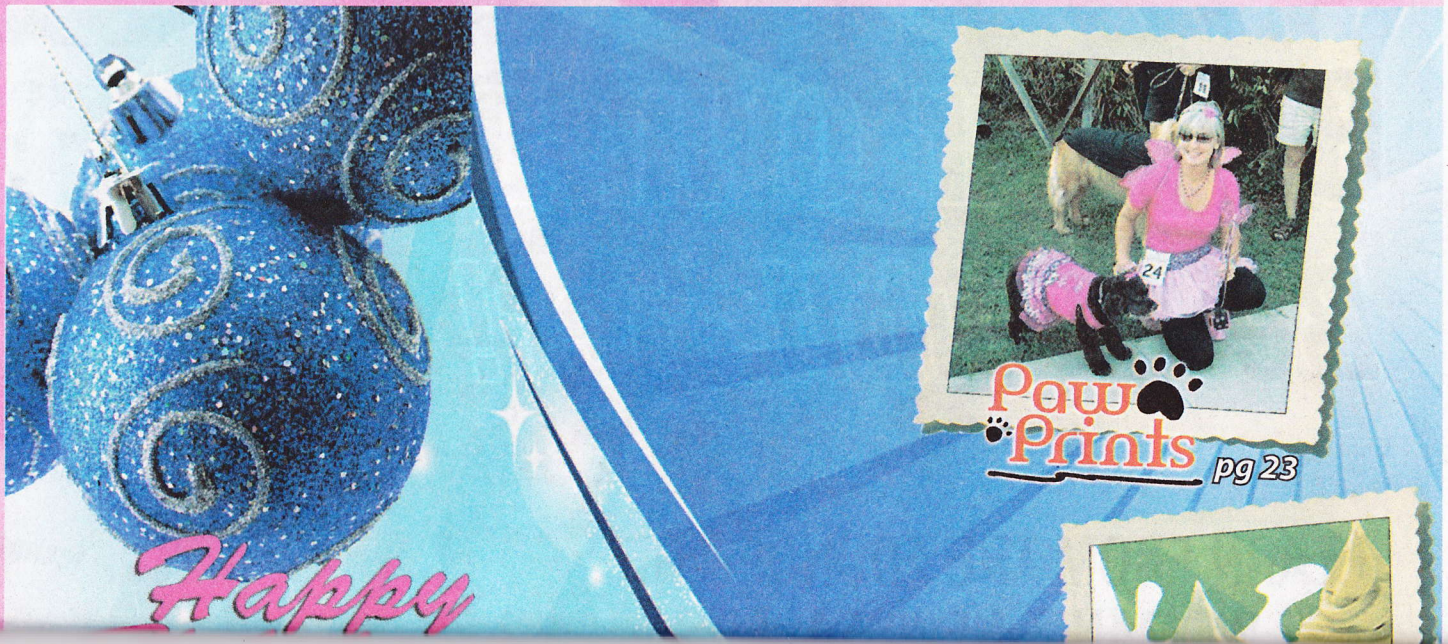
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Be a Team Member *AND* An Individual

By Monica Wofford, CSP





Jeannine was a member of a great team! She'd been married for more than twenty years and she and her husband nearly completed each other sentences. They had even been told "You guys even look alike!" more than once. She loved her hubby,

no question. That wasn't the issue. The challenge was she feared she was losing her own identity and that it had been gone for quite some time. Even when she first married, took his name, and began to receive mail to Mrs., followed by her husband's name, she began to question whether or not she was still an individual person with her own name, but didn't give it much thought in the excitement of being a newlywed. Is it possible to be a member of a great team and still maintain your own individuality? Is it possible to contribute daily to this team, have a great deal of pride in the common name (or team motto), and still have pride in who YOU are as a person, an individual team member, and contributor to this team and perhaps even other efforts, clubs, or activities? Yes. And here are a few of the ways you can do just that.

Keep Some Individual Activities

Whether your team is a marriage or workplace group, keeping some activities that are just yours will help you continue to feel like your own person. If you don't have other, outside of the team, activities, explore some of your own hobbies and likes and find a way to become involved in an activity that lets you be you without your teammate(s). It doesn't mean you like them any less, but means you value you even more, or at least as much.

Remember to Grow

Team members who only grow when they are in the team seem to lose something. Growth and personal development are in fact, personal and a good practice to keep in mind even when contributing to a team. After all, how much of a con-

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tribution can you continue to make to the team if you don't also grow yourself? Maybe this means learning even more effective communication skills. Maybe it means developing more patience. Maybe it means acquiring an appreciation for the gifts, skills, and talents of the other member or members of your team. Remember to grow personally, particularly if you want your team to flourish and develop, as well.

Maintain Your Own Identifiers

Not every woman in this day and age takes on her husband's name at marriage. It is an archaic tradition really, but one with great sentimental value and a practice that is widely accepted and valued. Regardless of your choice in this team effort, much like when one becomes a parent, without unique identifiers that are reserved for you and you alone, you are likely to feel some loss of identity. (that and respond to the label "joey's mom") Find topics, certifications, groups, or skills that you identify with and

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can excel in that are outside of the team you work with, live with, love with, or hang out with, so that you can be known to play many roles and feel fulfilled in many areas, maintaining your own individuality even when operating outside the bounds of one team or another.

Believe in You

Whether you are a member of a team or not, whether it is office related or family oriented, and whether or not you feel like you belong in that team or identify with it, all of it begins with believing in you and your own gifts, skills, and talents. The concept of co-dependency centers around the belief that in order to be whole, one must depend on the affirmations and love or actions of someone else. If you believe in you then you know that team member or not, you are whole, you belong, and you are a unique individual, here for a reason. That belief in you will also serve to attract team members who share similar beliefs in themselves and there's great strength in a team made up of incredibly powerful and confident individuals.

You can be both a team member and an individual. It's not always the easiest route, but in the long run, it will help you continue to be you, feel fulfilled even if the team forms, storms, norms, or adjourns, and help you be an even greater contributor to the team of your choice. Maybe we should talk about being a team member with the voices in your head next? ☺

About the Author

Monica Wofford, CSP is the CEO of Contagious Companies™, Inc., a five division training and consulting firm, and the producer of Contagious Conferences™. You can learn more and join her at the next conference on November 17th in Orlando, by going to www.contagiousconferences.com, www.contagiouscompanies.com or dialing 1-866-382-0121.

17th, 2010
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