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INTERNAL VOICE MANAGEMENT™

By Monica Wofford, CSP

Business & Finance





HOW TO MAKE YOU AND YOUR MIND MEET AND AGREE

Sarah walked into the hotel after an already challenging morning. She had changed her outfit a couple of times, noticed a few new wrinkles and as had become the usual, failed to prepare her presentation as much as she thought she needed to. She had been on the road for two weeks and was having trouble relating to her teenage children. Sarah's husband complained to her the night before that he was tired of not seeing her very often and there was guilt and a few expectations attached to his words. However, in spite of all this, she had a job to do. Her internal cheerleader was trying to pump her up, give her encouragement and convince herself that when she gave her speech, she would create a meeting of the minds between her and her audience. The only challenge was that she wasn't convinced by the overly optimistic voice and the meeting of the minds in her own head was not taking place.

We've all had those days. Yet, the skills of internal voice management and helping those voices in your head have a meeting of the minds and agreement takes more than pom-poms and a simple affirmation, it takes awareness, focus and a few simple steps.

Check the Facts - "Just the facts, ma'am" is the famous saying from Dragnet, yet so much more than facts, can clutter one's mind. The first thing to clarify before determining if what you say is factual, is whether or not you do talk to yourself. Do you? Of course you do! Though if you have just read that line and said to yourself: "I don't know. I'm not sure if I talk to myself", then recheck your facts. You just did! The unfortunate truth is that what is said in our head is often based on assumption, supposition, or down right false information.

Let's see...ever heard these before? "Mike walked right by me in the hallway at convention

and didn't even say hello. He must not like me or be mad at me." Please. Mike may have had an urgent need for a nature break and it may be just that simple and further more, have nothing at all to do with you, but your internal voices might tell you otherwise. "Bob has not responded to my email, so he must not want to talk to me." Hogwash! Bob is probably just as busy as you are and has not been able to see the bottom of his inbox in weeks. All of these and more can happen to us, but check your facts, first.

Monitor Value - What if, just by chance, any of those scenarios had a grain of truth, Mike didn't say hi and he was bothered by you. Bob had not responded because your email did not get his attention or you didn't take his top priority spot. Hmm... well, the key question is... do you care? This is not meant to be ugly or cold, merely a question most forget to ask. If someone doesn't like you maybe that is okay. We tell others that we can't make everyone happy and that we won't please all the people all the time, yet why is it that when it comes down to the business of managing our own internal voices, we seem to miss that message?

Monitor the value you place on the opinions of others and the power of authority you "give" them over the voices in your head. Of course, you are always in control of what you say to yourself, but if you are not careful, you may inadvertently give another person permission to hold a higher priority in your head, than you even give yourself. Doesn't your opinion count for something?

Think Straight - Some days in our business, it is as if a tornado is happening in our head. There are thoughts flying around everywhere, clients to please, emails to write, promotions to create, websites to update and on and on and on. Few people put "take care of me" on their list of "to-dos" and thus it is usually placed on the proverbial back burner of life. Whether or not you have taken care of you,

things happen. We age, we grow, we gain and we lose and the reality is that we notice it far more so than anyone else. Thinking straight includes a clear analysis of whether you really are what think and you really do what you thought. It also includes considering how much someone else's opinion is a result of his or her stuff. Maybe that one person didn't say hi because you reminded him of an ex-girlfriend. That is certainly his stuff, not yours, but you have to be thinking straight and clearly, and exercising effective internal voice management to come to that conclusion.

Practice, Practice, Practice - Managing the voices in your head is not easy. Getting them to agree and work with you instead of against you can be downright frustrating. Most of us know what to do, but struggle doing it, lest we would all be trim, completely healthy, and free of any bad habits. Yet, just as the bad habits take practice to get rid of, the good habits take time to form and take hold and those voices in your head have been talking to you habitually for years. Stay focused and practice.

The meeting of the minds and agreement of the voices is where we find happiness and contentment, but it is far less trite than it sounds. If you are not leading the voices in your head well, conducting effective internal voice management, then you frankly have no business leading other people. Consider this: would you give yourself a promotion based on how well you are leading you or would you get some great improvement comments on your review?

About the Author - Monica Wofford brings more than 21 years of experience as a business consultant, trainer, speaker and coach, to Contagious Companies, Inc. A sought-after trainer, Wofford leverages scientific research and data to design curricula and presentations that positively impact both behavior and performance. She is the author of numerous learning tools, including "Contagious Leadership", "Contagious Confidence," and "Contagious Customer Service". She can be reached at www.contagiouscompanies.com or (866) 382-0121.