

CAREER HEALTH

5 Reasons Why Nothing Has Changed in Your Organization

By Roberta Chinsky Matuson

Here are five reasons why your progress may have stalled.

1. You have people on board who aren't pulling their weight. If you've ever ridden on a bicycle built for two with someone who isn't doing much pedaling, then you know what it's like to try and move forward with someone who isn't pulling their weight. It's exhausting! Take a look around your organization and do an honest assessment. Who is peddling hard and who is coasting? Then make a commitment to remove those people who aren't doing much of anything. Now try moving forward again and notice the difference.

2. You've failed to invest in your firm or your people. It's easy to complain about how things are falling apart, yet you haven't made any investments in your company or your people in years. People are not going to become stronger managers and develop better relationships with your customers by osmosis. These are skills that need to be built and continually reinforced. Loosen your belt and start investing in your people. It shouldn't be too long before you begin seeing changes.

3. You have a hard time delegating. It's difficult, if not impossible, to move your business forward when you are still in the middle of daily operations. You hired people to help you, right? Then let them do just that, and notice how much time you now have available to grow your business!

4. You really have no idea where you are going. I recently experienced this myself when my husband and I were driving

through Tuscany. Yes, the scenery was wonderful, but after driving past the same church three times within a two-hour span, it was obvious to me that we needed a destination, even if it was just a gelateria! You will never get to a specific place in your business if you don't have a destination in mind. It's a good idea to look at your business every six months or so. This will allow you ample time to make course corrections so you don't find yourself circling back to the place where you started.

5. You don't implement recommendations. You surround yourself with smart people and you ask for their recommendations. Sometimes you even pay for this advice. Yet you never implement any of these recommendations. Is it any wonder that nothing has changed?

I understand that change is hard and that sometimes you'll experience even more pain before things get better. But in the end, isn't it better to have tried something than to have done nothing at all?

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10 Things You Didn't Know about Allergies

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Chiu explains, some make the list because they're prevalent among children and others because they prompt lifelong reactions. "A child will 'outgrow' some food allergies, notably milk and egg; as the GI system matures, the system gets better at breaking down the proteins in them that cause an adverse reaction. Other foods, such as shellfish, peanuts, and tree nuts, tend to trigger an allergic response even when broken down, so the reactivity is more apt to be lifelong."

8. A link has been drawn between allergies and obesity—but to date the association is controversial. Some research has suggested that food allergies contribute directly or indirectly to obesity. In 2007, one study published in the journal, *Diabetes*, found that a high-sugar, high-fat, low-fiber diet caused an immune response of inflammation, in turn leading to increased insulin resistance, which prompts the body to store more fat.

9. Nickel allergy is a common culprit of contact dermatitis. If your skin is irritated where contact is made with bracelets, rings, earrings, or eyeglasses, it may be due to nickel content in the metal. Reactions to 24-karat gold or other metals used in fine jewelry (such as platinum or titanium) are rare. Trace amounts of nickel in detergent, nail polish, and makeup, or even in buttons and snaps, however, can cause an itchy rash at the site due to metal allergy.

10. The prevalence of allergies continues to increase. According to the American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology, allergies of every kind—inhaled, ingested, contact, or otherwise—are steadily increasing in rate. Allergic diseases currently affect more than one in five Americans, making them the sixth leading cause of chronic disease in the U.S. If you have pollen or mold allergies, you can check daily counts in your area through the National Allergy Bureau.

"It's important to know what's causing a reaction," Dr. Chiu offers in conclusion. "Healthcare providers and allergy specialists can help identify the specific cause so that you can actually avoid what you're allergic to rather than simply treat symptoms with medication."

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PHYSICAL HEALTH

10 Things You Didn't Know About Allergies

By Rich Maloof

Allergies of every kind, from mold to milk to metal, are becoming increasingly common in the United States. With a sympathetic nod to those of you bracing yourselves against this spring's burgeoning pollen count, here are 10 allergy facts that don't come up as regularly or reliably as seasonal symptoms do.

1. Allergies can give you a shiner. When hay fever strikes, pressure from nasal congestion can be so great that it causes blood vessels in the face to become constricted. The blood can't flow freely and may pool under the eyes. Blood draining back toward the heart or venous blood, appears blue in color and when trapped, results in the appearance of an allergic shiner, sometimes known as "black-eye syndrome."

2. Any organ in the body can be affected by allergies. Sufferers of hay fever (allergic rhinitis) will attest that allergies can cause a runny nose, irritated eyes, and an itchy throat. Some allergic reactions can cause the skin to break out in hives or the intestines to cramp, and allergy-induced asthma takes a toll on the lungs.

3. It's not pet hair that gets your dander up. Contrary to popular belief, pet hair is not an allergen—though it's still no fun to clean the sheddings of cats and dogs from your wool coat. Rather, it's the particles of pet dander (dead skin), saliva, and urine trapped in the hair, or airborne in your breathing environment, that prompt allergic reaction.

4. "Allergy-addiction syndrome" lacks credibility. Like a drug addict who craves a chemical that's bad for the

body, some people claim to have an addiction to foods to which they are allergic. But paradoxical cravings are most likely explained by a typical psychological trick we play on ourselves: We always want something a little more when we know we can't have it. As Dr. Chiu notes, a child with a food allergy will instinctively spit out food that causes her mouth to itch or her lips to swell. Electing to override that natural survival instinct may be a mild form of masochism, but it's not an addiction.

5. The sharp rise in peanut allergies is still not well understood. The rate of peanut allergies in the U.S. has doubled over the past 10 years, currently affecting between 1 and 2 percent of the population. Prevalence in the U.S. may be explained by our method of processing; i.e., dry-roasting. Another prevailing theory is the hygiene hypothesis: Now that we're living in an increasingly sterile environment where diseases are eradicated and bacteria vanquished, the immune system may be seizing on harmless foreign antigens—essentially, protecting our system against a false threat.

6. Black males are at especially high risk of having food allergies. A March 2009 study showed that black male children are about four times more likely than the rest of the population to be food allergic. The study of more than 8,200 participants found both food sensitivities and food allergies to be highest among blacks, males, and kids—which leaves these kids right in the demographic crosshairs.

7. Eight foods are responsible for 90 percent of all food allergies. The chief offenders: milk, eggs, peanuts, soy, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, and wheat. As Dr.

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RELATIONSHIP HEALTH

4 Relationship Myths That Almost Everyone Perpetuates

By Dr. Terry Orbuch

Last week I was invited to a wedding shower where the guests were asked to bring a note card with one piece of advice for the new couple.

Most of the cards had typical comments like “Always compromise,” “Be honest and truthful,” or “Never go to bed mad.” As a relationship expert, I knew that the majority of the advice was not supported by scientific findings. So I began to wonder: how much of what people know about relationships is repeated as fact but is more like fiction?

We have learned about relationships from movies, TV and magazines, family and friends. And, of course, we’ve learned a thing or two about love firsthand. But without realizing it, we tend to cling to strong opinions about love and marriage based on misconceptions and myths. These misconceptions and myths can sabotage our relationships by creating unrealistic expectations that are bound to lead to frustration, anger, and sadness.

In my book, *5 Simple Steps to Take Your Marriage from Good to Great*, I discuss one important trait that happy couples in my long-term study share: they have learned how to have realistic expectations of their relationships and partner. To take your relationship from good to great, it’s essential to transform unrealistic expectations -- the ones that rarely get met and then cause you frustration, anger, sadness, hurt, and other negative emotions -- into more realistic versions that will be met. One of the best ways to do that is to stop relying on myths and look at facts instead.

Let’s look at some common relationship myths that might be contributing to unrealistic expectations. By learning the facts about how men and women relate, behave, and think, you can approach your

relationship with fresh, unbiased knowledge. And, next time you’re invited to a friend’s shower or asked to help a friend or family member, your advice will be based on fact rather than fiction!

1) Myth: Opposites attract and are more likely to stay interesting to one another over the long haul.

Fact: My research and that of others show that similarities are what actually keep people together for the long term and lead to the most successful, happy relationships. In my study, happy couples might have very

“Sometimes our light goes out, but is blown again into instant flame by an encounter with another human being.”

-Albert Schweitzer

different tastes in music, different social backgrounds, or even different religions, but the key aspect they shared was similar basic life values. This is the similarity that counts.

The take-away: If you want to find someone to grow old with, look for someone who has values that are compatible with yours.

2) Myth: A perfect relationship means no conflict.

Fact: A lack of conflict in a relationship signals that you may not be dealing with issues that really matter. In a surprising finding from my long-term study of marriage, the couples who reported no tensions or differences about money, family, spouse’s family, leisure time, religious beliefs, or children were not very happy over time.

The take away: Don’t shy away from difficult conversations. Learning how to disagree in

a healthy, productive manner is a key component of happy relationships.

3) Myth: Having separate lives keeps couples together long term.

Fact: Interdependence -- social, emotional, and financial -- is what creates the incentive for couples to stay together. It’s also important to be independent, to have your own interests, activities, and friends. This adds excitement and freshness to relationships. But couples who live parallel lives and don’t invite their spouse into their world on a regular basis tend to grow apart and be unhappy over the long term.

The take-away: Couples who work on acquiring common interests as the years go by are much happier than those in which each partner gets increasingly involved in a separate set of activities.

4) Myth: To be happy, you need to talk about relationship challenges and problems often.

Fact: In order for intimacy to occur in a relationship, both partners need to share and disclose concerns from time to time. But be careful about how much time you spend on conscious relationship maintenance, because men and women have very different tolerances for “relationship talk.” Women, as a rule, have a positive association with relationship talk; it makes them feel connected and happy. Men, on the other hand, do not enjoy relationship talk; it makes them feel blamed, worried, and distressed.

The take-away: Women, carefully pick those moments when you feel it’s necessary to talk about your relationship feelings. Men, realize that her need to clarify and check in feels reassuring to her, even if it doesn’t to you.

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INNER HEALTH

How the Mind Controls Pain

By Suzanne Levy

Science is beginning to investigate and support the role of therapies such as biofeedback and meditation in pain control. The idea that the mind has power over the body may be especially useful to chronic pain patients who often find themselves without satisfactory medical treatments.

The Emotional Response to Pain

Pain travels along two pathways from a source, such as an injury, back to your brain. One is the sensory pathway, which transmits the physical sensation. The other is the emotional pathway, which goes from the injury to the amygdala and the anterior cingulate cortex areas of the brain that process emotion.

“You may not be aware of it, but you’re having a negative emotional reaction to chronic pain as well as a physical reaction,” says Natalia Morone, M.D., assistant professor of general internal medicine at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Mind-body treatments that involve meditation and relaxation probably affect these emotional pathways. However, Dr. Morone admits that many doctors don’t put much stock in this theory. “Anything to do with mind-body medicine around pain is going to be controversial. This is all very new.”

Research is Beginning to Show the Connection

In a 2005 study, researchers at Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif., used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which measures activity in different areas of the brain, to see whether

subjects could learn to control a brain region involved in pain and whether that could be a tool for altering their pain perception.

Laura Tibbitts, 34, an event planner from San Francisco who severely injured her arm, shoulder and back when she was thrown off of a horse, participated in the study. In describing her pain, she says: “My muscles and nerves feel like a bunch of snakes that are all intertwined, but then I also get a stabbing and shooting pain. So you have that horrible, achy, uncomfortable, but then you get these jolts of pain.”

“The flower that blooms in adversity is the rarest and most beautiful of all.”

-Walt Disney

In the study, Tibbitts was asked to increase her pain and as she did, an image of a flame on a computer monitor became stronger and more vibrant. Then she was told to decrease her pain, which caused the flame to die down. “Sometimes I would imagine that the pain was literally being scooped out from me, taken away and carried off. Other times I used water imagery, like it was flowing through me and taking it away,” says Tibbitts. After the test, she learned that she had been able to produce a 30 percent to 40 percent reduction in her overall pain.

Giving Control to Pain Patients

For Sean Mackey, M.D., director of the

pain management division at Stanford University School of Medicine and one of the study’s researchers, the research revealed a striking element of empowerment. Patients would say, “A-ha! For the first time I could see the pain in my brain, and I could control it.” “And that was a very powerful experience,” he says.

Dr. Mackey believes pain medicine is moving away from the concept of strict mind-body separation toward a more unified—and ancient-sounding—view in which “mind and body are really one.”

The bottom line for pain patients is that they may want to pursue pain-control techniques such as biofeedback, yoga, and meditation. But they also need to be on the alert for scams and beware of claims made by therapists seeking to exploit their desperation. Before turning to one of these therapies, it’s best to thoroughly research the practitioner you choose.

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