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I deserve a raise! Why can't they see that?

Over 15 years of working with people, certain phrases constantly appear. These phrases constantly appear because they reflect universal circuitry in the brain. Something comes along to trigger a certain feeling and that feeling is verbalized in a universal phraseology. It can be verbalized in your head as the voice in your head or you can say it to someone expecting them to support you in your contention about yourself. The point to consider is that the belief that someone deserves something is not necessarily an accurate reflection of what has actually taken place in the office.

I have heard many dentists complain how some of their new hires, usually people in their 20s, have expectations and a sense of entitlement before experiencing any long term commitment to anything in their life. We can usually write this off to inexperience, naiveté or just a general disregard for authority caused by poor parenting. But more frequently, my clients tell me of long term employees who have been working in their office for 5, 10, 20 even 30 years and voice their sense of entitlement with a conviction that can be intimidating.

Some of these entitlements reflect the need to be perceived as special and able to function outside the office policies, while other entitlements involved excessive financial recognition or inappropriate deference to the fact that they helped to build the business and made it what it is today. There is really no issue with the latter situation, except when the owner of the business believes that the employee's sense of entitlement is greater than his/her own investment in the business. "I couldn't have done it without them." In all likelihood, this is not true, but it feels true.

I have worked with many professionals who have relied upon their advanced degree, their doctorate, their position of power to compensate for a deeper and inner sense of inadequacy. For these professionals, they are always held hostage to the possibility that someone might discover the secret: they are inadequate and not good enough. This is a very difficult way to live. We call it survival mode. In other words, one's lifestyle is one of survival rather than living up to one's achievements and experiencing a sense of safety and contentment.

Living with secrets always takes a toll. The toll is manifested in the feelings of stress and the belief that burnout is just around the corner. While it's reasonable to say that everyone has secrets, it's not really the secrets that do the damage to the psyche, but what you believe about the damage those secrets

“will” cause. When you see the issues of your life through the eyes of a child, the world will collapse on you if anyone were to discover the truth. When you see the world through the eyes of an adult, there is an appreciation for regarding the relativity of any situation and the circumstances that occurred. From this more broad-minded and greater tolerance perspective, one’s secrets do not have to be a burden, because what occurred was usually beyond your control, especially when it happened in childhood.

It is the burden of keeping the secret that shows up every Monday morning when you go to work, and it is the burden of your secret that doesn’t allow you to have a relaxing friendly conversation with a staff member, your patient or your friends. To reveal something about yourself that you believe you weren’t supposed to reveal for fear of retribution is a heavy burden to bear. It is the belief in retribution from the perspective of the child that leaves one with the never-ending sense of being held hostage. The typical response to such a fear is to be quiet and remain a mystery. This is often perceived as arrogance.

What’s missing effectively is the sense that people will accept you for who you are, if you will only accept yourself. Most people who live with secrets did not feel accepted by their own parents. The feeling of not being acceptable in childhood really takes its toll in adulthood when one feels forced to hide who they really are and deny themselves the connection to other people in the belief that they are not safe, when in fact, it is the connection to others that makes us safe.

The greater truth is that everybody has problems, and some people have worse problems than others, but being able to accept people for their humanity is a far more gracious and rewarding experience than living in fear that people will discover who you are and will attack you for being you. This type of hostage-taking, where you take yourself hostage, is where people get lost in themselves.

Yes, there are employees that deserve our consideration, but they are still employees. They have fulfilled their position as a member of the team and are not deserving of special treatment beyond what is reasonable in today’s culture, because their commitment to the process/business was an adult decision. In that decision came certain benefits and from those benefits, a sense of satisfaction was allowed to prevail. Essentially, the boss doesn’t owe the employee anything beyond compensation, but bosses with secrets never permit themselves such freedom.

If anyone deserves anything, it is our children. Children deserve our trust and our acceptance. They deserve it because that is the nature of being human. They need our trust and acceptance in order to grow and thrive. To confuse the trust and acceptance that we give to our family with that of our employees leaves the professional open for controversies that make going to work every day less than appealing.

Your daily life is a canvas and your beliefs, feelings and behaviors are just the palette of colors available to you. Unfortunately, you don’t choose the colors. They were chosen for you. For more information on this perspective, see my website: DrCarter@peaks-coaching.com