

Stop Tolerating That Career Stone in Your Shoe



Have you ever had a stone in your shoe? This small stone is annoying, slows you down, and possibly has you

leaning as you walk. Now, you and I know that it takes just a few seconds to remove that pesky stone, throw it out, and then continue on with ease and confidence to your destination. So, why do people tolerate the proverbial stone in the shoe that keeps them from achieving career success and significance?

Start out the New Year (and every three months thereafter) and ask “What am I tolerating that is zapping my emotional energy and stalling my career success and significance? Emotional tolerance is a career choice to either keep walking around with that “stone in your shoe OR choose to be “emotionally comfortable with being uncomfortable.” Tolerance either acts as a magnet that pulls you forward to experience AHA moments or pulls you back to avoid OH No moments. What you tolerate will persist!

For, example, a client goes to a job interview and makes a positive first impression. Near the end of the interview, the interviewer asks the question: “Where do you see yourself in five years?” This question reminds the client of his intimidating father asking what he was going to be when he grows up. The client shrinks and starts feeling the metaphorical “stone” in his shoe (lack of self-esteem) and he “drifts back” to a smaller self. He is unable to answer the question.

Whenever you start something new such as a job, college, relationship or project, your emotional tolerance zone is activated. Everybody has an emotional tolerance zone. Everyone can expand his or her tolerance zone by identifying, removing or minimizing events, people or behaviors that pull

them back or slow them down. Emotional tolerance starts by removing or minimizing the impact of that “stone in your shoe”.

Consider, in every group of 10 talented employees, on average four of them have a career issue they are tolerating and want to discuss with their manager, yet they don’t have the conversation. Isn’t the objective of leadership to help those who are not doing so well do better and help those who are doing well shine even brighter? **The BIG Question** - “*Can your company’s bottom-line afford to tolerate a workforce that is 60% unengaged?*” Unengaged workers range from marginally productive to fully distracted, often distracting the work of others. They are letting themselves and the company chug along by tolerating unengaged, distracted and nonproductive behavior.

Your emotional “stone” is tolerated not by the event or person itself, but by how you choose to interpret the event or interpersonal interaction. When I ask clients to acknowledge what they’re tolerating that interferes with their personal best, I hear a variety of answers (or excuses). Some say they tolerate people who are late, pretentious, judgmental, indecisive, rude, needy or arrogant. Others say they tolerate a bad habit, toxic relationship or an unfulfilling job.

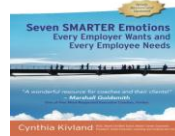
The next question I ask is, “What are others tolerating about you that holds them back?” Tolerations often involve a “Should” message or an “Always or Never” belief. For example, I should be on time or I can never be late, or the situation will always be this way. Remember, what you tolerate will persist. Behavior will repeat what you or others tolerate. If you tolerate someone being late, they will learn that being late is acceptable. If others tolerate you being rude, you learn that being rude has no consequences, and your rudeness continues.

Six Paths to a Toleration-Free Life

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1. **Challenge Yourself:** If you have a fear or limiting belief about yourself regarding a task or situation, challenge it. *Is this belief really a true reflection of my talent or skill-* or an emotional toleration that is limiting your potential?
2. **The Past is not Today:** Your tolerance zone has nothing to do with today. It's a learned habit based on past experience and is not a reflection of your potential today.
3. **Take a Step:** All tolerance zones can be broken and expanded. Take a first step. Just like when a baby learns to walk and leaves the comfort of his/her mother's arms, that first step turns into another step, and another. You learn to "feel" comfortable with trying and moving forward.
4. **Ask for Support:** Eliminating tolerations takes sustained emotional energy. Ask for support from family, friends, coach, peers or a significant other.
5. **Expect Setbacks:** Eliminating tolerations is not easy. It may "feel" easier to travel the same route, even if you get bumped or bruised along the way. Consider setbacks and second attempts as opportunities for self-discovery and growth.
6. **Prune Monthly:** Just like a garden needs to be pruned of weeds to flourish, so does your life. Set time each month or week to prune away those habits you are tolerating that clutter your "mind garden." It can be as simple as cleaning your closet or mail folder or updating your resume. It is hard to eliminate tolerations with "weeds" in your path.

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