

On the job... with the disorganized

Situation:

In addition to my work, I'm working long-distance on an audio-tape project. Even though we both planned on the project being complete in about 12 months, several personal complications on Greg's part caused major delays. The good news is that we're now going forward.

Today, Saturday, Greg called about 11:00 a.m. asking if I had the script for the relaxation tape. The copy he had "seemed awfully short," implying that it would have to be reworked or lengthened. As soon as the statements were out of his mouth I felt myself getting annoyed. I suggested I email him a copy of the script and he told me his email wasn't working right. So we decided I would print off the script, he would plug in his fax machine and I'd fax it to him.

Symptoms:

Racing thoughts: "I wrote that script and he's had a copy of it for well over two years – almost three! He's just now noticing that it's not as long as the other tapes? He lost the endorsements for the brochure four times and each time I've had to re-send them to him. I'm tired of playing catch-up after him. No wonder this project is taking so long. He's totally disorganized and has proved it time after time.

What kind of business person is he? We recorded all the other tapes more than two years ago. Some of them are still in the process of being edited for the first time. Then we have to check them for errors and listen to the re-edited ones too! It's going to be at least another month. At least! I should have never gotten involved with him. I should have checked his background more closely."

As I was waiting for the fax tone on his machine to go off after dialing a second time, I realized that I was bringing to mind all the not-so-pleasant things that had happened in the last 31 months. When I got to the point of again questioning my perseverance or stupidity in staying with the project, I knew I had to consciously work at calming myself down – if not, I could be crabby for the rest of day. And, I don't like being crabby!

Solution:

I know it's temper that causes tension and tension produces symptoms – in this case my racing thoughts and feeling crabby. Only one thing to do in this situation – change my thoughts so my crabbies would go away. Greg is not wrong, he is average. Period! Millions of people are disorganized – even people in business for themselves. He's not wrong, he's average for calling me on Saturday morning. When we first started working



together, he'd only call during regular business hours, and I told him it was OK to contact me anytime.

I'm not wrong, I'm average for wishing that he was more organized. I had an average original response to an irritation, frustration and disappointment. It was totally up to me to stop that reaction in it's tracks. A lot of people might say I had a right to get angry. I like to think of it this way – I have an obligation to myself to work at not staying angry.

It's average for "old" temper, past temper thoughts, to come up in our minds when we're thinking about a "fresh" incident. So, each time I thought back to the other times Greg called to ask me for something I had already given him, I excused, or re-excused, him for those trivial things too. The secure thought is that I am organized and everything he's asked for I have a copy of. So although it might be aggravating, unpleasant and bothersome, there is no danger whatsoever.

I'm also not wrong I'm average for not finding out more about him before we started and for sticking with the project through everything that's happened. The fact is, I believe in it. I believe that it can reach and help a lot of people. And helping other people is my Number One goal after my mental health.

At this point I don't know when the project will be finished, or if in fact it ever will be. The secure thought, and the total view, is that we're closer now than we've ever been.

In the past:

I was too consumed by anxiety and depression myself to be able to help anybody else try to overcome their problems.

If I was involved in anything that wasn't going "right," which in my mind meant exactly according to plan, I would had been mad and stayed mad. Not out loud, but I was good at holding running arguments going in my mind – for days. And I would have thought that I had made a huge, irreversible mistake by putting in a lot of time and energy. For days and weeks I'd be anxious and on edge, all because I'd be judging everyone and everything wrong. I'd make all the trivial things big emergencies and let them pile on top of each other. Then I'd end up having more bad weeks than good days.

