

Work Life... He's making more money than I am

Situation:

My co-workers and I had lunch with one of the directors on Tuesday. It went well until in the course of the conversation someone mentioned how much one of the other research assistants was making. Well, it's more than my salary, and right then and there I got miffed.

Symptoms:

Agitated thoughts: "That stinks! Why are they paying him more? What does he do, that I don't?" He doesn't even work as many hours as I do." First I was angry at the situation, then my thinking turned to wondering whether my work was up to par with his. I found myself thinking back through the last year, dredging up my mistakes, or what some people could consider mistakes. Then I'd switch back to being angry again. I thought: "I'm going to tell everybody in the department about this. I'll fix him!" I was actually rehearsing in my mind how I'd tell other people this latest news.

When I got back to work I was so tense my neck was starting to hurt. I picked up a pen and noticed my hands shaking. "That's enough! I knew then that I needed to calm down.

Solution:

It was a little difficult to think, so I stopped to listen to what was going through my mind. I recognized my angry thoughts and said – "So what, I'm angry" Then I thought about my hands shaking. If someone else came into the lab they'd see my hands shaking and they'd know I was upset. If I want people to think I'm in control, I need to drop this, now!

I'm not wrong, I'm average for my primary response. Anyone would be upset, so that makes me average. They are not wrong, they're average for paying Kamal more than they're paying me. I admit that I had to repeat line a few times. Once I realized that I was doing it for me and not them, it was a little easier. Saying they're not wrong is not saying they are right. It's a tool for me to use to calm down and be less tense. Because to tell the truth, I'm less effective on the job when my mind is on something else.

I thought back to the part about telling everyone else in the department that Kamal was being paid more than I was. On second thought it didn't seem quite as attractive. First, by retelling the story, I'd be reliving it. And if I was reliving it I would more than likely get all worked up and tense about it again. An second, if I told people that I was making less, they might think that I was doing less.

I made up my mind that I once I really, really calmed down about this, maybe the first of next week, I'd go in and talk to my immediate supervisor about money issues.



In the past:

I actually enjoyed being angry. Especially when I thought I was right about something. I was the first one to speak up when I thought there was something unfair going on. And it got me in trouble. Not so much in the outside world. Well, I guess I didn't have too many friends I was so opinionated. The worse time was when I stayed so enraged I ended up in the hospital.

Even with that in my past it's been hard to change my habits. But now that I've had a taste of real inner peace, I've decided not to toy around with my mental well-being. I can't afford to, I'm only 26 years old and I've got a lot more years ahead of me. I wan those to be good years.

