

Solve Anything with Dr. Mark

Career Advice
for the
Working Class

Freaked out

Q: You recently wrote a column in which you said you have an ability to see what other people miss, bring it to their attention and help them find a solution.

With all due respect, I think I speak for many out in the world when I say you might be missing something that is staring us in the face and that we live with day in and day out: We are freaking out!

We don't know if and how we're going to pay our bills, keep our jobs (if we're lucky enough to still have one), find the next job (if we're out of work), go for an interview without vomiting beforehand, fill out a resume without giving into the temptation of fudging facts, deal with getting sick, tell our spouses that we have to sell the house and move in with our parents, tell our kids that they can't have or do a, b and c. The list goes on but I'm getting too agitated and worked up as I'm writing this. So what are you going to tell us to do about that, doc?

A: I'm getting nauseated just reading what you're saying, because I think you have hit a nerve that not only speaks to many of my readers, but even speaks to experts like me.

So I'm going to do something that I learned from the book "The Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life" (Jossey Bass, \$27.95) by Steve Zaffron and Dave Logan.

I'm going to stop reacting to the world as, according to them, "it occurs to me." For instance, I shouldn't feel sick to my stomach reading what you wrote. And like you, I shouldn't feel worried about most of the things you mentioned. And I shouldn't have felt tempted to



Q&A

throw away what you wrote because it hit too close to home.

For that matter, many of the places I write for should pay me more and should make it easier for me to bill them without going through so much red tape. And my wife shouldn't tell me that I'd do better to focus on the real income producing skills that I have. By the way, I should also diet and exercise more than I do. And dammit, it shouldn't be so hard to diet and exercise anyway.

Have I now made you nauseated and more agitated? If so, touché.

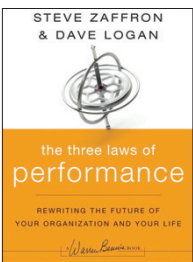
What "The Three Laws" would advise me is to take every "should be" in my mind and turn it into, "it would be nice if." For example, it would be nice if I didn't feel sick to my stomach by what you wrote and it would be nice if I didn't feel worried about the economy and my personal finances, etc.

What's my point? As I keep saying "it would be nice if" instead of "it should or shouldn't be," I become more relaxed. As I write this I even begin to smile and think of what I actually can do with the world the way it is.

Now you do the same with all things you think should or shouldn't be.

All those things that should or shouldn't be but aren't, simply are. The more you use energy to turn what is into what you think it should be, but will never be, the more agitated you will become. Instead of fighting the way the world occurs to you, just say to yourself, "it would be so nice if ----." Then take a few deep breaths and let it go. It will take you from freaked-out to a better frame of mind. Then you'll be in a better position to deal with it the way it is.

Every bit of energy we use fighting the winless "should be" wars is energy diverted away from things we can do. Dealing with reality the way it is not necessarily easy — as we hear President Obama regularly remind us — it is just necessary. It is also necessary if we are to "rewrite the future of our work, our lives and our country."



Ask Mark • Mark Goulston, M.D., is a Santa Monica-based business psychiatrist, executive coach and author of "Get Out of Your Own Way at Work." Ask him questions at mgoulston@markgoulston.com.

CAREER BRIEFS

Wanting new work

Even with slower hiring predicted for this year, 19 percent of workers plan to search for and find a new job by the end of the year, according to a CareerBuilder.com survey. Workers cited a variety of reasons for wanting to leave their jobs in the new year, such as: better pay; better career advancement opportunities; looking to feel more appreciated; career change; seeking more flexibility.

Being proactive pays

When times get tough, there's nothing companies need more than a problem solver. Problem solvers are seen as self-starters who are both dependable and creative. They think strategically and help alleviate trouble situations within an organization. Your boss and co-workers will immediately recognize the solution-seeking qualities you bring to the table and your ability to take challenges head-on.