



Three Strategies to Take Charge of Your Personal Life

So Your Professional Life Can Soar!

by Leadership Keynote Speaker Connie Podesta

Think your personal and professional lives aren't intertwined? Think again. Chances are that despite your best attempts to keep the two separate, the quality and stability of your personal life often have a direct impact upon the quality and success of your professional life. In fact, for many people, their professional life mirrors their personal life.

When your personal life is stable and happy, this mirroring is a good thing. Your professional life will be productive and rewarding because you'll be able to direct your attention and energy to your work, your customers and your teammates. However, if your personal life is filled with turmoil, grief or pain, your professional life will very often suffer. When you're emotionally drained from hours of conflict, sadness or abuse at home, it's difficult to focus on even the simplest work-related task. It's no wonder then that when asked to choose between two equally qualified employees, managers will routinely choose to keep the person with the stable personal life.

To many people, this may seem unfair. After all, your personal life is private and none of your employer's business. While this is very true, the fact is that many employees do not keep their personal lives private. Instead, they bring their personal problems into the workplace, thus affecting their ability to do their job well. Since organizations must focus on profits and customer satisfaction above all else, they cannot afford to allow unproductive workers to stay on the payroll.

However, many employers do realize that there will be times in their employees' lives when circumstances beyond their control may affect their ability to perform

on the job. In these instances, most organizations not only understand, but they are also willing to make arrangements to help employees through these difficult times. With that said, though, the employers also have certain expectations of their employees.

- They expect employees to try to deal with their personal problems on their own and to ask for help only with the most serious problems;
- They expect employees to make every reasonable effort to get help if they need it;
- They expect employees to work with them to find a solution, such as a temporary replacement or a new work schedule, so they can continue to provide the best service to their customers while they work together with their employees to deal with their problems.

Regardless of what may be occurring in your personal life at the moment, there are steps you can take to meet your employer's expectations while taking charge of your personal life.

Following these guidelines will enable you to become the employee your organization fights to keep.

- **Separate the “Big” Stuff from the “Little” Stuff:** If you're constantly upset, depressed, stressed, or involved in a life “emergency,” your job performance will continually decline and your employer's patience will finally wear thin. No organization should be expected to accept a drop-in work performance for every stressful event that comes along. Your employer counts on you to deal with most situations on your own, most of the time, without affecting your ability to have a positive impact on customers and co-workers. Before you bring your most current “crisis” into the workplace, decide whether it's big enough to warrant assistance. While you can expect compassion, and help for dealing with big problems, such as the death of a spouse or a catastrophic illness, you can't expect the same kind of support for little problems, such as the dog being ill or your child's softball game being rescheduled. Once you learn to separate the big stuff from the little stuff, you can keep your personal life in order by reacting to the problem appropriately.
- **Get Help if You Need It:** As understanding as employers may be, they can only do so much to help you. Ultimately, it's your responsibility to make every effort possible to work through your crisis, even if it means getting help from outside sources. However, the hardest thing for many people to do is admit they need help. They mistakenly believe that asking for help is a sign of weakness, when in reality the opposite is true. For the most part, people who ask for help tend to be very strong and determined not to

become victims of abuse, neglect, violence, or tragedy. How willing are you to get help when you need it? If your personal life is in turmoil, then you may be able to benefit from some of the many excellent services available in your community or through your organization. Remember, whether you solve your problem yourself or with the help of others, the results are worth the effort: peace of mind, healthier relationships, a new outlook on life, and of course, better on-the-job performance.

- **Work with Your Organization to Find a Solution:** When you do have a “big” problem that justifiably affects your job performance, let your manager know about it as soon as possible. Trying to keep it a secret or hoping no one will notice may increase the stress already induced by the event. But instead of revealing your situation and then waiting for your organization to come up with a solution, bring to the meeting some possible solutions that would work for both you and your employer. Perhaps you could be temporarily transferred to a department that requires less customer contact, or maybe you could make arrangements to switch schedules with someone in order to give you the time you need to deal with your problem. When you show your employer that you respect their objectives and are prepared to do what it takes to get your personal life back on track, there’s usually little they wouldn’t do to help you.

Today’s organizations expect their employees to come to work ready to put their full effort and energy into the task at hand. Maintaining a stable personal life is one of the surest ways to accomplish that. But while no one’s personal life will ever be perfectly in order, being able to separate the “big” stuff from the “little” stuff, asking for help when you need it, and working with your organization to find a solution for your problems are the keys to weathering any crisis. Always remember that when your personal life is in order, it will be reflected in your work and in your ability to ensure your future employability.

Make taking charge of your life a priority. I’d love to hear your thoughts! Visit my [Facebook page](#) or leave a comment right here! Now, take care!