

Sometimes Efficient Planning Crosses the Line into Negative Worrying



Planning for the future, we are often told, is an effective strategy for success. Planning provides opportunities to consider options, set goals, establish time lines, identify resources, elicit assistance and consider contingencies. In a workplace it would be extremely difficult to efficiently complete your work without planning. Planning is a useful skill to develop and an important one to demonstrate in today's busy work environments.

When Too Much Planning Becomes Unhealthy

Unfortunately, for some people constant planning is essentially a ruse for hiding obsessive worry and feelings of inadequacy. Within the workplace that highly efficient, well-organized employee who appears on top of his game may be struggling with fears and anxieties that can result in a big and costly error down the road.

Where supervisors or HR may be quick to step in to help the disorganized employee it can be equally important to support the seemingly highly efficient employee who may be walking a tight rope of worry.

Introducing Self-Compassion

Often we hear compassion used in reference to how we should treat others, yet treating yourself with compassion is important also. People make mistakes, have fears and self-doubts. The act of self-compassion is not about making excuses for mistakes or failures. It is about building oneself up by remembering to put things into perspective. Self-compassion is a positive and proactive way to challenge self-doubt.

A growing body of research suggests that self-compassion can contribute to a more positive mood, better well-being, more life satisfaction and deeper feelings of being connected to others. By practicing self-compassion an individual can get in the moment of the negative thought and actively work to change the negative thought patterns. If you have an employee you think may be over compensating by being on top of every details consider if he/she is struggling with worry or low self-esteem, regardless of whether or not their performance had begun to slide. Here is an exercise you can introduce into the workplace to help boost the mood and self-esteem of any employee.

6 Steps towards self-compassion – Self Compassion Exercise

- 1) **Find a private moment:** Set aside at least 10 minutes of solitude in a place where distractions can be minimized. This might include putting headphones on and a sign that says to not disturb (with practice you will not even need the sign or headphones).
- 2) **Identify a problem or situation:** Consider something that is bothering you or makes you feel inadequate. Briefly think about it or write it down. Select just one at a time.
- 3) **Set your mindset:** Take on the role of being a good friend to yourself who is listening with compassion or imagine you are talking with a good friend who has that problem and offering compassion.
- 4) **Say something:** Write a note or engage in self-talk with a focus on considering your failings or worry. Think about what someone would say to make another person feel better. Don't sweep the issue under the rug with platitudes but an honest conversation about what the worry is, how it has an impact and, then, how it does not define a person. Write down compassionate things that could be said in a situation where someone was dealing with worry. Remind the person that worry or failure does not define a person.
- 5) **Take a break.** Walk away and then come back to the note after you have had an opportunity to gain some perspective. Send yourself an email with the note at a scheduled time later that day. Read the words and consider what they mean and how they apply to you. You want to reframe your negative thoughts of worry into thoughts of compassion
- 6) **Practice mindfulness.** When you are living in the moment planning for the future can be put on the backburner. Mindfulness includes being present in the moment. Spend a few minutes being aware of your surroundings and appreciating yourself for the efforts you make and forgive yourself for the mistakes you make.

The first few times someone attempts this exercises they may feel silly and forced, that is because for many self-compassion is a new skill. Eventually self-compassion can become a healthy habit that turns worry into appropriate levels of planning, saving both time and energy. Feelings of self-compassion can result in a more effective, less worrisome approach to life.