

Men's Career Issues

By Marty Nemko

Most career issues apply to both sexes, but in honor of Father's Day, here are my thoughts on some men's career issues.

Used wisely, male aggressiveness is a strength

Do not listen to those who say aggressiveness is a bad characteristic. Use your aggressiveness as a wise warrior would use a weapon. Its power can benefit you, your employer and the world, but it must be used judiciously, sometimes even surreptitiously.

Do not confuse aggressiveness with anger

Angry people are usually unsuccessful in the workplace and may place their health at risk. If you find yourself angry at someone, replace your fury with empathy, remembering that that person is probably doing the best he or she can. Be grateful you are more capable.

If you are angry at your life situation, remember that if you are living in the Bay Area and not in chronic pain or late-stage terminal illness, your life is probably better than 95 percent of people on the planet. Fortune has smiled upon you. Go through life with a spirit of gratitude.

Do not uncritically accept that you should be the primary breadwinner

Each couple must discuss this openly. In being the primary breadwinner, are you forced to take a job that makes you unhappy or overly stressed? Would you be much happier in a lower-paying job? Should your wife assume more of the financial responsibility, even if it means she's not at home as much with the kids? (The evidence is equivocal on whether stay-at-home moms' kids do better.) Should you do more of the housework? The parenting? Fortunately, there are no rules — there is no more "men's work" or "women's work." Each couple should craft for themselves the division of labor that best accommodates both spouses' strengths and preferences.

Consider non-traditional careers

Some traditionally female careers are unusually rewarding: nurse, librarian, teacher, editor and graphic designer, for example. And in the case of nursing, the job market is good and salaries are high. A real man chooses a career that feels right for him without worrying that it's not a "manly" career.

Consciously decide how you want to react to reverse discrimination

No employer will admit it publicly, but in many, although certainly not all workplaces, women receive favoritism in hiring and promotion over men who are more competent and willing to work longer hours.

You could try a lawsuit, but that is chancy and exhausting. Or you could make a career of changing the conventional wisdom that reverse dis-

crimination is a net good.

If you don't want to pursue either of those options, get over it. Reverse discrimination is a fact of life today. It's bad enough you may be treated unfairly. There's no need to let it destroy your peace of mind. That reminds me of the story of Massoud and Tarik on camels in the middle of the desert. Suddenly a marauder gallops up, robs them of their money and gallops away. Massoud is distraught while Tarik remains calm. Massoud sputters, "How can you stay calm?" Tarik replied, "He stole my money. I won't let him also steal my peace of mind."

Forefall aging

Men die an average of six years younger than women, and it seems that more men than women in their mid-to late-50s show significant decline in physical and mental capability. Some of the cause is probably physiological — the current theory is that estrogen protects.

But you do have some control. Because men are at-risk of earlier decline, it's especially important that men do what they can to forestall aging and disease. I'm not telling you anything new here, but perhaps this is a wakeup call to get serious about controlling your weight, not smoking, drinking no more than moderately, and doing regular moderate exercise. Science is finding that your mother may have been right: Walking may be the best exercise.

I'd also recommend thinking twice about any extreme diet, including low-carb. Like most fads that preceded low-carb diets, anything extreme too often ends up having unwanted side effects. And even in terms of weight loss, a recent study found that although for the first six months, low-carb dieters lose more than dieters on balanced low-calorie diets, after a year, they're equal. See your doctor before beginning any diet, but you may be on the safest ground by following the just-released FDA guidelines, which reject low-carb diets in favor of a well-balanced diet: not too many carbs, not too few. Focus on whole-grain rather than refined-grain carbs. Eat lots of fruits and veggies. Keep your calories down by avoiding high-fat foods.

Advice I'd give my child

Today, men are often portrayed as lesser than women. Textbooks, college professors, sitcoms, movies, even newspaper and magazine features tend to portray women as the good guys and men as testosterone-poisoned boors, crooks, or abusers.

The fact is that most men are hard working, goal-oriented and straight-shooting. The world needs both men and women. Don't forget it.

Career coach Dr. Marty Nemko will be conducting a workshop for career changers and job seekers tomorrow. For info, go to learningannex.com. His radio show airs Sundays 11 a.m. to noon Pacific time on KALW 91.7 FM or worldwide on www.martynemko.com. That site also contains more than 400 of his published writings.



A New Conversation About Dreams Who Is Directing Your Life?

By Marcia Wieder

While aspects of you encourage you to, "Go for your dreams," other parts simultaneously threaten, "Don't you dare." A cast of characters lives inside of you, and at different times you may receive conflicting or contradictory messages. If you want to be happy, successful and fulfilled, consider putting your "dreamer" in the director's chair.

What are the voices inside of you saying? As you turn the volume up on the voice of your dreamer and down on the voice of your doubter, you can practice discernment, allowing for greater clarity. To assist you in hearing these voices, let's set up a simple scenario. Picture something you want, something that matters to you. Choose a personal or professional dream and consider how these various parts of you might respond.

Dreamer — The dreamer inside says, "What if ..." and is open to a creative process without over-analyzing it. This is the part of you that imagines, believes in possibilities, has hope and seeks kindred spirits. Dreamers talk about their ideas with intention, clarity, and passion. Great dreamers get others excited about their vision. And most importantly, successful dreamers take action to make their dreams a reality.

Doubter — This voice is often heard saying such things as, "I don't think this is a good idea." The doubter provides concern, touting, "But what if ..." and imagines the worst. If you crank the volume up it can even become annihilating with accusations shouting things like, "Are you out of your mind?" William Shakespeare said, "Our doubts are traitors." Carlos Castaneda said, "In order to experience the magic of life, you must banish the doubt." My favorite quote on this subject is in "The Prophet," where Kahlil Gibran wrote, "Doubt is a feeling too lonely to know that Faith is its twin brother."

Realist — "Be realistic ..." Modulate the doubter down a notch or two and it becomes the essential voice of the realist. This part wants to know, "What's the plan?" including where the time and money are coming from. However, in the early phase of dreaming, you may not know. The challenge is not to allow the realist to immediately turn into a doubter who might judge or obliterate your idea. Honor this voice (to the best of your ability) by giving it the information it needs. If you ignore or reject it, it will cleverly agitate or distract you. Being realistic is prudent and makes you do your homework, but if you are overly realistic or go to strategy too soon, you will most likely compromise the dream and kill your passion.

Visionary — This voice says, "Anything is possible, so let's dream big!" This is what we hear from the leaders and people we look up to and admire. They have learned the process of realizing their dreams and embody what it means to be big dreamers. Setbacks or failures do not stop them. Simply put, visionaries have visions and invite others to join them. They are found in all walks of life, and we are often so inspired when we are in their presence that we sign up just to be near them or part of what they're doing.

Visionaries are not defined by the size of their dreams since dreams are precious and come in all sizes, shapes and areas of life. If you were living your dream life, how would it be different? What do you see yourself doing? How many lives would you touch? What would you change? Who would you help if you were truly living as a visionary?

Avoid Sabotaging Your Dream

When these different voices merge they can become muddled and result in confusion and poor decisions. For example, you might poison your dream by projecting doubt into it. Then with each step you take toward what you want, you also move

toward your doubt. Doubt and fear, which most of us may have at some time or another (especially when embarking on a new or big dream), do not belong in your dream. These feelings are simply part of your reality. This is a subtle and essential point.

Here's a simple technique for avoiding this sabotaging pattern. Draw a line horizontally across the middle of a piece of paper. On the top half write out your dream with as much detail as possible. On the bottom, write out your reality (where you are now) in relationship to your dream. Reality usually includes good news and (so called) bad, as well as any fear or doubt you may have. Just state the facts and your feelings about them.

Now, which one are you more committed to; your dream or your reality? We tend to choose "reality" when we don't have clearly defined dreams or when we saturate our dreams with doubt. If your dream is loaded with your worst imagined nightmares, reality will always seem safer and saner. But doubt placed appropriately as part of your reality, allows two things to happen. First, no longer blown out of proportion, it's an obstacle that basically requires a strategy to manage. But more importantly, with doubt where it rightfully belongs, you are free to move forward on your dream.

It's like a play. All the characters have wisdom and insight, but you can't clearly understand them when they're speaking at once. Take time to tune in, to listen, and on a regular basis, have the courage to give your dreamer its directorial debut or even the leading role.

Known as America's Dream Coach, Marcia Wieder is an internationally recognized speaker and best-selling author. To subscribe to her free e-letter or to join her community of big dreamers, go to: www.mydreamcoach.com.