

# CAREER HEALTH

## The New World View of Work & Life

By Linda Tarrant

*"You can't have a strong fabric if all the threads go one way; both the strength and sensitivity of the web lie in its construction; touch it anywhere and the effect is felt throughout."* - Sally Helgensen

Imagine a rug lying on your living room floor that has the threads of fabric all going in one direction. Nothing holding them together at the top or bottom and no connecting threads throughout. It certainly would look funny and it would probably even be dangerous. Yet many people in today's turbulent and uncertain world feel just as disconnected as these threads. They can't see a pattern amidst all the chaos and the future looks scary. Even if things aren't falling apart, they sure don't feel like they're hanging together.

In a recent survey, employees reported that they were working longer hours and at faster speed than was required in the past and yet they felt that their jobs were meaningless. If people are working harder but don't feel valued or valuable, there is little wonder that they feel alienated and disconnected. But it's not just the escalation in expectations that contributes to these feelings. Quite simply, the very fabric of work as we have known it has changed. The effects of these changes are cumulative and interactive and have left many people feeling as Charles Schultz described Linus "when his blanket is in the dryer, he doesn't have anything to hold onto".

So what are some of the challenges that we will face personally and organizationally as we attempt to connect differently? Here are a few:

- Connection requires open communication.
- When we connect differently we blur the distinctions between people who think, plan and do.
- Processes and structures are interconnected and should enhance relationship building.
- Connections enhance strength, sensitivity, success.
- We must connect differently as things around us change and evolve.

These connectivity lessons speak to the inter-relationship of Process (how we do things), Structure (how we are organized) and Relationships (who is involved). Like the web that Helgensen describes, when any of these elements are disturbed, challenged or changed, each of the others is impacted and "the effects are felt throughout".

When organizations attempt to radically change their old tried-and-true ways of doing things, they often run up against archaic structures that inhibit the success of these new leading edge processes. Traditional ideas of hierarchy, size, stability and production are in direct conflict with the new rules of work: fail fast, rebuild quickly and accept that we are constrained only by our lack of creativity. Any alteration of structure or process will also affect people and their relationships with one another. Everyone will be expected to behave differently in an environment that blurs the distinction between thinkers and doers. Who's in charge will not be as important as who is responsible and accountable. When information is accessible and shared freely, power, status and control will be impacted. Title, longevity and experience will no longer define success.

Successful people and organizations are re-thinking many of their processes and structures. But more importantly, we should be giving great consideration to building strong and sensitive relationships. Ultimately, organizational and workflow charts don't make things work, people do.

The web isn't about building a new organizational structure; it's about being attached to information, learning, ideas, customers and supports. It's about reaching out and building multiple points of contact and support so that we're less likely to fall apart when the waves of change hit. Connectivity is about being a part of something bigger than yourself.

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## Fitness

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Stationary biking is a step or pedal in the right direction. By exercising the 2 largest muscle groups in the body, the legs, the demand for oxygen, and the means of circulating oxygen in the blood, increases. This causes our heart to beat faster and our lungs to breath heavier, which is a good definition of aerobic exercise. The key is to apply yourself to the routine, as opposed to just sitting leisurely, and gently pedaling. A little bit of something is better than nothing, and a little bit more effort, and yes, that means a little bit more sweat, is better still.

Minimally, the guidelines for improved health through exercise indicate 20 minutes a day, 3 times a week. Ideally, if we can find 20 to 30 minutes a day, 5 or 6 times a week, we will produce dramatic results in our cardiovascular health. Anything above the 30 minute peak and you start to focus on muscle development, which is a topic for another column.

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-James Broughton



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# VALUES - BASED QUALITY OF LIFE™ Newsletter

Because Making Smart Choices About Your Money Impacts The Quality of Your Life

Over the years, we have found that there are elements of your life that are more important than money. These elements - Physical Health, Relationship Health, Inner Health and Career Health - cannot be delegated.

We hope that you find these articles to be of value in improving the quality of your life.

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

### Fitness

By Mark Anderson, M.P.H., CHES

Improvements to our overall health by increasing the frequency and duration of our exercise efforts is well documented (Ross & Hayes, Salonen, et al). Virtually every study examining fitness indicates that regular exercise, over time, will result in fewer heart disease episodes and, in a very real sense, contribute to a longer life span, since cardiovascular disease is the number one killer in the U.S.

When we are asked in a poll or survey, nearly 50% of us report that we engage in some form of exercise (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services). However, a review of our exercise habits shows that only about 25% of us are engaging in a physical activity at a level that actually produces some tangible results in respect to preventing premature death or disability (Ross & Hayes). What this means is that while many of us say we exercise, most of us are not doing it often enough or long enough to get the real benefit for our heart and lungs.

The arguments go something like this: I play golf every week, and carry my own clubs; I am in a softball league and practice or play every other night; I have a stationary bike at home and ride it while I read a book. In the larger scope, all these activities, and so many more, are indeed

exercise. Engaging in them is certainly better than watching TV. At the same time, we must understand that to make lasting changes in our health we must involve ourselves in an activity of an aerobic nature. All that simply means is we have to get the heart pounding and the lungs breathing at a faster and heavier rate than normal, and keep them going at that rate for at least 20 to 30 minutes AND we have to do it 3 or 4 times a week.

The golfers may think they are working out, yet the duration, the time spent walking from one shot to the next, and the intensity, just how hard they are breathing and beating, is comparatively mild. It is a low impact, low energy sport (stress does not count) which is low on the aerobic activity chart. The same is true for softball and baseball: a few seconds of exertion followed by many minutes of waiting for something to happen. This is not to say that the players may not be fit, especially at the professional level. They spend much time at both strength building and aerobic exercise to allow them to excel when the time comes during the game. The game itself, as played by the pros and us, minor leaguers, is low on the aerobic activity chart

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# RELATIONSHIP HEALTH

## The 12 Blocks to Listening

By P.J. Germain

There are twelve blocks to listening. You will find that some are old favorites that you use over and over. Others are held in reserve for certain types of people or situations. Everyone uses listening blocks, so you should not worry if a lot of blocks are familiar. This is an opportunity to become more aware of your blocks at the time you actually use them.

1. Comparing - Comparing makes it hard to listen because you are always trying to assess who is smarter, more competent, and more emotionally healthy, whether it is you or the other person. You cannot let much in because you are too busy seeing if you measure up.

2. Mind Reading - The mind reader does not pay much attention to what people say. In fact, he often distrusts it. He is trying to figure out what the other person is really thinking and feeling. The mind reader pays less attention to words than to intonations and subtle cues in an effort to see through to the truth. If you are a mind reader, you probably make assumptions about how people react to you.

3. Rehearsing - You do not have time to listen when you are rehearsing what to say. Your whole attention is on the preparation and crafting of your next comment. You have to look interested, but your mind is going a mile a minute because you have got a story to tell, or a point to make.

4. Filtering - When you filter, you listen to some things and not to others. You pay only enough attention to see if somebody is angry, or unhappy, or if you are in emotional danger. Once assured that the communication contains none of those things, you let your mind wander. People filter simply to avoid hearing certain things--particularly anything threatening, negative, critical, or unpleasant. It is as if the words were never said: You simply have no memory of them.

5. Judging - Negative labels have enormous power. If you prejudge someone as stupid or nuts or unqualified, you do not pay much attention to what they say. You have already written them off. Hastily judging a statement as immoral, hypocritical, fascist, or crazy means you have ceased to listen and have begun a knee-jerk reaction.

6. Dreaming - You are half listening, and something the person says suddenly triggers a chain of private associations. You are more prone to dreaming when you feel bored or

***“Listen or thy tongue will keep thee deaf.”***

***-Native American Indian Proverb***

anxious. Everyone dreams - and you sometimes need to make Herculean efforts to stay tuned in. But if you dream a lot with certain people, it may indicate a lack of commitment to knowing or appreciating them. At the very least, it is a statement that you do not value what they have to say very much.

7. Identifying - In this block, you take everything a person tells you and refer it back to your own experience. Everything you hear reminds you of something that you have felt, done, or suffered. You are so busy with these exciting tales of your life that there is no time to really hear or get to know the other person.

8. Advising - You are the great problem solver, ready with help and suggestions. You do not have to hear more than a few sentences before you begin searching for the right advice. However, while you are cooking up suggestions and convincing someone to just try it, you

may miss what is most important. You did not hear the feelings, and you did not acknowledge the person's pain. He or she still feels basically alone because you could not listen and just be there.

9. Sparring - This block has you arguing and debating with people. The other person never feels heard because you are so quick to disagree. In fact, a lot of your focus is on finding things to disagree with. You take strong stands, are very clear about your beliefs and preferences. The way to avoid sparring is to repeat back and acknowledge what you have heard. Look for one thing you might agree with.

10. Being Right - Being right means you will go to any lengths (twist the facts, start shouting, make excuses, accusations, or call up past sins) to avoid being wrong. You cannot listen to criticism; you cannot be corrected; and you cannot take suggestions to change. Your convictions are unshakable. And, since you will not acknowledge that your mistakes are mistakes, you just keep making them.

11. Derailing - This listening block is accomplished by suddenly changing the subject. You derail the train of conversation when you get bored or uncomfortable with a topic. Another way of derailing is by joking it off. This means that you continually respond to whatever is said with a joke or quip in order to avoid the discomfort or anxiety in seriously listening to the other person.

12. Placating - Right, Right ... Absolutely ... I know ... Of course, you are ... Incredible ... Yes ... Really? You want to be nice, pleasant, and supportive. You want people to like you - so you agree with everything. You may half-listen just enough to get the drift, but you are not really involved. You are placating rather than tuning in and examining what is actually being said.

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# INNER HEALTH

## Transform Your Imperfections

By Laura M. Turner

*“In nature every moment is new; the past is always swallowed and forgotten; the coming only is sacred. Nothing is secure but life, transition, the energizing spirit. No love can be bound by oath or covenant to secure it against a higher love. No truth so sublime but it may be trivial tomorrow in the light of new thoughts. People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled it there any hope for them.”*

~Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self-Reliance

Recently I was reading the 7 Secrets For Successful Living By Marianne Paraday when a thought struck me. In the book, Paraday gives her annotations on the works of transcendentalist, author and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson and my thoughts spawned from his words noted in her writing: “Every man in his lifetime needs to thank his faults. Our strength grows out of our weakness.”

Paraday writes at length about giving up our need for perfection and it got me thinking: How much our lives could be enriched if we could simply give up our quest to be perfect! After all, who defines the perfect house, income, body, relationship? If we let it, this quest could cause one to log endless amounts of time on what we're not, don't have and so on. What's more, what if we could actually transform imperfections and literally “grow our strength” directly from them?

In many of my other articles on self-awareness, I encourage readers to focus on the positive parts of themselves and let them expand. Yet, what to do with the imperfections? Here' three ideas.

### **Practice Total Self-Acceptance:**

When undertaking the quest of full self realization, take responsibility for the total you. Yes, we all have parts of our lives that we don't envision for ourselves, but we must continue to accept

them. It is always important to take full responsibility for who we are in this moment. The word “forgiveness” comes to mind. What it means to truly seek forgiveness of ourselves requires, in my opinion, an awareness and acceptance of what is. Remember the statement: It is what it is? it certainly applies here. Yes, we can seek to change what we do not desire, but first we must embrace it - take off the proverbial Band Aid and let it heal from the inside out.

### **Be Aware of Emotional Hide and Seek:**

With this in mind, it is very easy to hide, cover up, aim to sweep away what ails us. It's not al-

***“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”***

**-Winston Churchill**

ways as large as an eating disorder or pathology, for instance. It could be the day-to-day struggle of a strained relationship, addiction or financial instability. I'm convinced (through experience, sadly) what we continue to stuff and put away will not stop growing. In fact, when not acknowledged, trouble often manifests itself in a larger way later.

I like to remind myself that it's easier to deal with problems when they are small. Even when they are huge, it is easier to first break them down into bite-sized pieces and take baby-steps toward solving them. For example, a friend of mine actively worked to quit smoking after his heart-attack. One day he just stopped and told himself, “I can always have a cigarette. I think I'll wait 'till later.” He told himself this from minute to minute as the

urges struck him. After a day he said, “Oh, no problem, I can have a cigarette tomorrow!” When tomorrow came, he continued this dialogue in his head until he'd strung 10 years together. He told me, “I tried not to look too far ahead, I tried to stay in the day.”

### **Use Your Active Imagination:**

It is often a healthy practice to write a dialogue to a nagging imperfection and see what it wants. When I write a fictional story, for example, I literally get out pad and pen and create a dialogue with my character to talk to him/her. My aim is to decide what the story is that he wants to tell. I often use this same technique when dealing with a less than perfect part of myself. Give this a try. First identify the imperfection, then give it an identity by “talking” to it on paper. Find out what it wants, then find a way to fulfill its need and make peace with it. Finally, say goodbye and let go.

### **In Conclusion:**

True, it's uncomfortable to go into the places that scare us. Yet, the reality is, our lives are the productions of our choices, unconscious or conscious. Isn't it worth our time to carefully consider each step? Moreover, instead of stuffing, why not continue to “grow your strength” from the obstacles that lie before you. We could all do worse than to let go of our need to be perfect and seek only our own highest truth. If nothing more, remember the words of Emerson himself: “Nothing is at last sared but the integrity of your own mind.”

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