

Be Careful What You Ask For

Many of us spend a great deal of time wishing things were different. We dream of a "better job," more responsibility, less of this, and more of that. Sometimes, the things we spend our energy longing for actually do (or would) improve the quality of our life. Other times, however, the very things we wish for are hardly worth the tradeoffs, or the effort. For this reason, I suggest you be really careful what you ask for.

The purpose of this strategy isn't to encourage you to stop dreaming of, or working toward, a better life, but to remind you that sometimes your life is pretty darn good exactly the way it is. My goal here is to remind you to carefully think through what it is you think you want, because you might end up getting it, which is often more than you bargained for - more frustration, more grief, more travel, more responsibility, more conflict, more demands on your time, and so forth. When you think in these terms, it often helps you reconnect with your gratitude and realize that perhaps things aren't as bad as we sometimes make them out to be.

I've met plenty of people who spent years focused on how much better their lives were going to be when certain things occurred - i.e., when they were finally promoted to various positions-so much so that they took for granted the good parts of the position they already had. In other words, they were so focused on what was wrong with their careers that they failed to enjoy and appreciate the gifts they were enjoying all along.

For example, a man I knew dreamed of a job he felt would be "so much better" within the same company he was working with. He lobbied for that job for quite some time, constantly complaining about his current position. It wasn't until he finally secured that job that he realized the major tradeoffs that were involved. It was true that he had a bit more prestige and a slightly higher salary, yet he was forced to travel several days a week, often much more than that. He missed his

three kids terribly and started missing important events-soccer games, music performances, teacher conferences, and other special dates. In addition, his relationship with his wife became strained as their relatively peaceful routine was set aside for the alleged "better life." He was also forced to scale way back on his much-loved exercise routine due to his busier, less flexible schedule.

A woman I knew worked hard to convince her boss that she deserved to telecommute instead of coming into the office. She succeeded. The problem was, she never realized (until a month later) that, despite the dreaded traffic, she actually loved coming into the city each day. This was structure, her chance to be with people. She also missed lunch at local cafes, her favorite music that she listened to on the way to work, and other taken-for-granted simple pleasures. After a while, she began to feel trapped in her own home.

Other people crave power or fame. Only after they achieve it do they realize that the lack of any real privacy is a drag. Instead of anonymity, which most of us take for granted, people are now looking over their shoulders. They are often exposed to more criticism and closer scrutiny.

I want to emphasize that I'm not taking a negative stance on any of these tradeoffs. Often, making more money is crucial, and outweighs any other consideration you might have. For many people, traffic is almost unbearable and would be worth avoiding at almost any price. Some people love the spotlight and the increased visibility. The important point here isn't the specifics, or any sort of value judgement, but the recognition of the relevance of asking yourself the important questions-"What am I really asking for, and why?"

When thinking about your job or career, it's important to consider what's right and good about your work in addition to focusing on what might be better. Feeling satisfied or being happy doesn't



mean you aren't still working hard to make your career as successful as possible. You can have both-happiness and drive-without sacrificing sanity.

Keep in mind that more responsibility might be a great thing, but it could very well lead to less personal freedom, privacy, and so forth. Similarly, a better paying position might make you feel more financially secure and it might be worth it-but you may give up other things that you haven't considered, or that you simply take for granted. It's all just food for thought. Remember, be careful what you ask for, because you might just get it-and more.

Reprinted from DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF AT WORK: Simple Ways to Minimize Stress and Conflict While Bringing Out the Best in Yourself and Others by Richard Carlson, Ph.D.. Copyright 1998 by Dr. Richard Carlson. Published by Hyperion. Available wherever books are sold or by calling (800)759-0190.

"Stay Connected"

**MAAGCS
ONLINE**

www.maagcs.com

President

continued from page 2

often to you receive a phone message that ends with the caller leaving a phone number at the speed of light. I don't know about you but I often times have to play the message back numerous times to comprehend the number. Please when leaving your phone number ... "SLOW DOWN"... you might just get a returned call.