

Chapter Seven

Working in a Community

Whether we work in a business office, a hair salon, or a hospital — or volunteer our time on the board of the PTA — it's not just a job . . . it's a community. Consider that the Being at the heart of our human nature links us to the Universe. All of our colleagues also embrace a Being, and thus, we are all linked together at a spiritual level. As a result, our work community becomes a separate and cohesive entity. Considering our work life in this way can change the way we approach our

contributions and the problems we may experience in this setting.

A work community is like a living organism and not just a collection of individuals. Each person in the group has an effect on the other members, and the well-being of each is essential to the well-being of all. Your heart can pump away for all it's worth, but if your kidneys fail to remove toxic substances, you won't be able to survive.

Each member relates to other group members on a psychological and social level, and how each relates to the others has to do with the person's character and temperament. Trustworthiness, conscientiousness, and adaptability are three virtues that will be highly prized in a work group.

If you always do what you say you'll do, you

will come to mind when a trustworthy person is required. You'll get the job, while people known for empty promises will get zilch. Conscientious workers always do their best, no matter how big the task — and whether or not the boss is watching. In fact, they over-deliver, often going beyond what was asked and expanding the task with creativity and value. Often driven to achieve, they are organized and thorough. They don't lie to others or to themselves, and they care about getting things right.

Adaptable workers see a crisis as an opportunity. How quickly can you figure out a way around a roadblock? Another facet of adaptability involves analyzing the task and finding the most effective way to complete it. Where you choose to invest your energy will decide the outcome of your effort — like a marathon runner, you need to manage your

energy so you can deliver top speed when you need it. Only wise runners win races.

Poor impulse control is one of the most disruptive characteristics for a work community. Forty percent of new leaders get fired or demoted within the first 18 months of leadership due to inappropriate reactive behavior. Wise leaders who blew their stack at a colleague will make sure they apologize quickly for their boorish behavior. Otherwise, the damaged relationship may mean that Mr. Blowhard isn't among the 60 percent who survive their first year and a half as leaders.

Groups within Groups

Wilfred Bion, an influential British psychoanalyst, pioneered the field of *group dynamics*. He found that groups, like dreams, have a conscious as well as an unconscious

aim. The conscious group works at agreed-upon tasks and their completion. However, members of the group have hidden agendas that affect the group as a whole. Their conscious and unconscious goals influence their thoughts in ways that either support or limit the task.