

## BALANCING TOMORROW, TODAY™

by Dr. Stacie



I had a job some time ago that made me dread getting up in the morning. I actually loved the work. I just didn't enjoy the people with whom I worked! So I got to thinking—why is it that some people are more fun to work with than others? How is it that when you enjoy working with those around you, you work faster, harder and make fewer mistakes? What is it about some people that make them so great to be around? I think it is their character. I have found that individual character can make or break the workplace. And that is why we are going to look at balancing tomorrow's *character*, today – *at work*.

Well, I did end up leaving that great job. After much effort and deliberation I realized that I could not effect enough change to protect my own character. I discovered that for me, character was too important an area for compromise. I did not want to work with people who were not honest, forthright, caring, and kind to those around them.

We spend most of our lives at work. How we behave and the choices we make effect the work and lives of all those around us, as theirs does ours. So what makes *us* the coworkers people enjoy being around? Being truthful, open, and honest is a great start. This means admitting when you're wrong, even if the person you're admitting it too has an ego the size of Texas and may never let you live it down, being truthful is the biggest character builder—you just feel great when you tell the truth, it is so refreshing. Try it, you'll like it!

Okay, next is being open: open-minded and open-hearted. Listening and hearing other people's opinions, thoughts, concerns, and desires is the fastest route to a strong character and a fun and productive work place. The strongest workplaces are those where everyone's perspective is considered and valued...let it start with you.

The next dimension of character, being honest, may appear to be the same as being truthful, but here is the twist (or for some of you, the rub!)...when you're truthful, you admit when you've made a mistake to others ...when you're *honest*, you admit your mistakes to yourself! Yes, this honesty is the make it or break it part of character development and actually comes before truthfulness and being open in my opinion. If you cannot admit your character challenges to yourself, then you'll have a tough time admitting when you're wrong and being open to others!

So how do we balance tomorrow's character today – *at work*, so we can do our part to make our workplace a more enjoyable and productive environment for everyone?

- Think about the people you enjoy being with the most. What characteristics in them do you enjoy or admire? Write those down.
- Now look at the characteristics that you enjoy or admire in yourself? Write those down, too. (See, your already honing the "honesty" dimension of your character!)
- Is there a gap between where we feel our character is and where we'd like it to be? (For most of us, the answer will always be "yes." Like balancing, character development is a process, not a destination. Our character will always be a work in progress.)
- You can close this gap easily now that you know it is there. All you have to do is assume the character trait you aspire to be a part of you.

*Here is a personal example: I would like to have more empathy for others. When I am working, I am so engrossed in what I am doing that I often miss some of the early cues that someone might be struggling with something non-work related and could use some support. I eventually catch on and see if I can help, but my husband, for example, has this empathy radar that picks up on these types of things and figures out how to help before my clue light has even turned on!*

*So even if I never pick up on things as quickly as my husband does, by assuming, or trying on, his empathy trait, I am practicing this and building tomorrow's empathy, today!*

- The deal with balancing character is the "ing" part...that's the continuing practicing. Keep at it and it will come!

Remember, balance and character development is a process...not a destination.

*Many thanks to all of you who have been sending me e-mail requests. Please send me your questions, feedback, and topic ideas for future columns and I'll take a crack at it! As always, all correspondence will be kept confidential.*

Dr. Stacie Morgan is the author of **Professional Strategy in a New York Minute**, *How to get the right job, the right promotion, the right pay, and the right respect* (New Strategy Press). For more information visit her website at [www.balancedmanagement.com](http://www.balancedmanagement.com) or e-mail her at [stacie@balancedmanagement.com](mailto:stacie@balancedmanagement.com).