



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

1.13 CONQUER YOUR INNER ENEMY

Harming others is never necessary for success. As we are aware of the Divinity that is in everyone, we can face our own tendencies to cause harm, even subtly, and discover non-violent ways of responding to our work situations.

HAVE YOU ever experienced...

- Being in a tough competition with someone for a promotion you really wanted?
- Having someone oppose your strongly-held point of view?
- Struggling with another company to get or keep a customer?

In these types of situations, it's so easy for us to see others as the "enemy" in our own minds! And we can easily find ourselves feeling critical and resentful, trying to control or dominate others, and wanting to retaliate or "take them down a notch."

As we explored "non-violence," the fifth human value in our series (truth, righteousness, love, peace and non-violence), we realised that we may not readily think of these situations or reactions as "violent." But the broadest and most common definition of non-violence is: *respecting all and causing no harm to any being by our thoughts, words, or deeds.* These examples above are some of the subtle ways that we may be harming others at work, without being aware of it.

From a spiritual perspective, we've discovered that non-violence is regarding and treating everyone and everything in creation as Divinity. In other words, when we're aware of the oneness that underlies all of creation, we realise that when we do anything that harms others, it's the same as harming ourselves. As Sathya Sai Baba, a spiritual teacher in India, says:

The only way in which one can take the path of non-violence is to recognise the oneness of Divinity that is present in all living beings and regard them as equal.

We've found in our own lives that we often justify our critical and harmful ways of relating to others by thinking, "They're the ones who started it, not me." That is, we tend to go by the old adage, "An eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth." But when we reflect upon this from a spiritual perspective, we remember that Jesus taught:

Love your enemies and pray for those who harm you.

And Muhammed said:

If you are able, keep your heart free from malice towards anyone. Enmity and malice tears up heavenly rewards by the roots.

How can we treat others at work without harming them, even if they seem to be intending to harm us? We've found three guidelines helpful to us:

1. Have a clear intention to respect others and not harm anyone, no matter what the circumstances are. This can be true even when competing for a treasured job. As one general manager told us:

My purpose was always to be a leader; I knew that I would reach the top, but not by causing harm to anyone.

2. Trust that harmful responses are never necessary for success. This applies even in running an entire business, as a vice-president stated:

In order for an organisation to be successful, the leaders must care for people, they must have a proper business strategy, and they should continuously think in terms of not doing any harm to the environment or people.

3. Live by the other four human values we've been writing about: truth, righteousness, peace, and love. The combined power of these human values makes non-violence a natural result, even in tough confrontations. One executive faced a hostile group of union leaders, but responded with empathy:

Because of the spiritual feelings I have inside, I knew immediately when they came that they didn't mean anything against me, they just wanted to put up a show. I knew this very well in my heart and as such I could anticipate this right up front.

As you face your true "enemy" – the tendencies to cause harm that are within yourself – you'll know you are working in non-harmful ways when you:

- Harbour no feelings of resentment, criticism, or desire to retaliate against others
- Have self-control over any wish to possess, control or dominate others
- Experience no sense of separateness from others, but feel respect and a desire for the well-being and dignity of all people

So, ask yourself: *To what extent do I have respect, forgiveness and good wishes for all (free from any intention to blame, belittle, harm or oppress)? How well am I regarding and treating everyone and everything in creation as Divinity?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: The Basics*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of "spirituality and human values for leadership and work", visit our website: www.globaldharma.org