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a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

Facing Your Fears as a Supervisor

Boy, do I remember when I stepped into a significant supervisory position with a nonprofit coalition for the first time! I was forty-three. By then I had experienced a lot of life. Just not *that* part of life. Talk about a case of whiplash.

A few weeks into it I secretly concluded they all had to go. I needed to cut the cord for different reasons: job mismatch, lack of motivation, pervasive inaccuracy. My heart sank. Don't misunderstand me: These were very nice people—the kind you'd want for neighbors. But nice folks don't necessarily make ideal employees. Intuitively, I sensed that the price to keep them was too high. Even as a novice I understood that.

After a show, with niece Sarah last month



My inherited staff was small,

the state government assigned workload large. Releasing folks familiar with the organization, its mission, and required activities scared me. I, myself, was still learning the ropes. Hiring new people was risky. Yet slowly, over a period of maybe six months, I terminated the three of them, one by one. I faced my fear and chose to stand up to it. Then I walked through it...invisibly shaking from head to toe.

I tell you this story to show you that staff issues only improve when you're willing to put on and wear your supervisory suit. The whole suit—not just the pants/skirt or the jacket or the shirt/blouse or the tie. The whole suit. That's what I did. And you know what? With the right employees in the seats **everything** changed. As an agency we were more cohesive, more productive, more content. Eventually we got to the place where occasionally we had some fun. What have YOU been putting off out of fear? Check out my feature article below to gain clarity around what makes you anxious, fills you with doubt, or triggers dread.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

10 Fears Supervisors Often Harbor

Multi layered and complex as it is, supervision can cause you to feel inadequate or uncertain deep inside more frequently than you'd prefer. This is not unique to newbies. Seasoned supervisors also become hesitant and afraid in

particular situations. The key is to identify your fears and tame them. But you can't work through a fear you don't know you have. Scan the list of ten highlighted supervisor fears in this article. Whether you have twelve direct reports or one, staying stuck in fear blocks your professional growth and impedes overall company progress.

1. **Fear of rejection:** To what extent do you need/want to be liked by your staff? If being liked ranks high with you, then you're apt to accept lame excuses for bad behavior, missed deadlines, and poor performance. You're also inclined to seek friendships among the people you manage.
2. **Fear that you're unable to give clear direction:** Do you trust yourself to assign duties in a way that folks understand? How about describing processes that people can implement easily? What evidence do you have that you can't do these things successfully?
3. **Fear of the gap:** One of the greatest fears supervisors hold is that of not knowing the answer to a valid question, not having enough information in the moment to provide appropriate guidance, not knowing what to say next without missing a beat. You don't want to appear foolish, incompetent, or weak.
4. **Fear that you don't have the time:** You've observed an employee who's going down the wrong track on a project. Twenty minutes of private coaching could help her course correct, but you have no idea where to fit this into your totally packed schedule. You recognize that this happens on a regular basis.
5. **Fear that employees can't do their jobs:** If you hired them, don't you trust your choices? Do you doubt that folks can proceed with tasks and activities on their own? Do you feel the need to micromanage? Are you actually doing it? Maybe you have a need to be indispensable.
6. **Fear of conflict:** You carry childhood baggage which continues to whisper in your ear that disagreements and differing styles are undesirable or bad. Or, you accept conflict as part of life but lack solid skills to manage it. Whatever the issue, you choose to deny or ignore situations and conversations that disrupt the peace.
7. **Fear that you don't know how to be fair:** While supervisors must treat their employees fairly, this doesn't mean they treat them all the same. Tom wants to leave early on certain Fridays; Sue asks to come in a few minutes late every morning, Sandy believes she deserves longer lunch breaks this week because of the overtime she contributed last month. What do you do

to be fair?

8. **Fear that you can't be the resource they need:** To what extent do you fear that you won't know a fact, a person, a line item budget number, a reference book title, a document's file name, a computer password, a last minute calendar change, a meeting time, the staff retreat location, or somebody's birthday when a staffer asks? Why do you expect yourself to be a walking encyclopedia 24/7?
9. **Fear that you won't make wise decisions:** When John approaches you about taking on the role of team leader and you know he's already overextended, do you fear that you won't be able to say no? When Jane comes to you with a minor complaint about a coworker, do you fear that you won't have the courage to advise her to settle the problem by herself?
10. **Fear that you don't know how to develop your people:** Do you understand the professional development needs of each of your employees? Are you able to identify both high cost and low cost options for meeting those needs? Do you believe that you, personally, have the skills to coach and mentor these folks during individual staff meetings? What, specifically, do you fear about the process of growing your staff?

Just two final questions: Are your supervisory fears real and rational? Or are they indicators of an imagination running wild? Your response sets the stage for what ought to happen next. Just know that choosing to do nothing isn't possible if you want to keep your job or be viewed as credible.

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What Clients Say

(This example illustrates a fear of the supervisory position itself.)

Last year I was moved into a management position that involved supervision of two employees. The truth is that I had no idea what I was doing with these people. Both were quite a bit younger than I am and needed my guidance and direction. As is often the case, I got this promotion because of my own consistently stellar job performance and longevity with the company. I felt like a fish out of water. After a lot of deliberation, I decided to hire Sylvia Hepler to help me develop some basic supervisory skills that allowed me to build a healthy relationship with my staff and eventually yielded necessary results. Believe me, I almost talked myself out of calling her. I made all sorts of excuses about

money and time. Thankfully, I didn't back down. Working with Sylvia for a few concentrated months made all the difference in the world!

- Carolyn H., Wealth Management Industry, Camp Hill, PA

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Offers and Opportunities

Fall FREE Teleseminar Coming Soon

On September 20, 2016 at noon EDT Sylvia will offer a FREE one hour teleseminar entitled: "5 Tips for Tackling Tough Conversations With Staff". Watch your email inbox for more details early next month. If you get nervous just thinking about having these awkward but necessary conversations with folks you supervise, this audio event is right for YOU.

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RESOURCES

Give Yourself a Practical Present

Pick up a copy of Stephen P. Robbins' book entitled *The Truth About Managing People* if you want an expert's answers to just about any management challenge you are facing at work. Filled with proven principles for dealing with these issues boldly and responsibly, this reference is one you will want to share with others in supervisory roles. Available in paper back on Amazon.com for \$23.00; less expensive used options also offered.

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TIP

Name your #1 supervisory fear. For an idea refresher, go back to the feature article above. Perhaps your greatest fear doesn't appear in the list. Whatever it is, however, say it aloud. Connect with how you feel as you hear those words. Then figure out how long you've felt the awkwardness or discomfort associated with this particular fear. Identify specific examples of

evidence that this fear is one truly worthy of your attention. Decide what it would take to diminish or eradicate this fear in order for you to perform your job duties more effectively and reduce your negative stress.

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Where in the World is SYLVIA?

In addition to serving quite a few new private clients, Sylvia has devoted much of her summer to reading all of the expertly written Anna Quindlen novels as well as enjoying the company of friends over lunch and dinner at local restaurants. Some of her favorite eateries include: Devon Seafood Grill in Hershey, The Tomato Pie in Harrisburg, and Sophia's at Walden outside of Mechanicsburg. In late July Sylvia's twenty-one year old niece, Sarah, from western New York paid a visit for five days. Going to the brand new Butterfly Atrium on the property of Hotel Hershey proved to be a highlight of that mini vacation. If you have not yet had this delightful but unusual experience, you **MUST!**

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About This Ezine

The purpose of this Ezine is to: 1) Provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to personal and professional growth as well as overall career development; and 2) Invite readers to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

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About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, LLC, specializes in career development for both corporate and nonprofit executives and managers. Based in South Central PA, she specifically supports clients as they upgrade their current job performance, seek a promotion, or plan/navigate a career transition. What makes her services unique is that Sylvia helps people to cope with change, loss, and grief as they work on developing their careers. Her professional background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, nonprofit community health program start-up, program evaluation, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A certified executive coach through The Rescue Institute in Golden, Colorado and Quantum Endeavors in Chicago, Illinois (plus a participant in extensive continuing education opportunities with several coaches of national notoriety), Sylvia offers individual and group coaching, assessments, teleseminars, workshops, keynote speeches, and retreats. She also has created tangible and downloadable products that augment her coaching and speaking services.

For more information and to connect with Sylvia try:

[Launching Lives Website](#)

[Click to contact Sylvia by Email](#)

Reach Sylvia by phone at **717-761-5457**

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives, LLC is a full service career development company for managers and executives located in South Central PA. Utilizing a holistic approach to service provision, Launching Lives focuses on supporting clients as they create the platinum level career they desire by upgrading their job performance, seeking a promotion, or planning/navigating a career transition

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my

own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching may be the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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