

Protect Yourself from Workplace Politics, Stress, and Procrastination

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Protect yourself from stressful workplace politics with confident composure.

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Rat race can mean a fierce competition by people who plan to get ahead at any cost. The negative influence of this workplace politic group far exceeds their numbers. Open their Pandora's Box and you find betrayals, manipulations, deceptions, and exploitations. If you count yourself among those who would rather get body slammed than politically whipsawed, how do you protect yourself?

Take charge of yourself and you can help yourself avoid many political frays. Follow 10 guidelines to boost your *confident composure* as you solidify your position in an organization. Use a three-phase radical shift technique to avoid procrastinating and add to your effectiveness.

Act with Confident Composure

Confident composure is a state of mind where you recognize that you can directly command only yourself. You resolve to do so. When you are in charge of yourself, you believe you can better influence the controllable events that take place around you. You act to do so.

It's one thing to have a view on confident composure. It's another to turn this belief into action. Here are 10 proactive guidelines to strengthen confident composure and keep solidly grounded in competent actions.

1. *Express your talents through a personal mission.* You know where you are going and where you stand. That simplifies life. A sample mission is to advance your work skills to contribute, improve, and prosper. Your actions become more directed when you *do* something (specific actions) for achieving your long-range mission.
2. *Focus on objectives.* You can lose a lot of time trying to figure out what the other guy is doing. Although it is helpful to understand your competition, you'll get further attending to what you can control. If a shoot-out looms, you gain traction by sighting beyond your competitors by concentrating on your mission while working toward achieving your constructive objectives.
3. *Stay organized.* Simplify your system to get results with less hassle. Before you leave work, create your *to do* list for the next day. Emphasize what is most visible and valuable to do. Whenever practical, start with your top priority. Keep your computer or file folders in order. You won't have to chase around finding stuff or duplicating efforts. Schedule a fixed amount of time each day to prepare for what comes next. It's normally easier to continue something you started than to begin from scratch.
4. *Look ahead.* Prepare yourself for progress. Add to your work skill capabilities through education and by exercising your strengths. Get set for the next level or to broaden your responsibilities at your current level. By ably channeling your abilities and interests into your work, you've moved yourself in a direction that is hard to beat.
5. *Make adjustments.* You have a mission and clear goals, but keep coming up short. You may have bought into the wrong goal. Worse, you may get what you say you want that doesn't align well with your talents. Let's say you've decided to be sales manager. Had you considered the day-in, day-out duties the job entails? Track toward activities that are right for you--not titles that sound glamorous.
6. *Question your assumptions.* To avoid plodding in the wrong direction, examine the direction you'll expect to take by following your work assumptions. Consider opposing views. Try to disprove your ideas. As you gain distance from your original ideas, you get less ego-involved. It's easier to adapt when you don't glue yourself to fixed assumptions. You may conclude you are tracking in the right direction for you.
7. *End self-defeating comparativitis.* I call this a mental virus. You downgrade your abilities by comparatively elevating the abilities of others over your own. You degrade yourself for not being good enough. A secret is to build on your strengths. Another is to take a long view. No one is ever a finished

"product." Plug away. Your growth and development will eventually serve as an added buffer against workplace politicking.

8. *Accept stress*--but the right kind. Tension that arises from overcoming obstacles is a propellant, healthy, stress. Handwringing is distressful. Each represents a choice. The distress choice may not be easy to recognize. Think about your thinking when you feel distressed. You may find a language of distress weaving through your stress sensations.
9. *Keep a positive public image*. It is in your interest to project a positive public image. You will want people to think well of you. If you need to establish alliances, you'll have an easier time. Working well with others is an extension of confident composure. You'll get further by working cooperatively with people than by butting heads with them. However, you can't win them all.
10. *Support your ideas with facts and plausible tests*. Present your plans and proposals in supportable terms. Consider what other people are trying to do that fits with your plans. Whenever feasible, establish conditions for you and others to have a mutual advantage. The benefits are obvious. (For more on building solid communications and people skills, see chapter 8, *Shaping up Your Communications Skills*, in <http://www.amazon.com/Fearless-Job-Hunting-Psychological-Strategies/dp/1572248343>)

Get Ahead While Others Procrastinate

Rather than tackle challenges, it is easier to delay and make up excuses. To get somewhere in life, exit this procrastination treadmill anytime. Force yourself to start actions that support your mission. Persist, persist, and persist!

Build confident composure by substituting productive efforts for stressful procrastination habits. You'll be less exposed to workplace politics. You'll accomplish more with less stress. Persistently pursue positive results using the following three self-help guidelines.

1. *Accept inertia*. A boulder rolling down a hill gains momentum. It takes an extra effort to change the course of this object. Shifting from the inertia of resistance to action also takes a radical shift and accompanying effort. Force yourself to start a productive task whether you feel like it or not. By making this radical shift you reinforce an attitude of confident composure.
2. *Assert your will to change*. The 18th century diplomat, Ben Franklin, advised picking qualities you want to develop. Practice using them and you strengthen them. Role construct psychologist, George Kelly, advised practicing productive roles that compete with negative patterns. Try a role. Retain what works. Discard the rest. French educator and philosopher, Jules Payot, advised asserting your will to engage strenuous activities. Look at this effort as a means of developing mental and emotional muscle. Do you have the will power to take these three actions? You'll know from what you do. (See chapter 15 for more on *the will to change*: http://www.amazon.com/Procrastination-Workbook-Personalized-Breaking-Patterns/dp/1572242957/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1303300677&sr=1-1)
3. *Make radical shifts from procrastination to productive perspectives*. Cross over from (1) requiring guarantees for success to a willingness to risk failure; (2) getting tangled in your emotional underwear, to building your talents by planned experimentation; (3) reducing malfunctioning to expanding functioning; (4) stopping procrastinating to stretching for opportunities. (Ibid, chapter 15.)

I specifically designed *End Procrastination Now* to give you strategies and tactics to boost your [productivity](#) at work, home, and school. See: http://www.amazon.com/Procrastination-Workbook-Personalized-Breaking-Patterns/dp/1572242957/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1303300677&sr=1-1

If you are in a toxic work environment where unreason prevails, see <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/science-and-sensibility/201104/workplaces-hell> for ideas on maintaining confident composure despite this madness.

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