

THE "7 VOICES" COMPANION

Practical Leadership Applications for the "7 Voices" Message



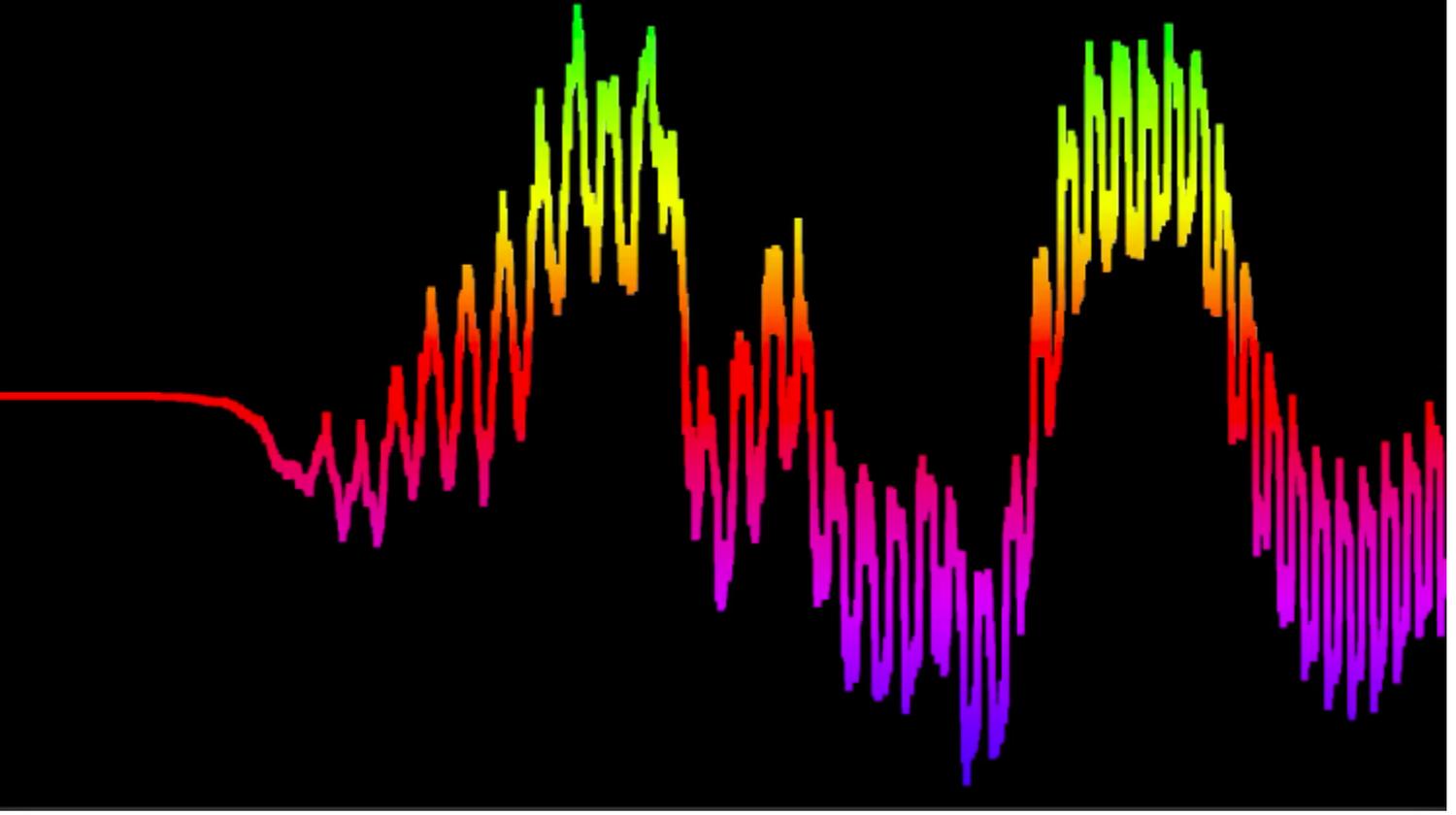


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Voice #1: The Voice Of Comparison

Science now says that up to 10% of our TOTAL thoughts every day are COMPARISON thoughts. And one of the worst places this happens is Social Media. Over 75% of people who use social media puff up their profiles to make them look better than they actually are, causing many to believe that the "perfect" lives they see from others are far better than their own.

"Comparison is the thief of joy."

-- Theodore Roosevelt

When people constantly compare themselves to others, they can become so focused on what they aren't that they deny their own contentment with the value, beauty and uniqueness of who they are.

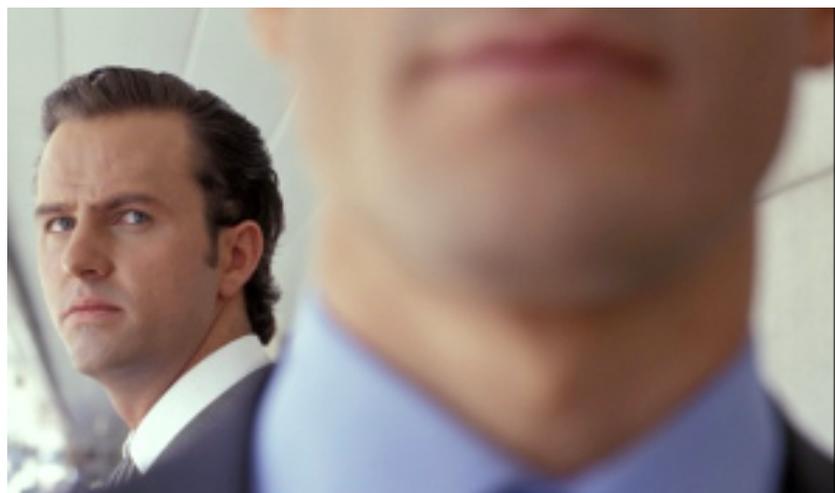
Despite what others may portray, we're all imperfect in some way. Comparing the way we look, dress, talk, eat, socialize and live our lives can be exhausting, unsatisfying and ultimately unfulfilling.

Being able to look in the mirror each day with self-love and respect, enjoying who you are and being content in the moment can go a long way toward building the life you want.

Accepting praise humbly and being grateful for the good in your life can be two of the healthiest things you can do to avoid the Voice of Comparison from taking over.



There are some positives in comparison; for example, sales departments within companies look for people who thrive on competition, and are measured and rewarded for their success in comparison to others on the sales team. However, for many people, this Voice of Comparison is a constant broken record of trying to measure up to an impossible standard -- at work, at home, and in every facet of their lives -- and this constant comparison can be a destructive, never-ending feeling of despair.



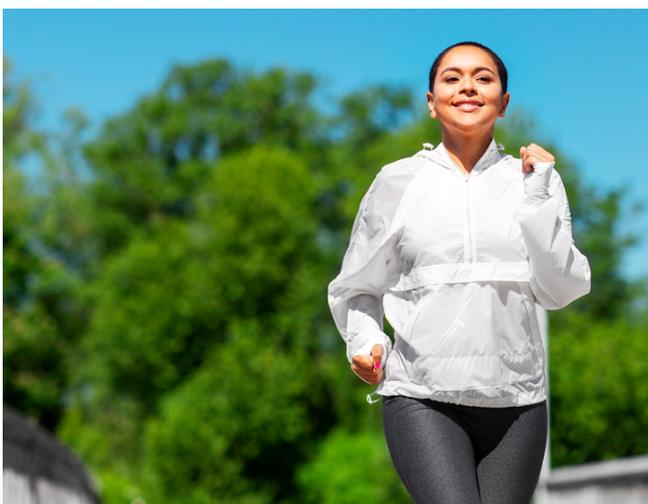
Addressing The Voice Of Comparison

Choose mini milestones 1

Mini Milestones are smaller goals that you can set for yourself over a shorter period of time. Tiny, easy-to-measure steps in the right direction so you can feel good about the progress you're making little by little vs. being unrealistic about being the very best right away.

Starting an exercise program a little at a time, setting partial goals on the way to a larger one, or undertaking a new challenge step by step allows for "feel-good" stages that move you closer to the outcome you want.

Everyone you see that you're comparing yourself to had to start exactly where you are today. Don't bite off more than you can chew on the first day!

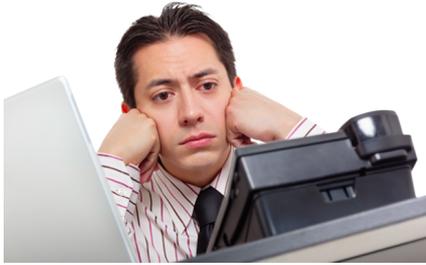


Being a "Secret Seeker" means being on the lookout for something that may not be obvious to you, but is something that can allow you to compare more favorably. That person you're comparing yourself to may have discovered something that YOU don't know yet. This "secret" could be the very thing that is allowing them to achieve it and could help you as well!

What is it that you want to accomplish that you're struggling to achieve in a comparison situation? Could there be a resource, a training method, certain kinds of materials or a special way of doing things that someone else knows that you don't? If so, where can you go to find out what THEY do that you could do too?



"Getting Real" means looking closely at who or what you're comparing yourself to and setting more realistic expectations. You may never be able to pump iron like Arnold, look as fabulous as J-Lo, or create works of art like a professional, but you can still make progress on your goals and celebrate your improvements along the way. Be careful not to aim too high in your expectations!



Voice #2: The Voice Of Regret

Millions of people go through life with an enormous burden of the choices they've made and the regrets they have about those choices and actions. So much mental energy is wrapped up in "Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda" that they often refuse to live in the present.

From all the most recent research on psychology and regret among Americans (see chart below), their Top 5 regrets are:

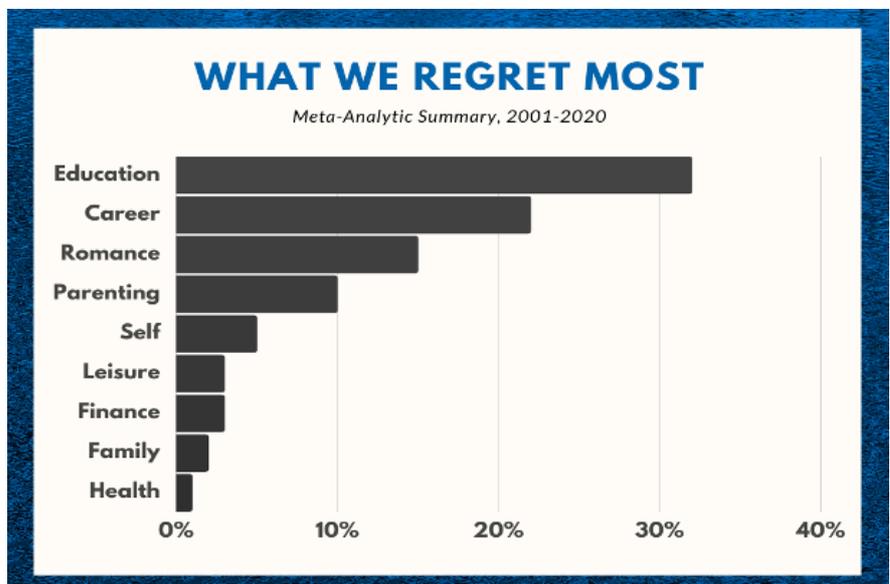
- Education (32%)
- Career (23%)
- Romance (15%)
- Parenting (10%)
- and Self (5%).

For those who regret things about their Education, they say things like, "I should have stayed in school, should have studied harder, should have earned another degree", and so on.

But there are two remarkable correlations: First, people are MOST regretful about things that can STILL be CHANGED, like your education, your career, or finding love. And with a few exceptions, the more often the regret shows up, the greater your chance seems to be to take positive action to address it and make things right.



Often people regret something they've NOT done more frequently than what they've actually DONE, but the regret has the same effect; a feeling of shame and a fear of moving forward. The very thought of the past brings up an almost paralyzing mental suffering that can easily become physical. Dwelling on this Voice of Regret can actually make you physically sick, and more vulnerable to serious illness.



Addressing The Voice Of Regret

Let the Balloon Go



By "Letting the Balloon Go", the idea is to allow all of your regrets and misgivings about the past to be put inside a metaphorical helium balloon and to let them escape and float away. Some have even gone so far as to write their regrets on the outside of a real helium balloon and let it go.

Psychologists say that feelings of regret can affect your body chemistry in dozens of negative ways, like high blood pressure, energy levels, hormones, immune response, and much more. So if you want to increase your tolerance to viruses and other harmful toxins, let your balloon go! Give yourself permission to let go of the regret and let it float away.



"Failing Forward" is a phrase that John Maxwell is widely credited for creating. Its meaning is rooted in the ability to overcome regret, be unafraid to fail, and look at life's experiences as an opportunity to build on what we learned along the way toward a brighter future.

What did you LEARN from what happened (or didn't happen), and how can it make us better, smarter, or more likely NOT to do it again? Maxwell says it this way: "If you're not failing, you're probably not really moving forward."

Be a Fixer



If your regrets have centered around what you may have done TO someone else, being a "Fixer" can often begin the healing process in ways that are unexpected and positive.

By making something right again, you can finally set the Regret aside and create a clear path to healing and positivity. It may not be easy, but Being a Fixer can often be the most powerful means you have to making things right again. Don't put it off, because you'll regret THAT, too!



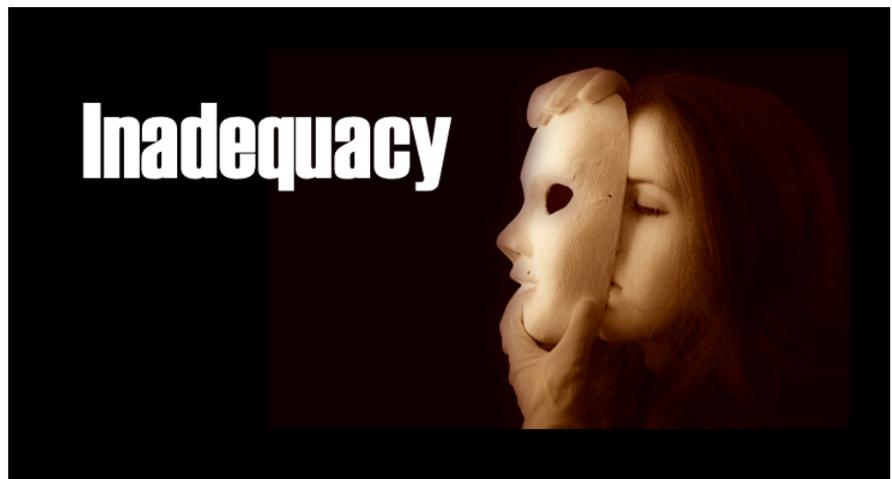
Voice #3: The Voice Of Inadequacy

No matter who you are, what you do, or where you live, everyone is subject to feelings of inadequacy. It's that sense that no matter what you do, no matter hard you work, you will never measure up. Sometimes the expectations come from others, like a boss or a spouse, but most often these deep, dark feelings of "I can't" come from within.

Inadequacy has a shadow side that can often make it easier to spot in others: When something positive happens, no matter what it is, those who suffer from Inadequacy often have difficulty accepting praise or accolades.

If someone is being singled out for an award, a promotion, or something noteworthy, often "the BUT Factor" will kick in. By saying, "Yes, but..." and pointing out something negative, they're minimizing the positive effects of what's being said and wallowing in their own sense of lower self-worth.

The "BUT Factor" can be especially damaging when someone truly HAS done something great, but refuses to acknowledge the positive accolades they're receiving for it. Those who feel this way describe it as "the praise seems to go into a bucket and come out of a hole in the bottom."



Inadequacy has known a new name recently: **Imposter Syndrome**. This is when you feel like you're really not as smart as people think you are, and you live in fear of being exposed as a fraud. Psychologists and behavioral scientists saw a huge spike in this phenomenon during the pandemic, but it continues to be rampant even today. Given all the uncertainty in business, it's widely accepted that it is been harder to be a leader in today's society than it has to be an employee or a follower due in part to Imposter Syndrome.



Addressing The Voice Of Inadequacy

Kick Your "But"s 1



For those who are doubting their own abilities to overcome their feelings of Inadequacy, one of the most debilitating things they're doing to themselves is using self-defeating language.

Using the word "BUT" takes all the good things that have been said or thought before it magically disappear. By replacing the "But" with "And", you're allowing for an outcome that's different from the doom-and-gloom, regret-filled thoughts you have about the topic you're discussing.

For example, you might say something like, "I'd like to get out and start dating again, but I hate the thought of being rejected." Try that same phrase with the word AND instead, and see what a difference it makes: "I'd like to get out and start dating again, AND once I get over the rejection part, it's going to be great!"



Use "YET" to GET 2



This powerful concept of internal language can also be used to create a positive vision of success, which has been proven to be an important factor in nearly every kind of forward progress, including overcoming obstacles like the Voice of Inadequacy.

If you hear yourself saying "I'm not", add the word "YET". If you say to yourself, "I'm not a good guitar player," that's a self-fulfilling prophecy; however, if you say instead, "I'm not a good guitar player YET," you give yourself some space for the journey of BECOMING.



Inadequacy can often make one feel as though they are isolated; it's as if they're on Inadequacy Island and they're the only one who is feeling this way.

When people begin to understand that the MAJORITY of people walking around every day are feeling a similar sense of inadequacy in some way, they begin to lighten up on themselves and feel as if there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Inadequacy is a part of who we are as humans. The good news is that it doesn't have to take us over completely.



Voice #4: The Voice Of Genetics

Perhaps one of the more unusual Voices in people's heads comes from the notion that everyone's genetic makeup has pre-determined anything and everything they're ever going to be in life. Their thinking is that unless you are born with the "right" genes -- within a certain family, race, sex, region of the world, or any other classification -- those outside of that gene pool have no chance of ever becoming what their heart desires.

Many young children grow up in families that constantly reinforce this Voice of Genetics in a negative way.

It's a horrible cycle that continues when parents use words and phrases that reinforce a negative view of who they are genetically, and can be very detrimental to their overall positive mental health and development.

When parents say things like:

"You're never going to be any good at math; none of us are, so you're stuck being a Johnson."

"Better get used to it; you're always going to be a loser, just like everyone else in this family."

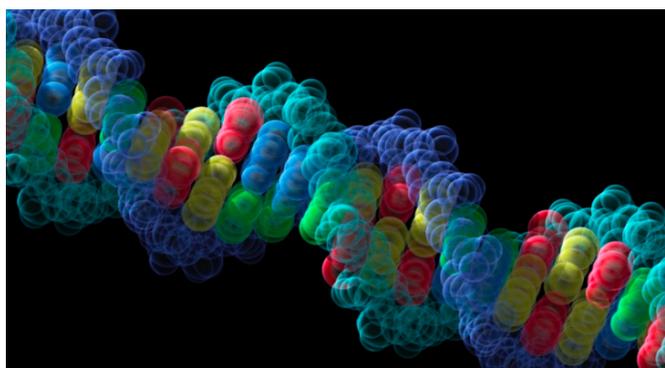
"Why are you always losing things? You're so stupid; you'll never make anything of yourself!"

This negative impression of who they are can be carried with them like heavy baggage throughout their lives and into adulthood.



This belief in pre-determined outcomes can happen to anyone, but can often be present in those who were born outside of the country in which they choose to live and work. This "outsider" feeling can stifle their ability to grow and develop in their careers and in their personal lives, convinced that they have no chance of breaking free of who they are from the inside.

Managers should be keenly aware of these cultural differences at work, and make a concerted effort to get to know their people to avoid this feeling of their DNA holding them back from becoming all they are truly capable of.



Addressing The Voice Of Genetics As Leaders:

Learn Their Story 1

As a leader, every one of your people is unique. What do you know about their story? Many of the best leaders WANT to get to know what each person's journey looks like, and where they'd like to be in the future. When you know someone's background, it gives you a unique window into THEM... and you can potentially use that information to help them to grow beyond what they believe to be their own limitations. It could be that you can show them that their genetics and history aren't getting in the way... they're actually the unique reasons that they CAN succeed.

As a leader, keep in mind that **each individual's unique destiny is far more about DESIRE than DNA.** Give them the chance to thrive in your environment despite what they may personally feel about their own potential!



Tell Them Your Story 2

Your individual story may be messy, but sharing your background can be something that can make people feel good about their own DNA.

They don't have to know every little detail, but giving them more of a window into your own story can make them feel more connected to you, maybe a bit more likable, and it may make them feel less self-conscious about where THEY came from.

Provide Resources for Growth 3

If you can provide the kinds of opportunities that will allow your best people to succeed, it can be a "Voice-busting" moment for them that shows your confidence in THEM as well as giving them the opportunity to prove to themselves that they are more than what their Genetics may say.

What time or budget could you bring their way to help them in their quest to become more than they've ever been before? Maybe they've felt they just don't have what it takes to earn a degree, because no one in their family has ever done it before; maybe you can help with a dollar-for-dollar matching program, and if they graduate with honors, then you'll pay 100%. Incentivize their self-confidence... and give them a chance to soar higher and farther than they ever thought possible.



Voice #5: The Voice Of Failure

One of the most prevalent Voices in our heads is one that we all experience regularly, and sometimes multiple times a day; the Voice of Failure.

No one likes to fail, yet we experience failure at different levels constantly; losing a sale, trying a new recipe, refinishing a piece of furniture or asking someone out on a date can all have less than satisfactory outcomes, and many people suffer long afterwards from the mental distress that failure brings.

Psychologists see the Voice of Failure in their patients so often, they actually have a WORD for it: Atychiphobia (a-TICK-a-FO-be-uh). It's the official clinical name for fear of failure. Everyone experiences it, but no one wants to feel it.

If you're a leader, most everyone on your staff has screwed up before -- missed a deadline, forgot a priority, lost a sale, or something else. Your natural reaction as a leader is to point it out in some way, in the hope that the problem can be corrected and not repeated.

But there are people on your team that are SO afraid to fail, they do whatever they can to AVOID it. And, ironically, it's the very thing that leads to hiding, stagnation, irrelevance, and ultimately the thing they fear the most -- termination.

It's important to be aware of this crippling fear and NOT to over-exert it in the workplace.



There's another related term in psychology called "Self-Handicapping"; that's when someone actually creates a situation for themselves that keeps them from failing or being rejected. In sales, a person that is self-handicapping might call on a prospect at a time when they know they will be unavailable, like during the lunch hour. "Well... I gave it my best, and they didn't answer, so I just left a voice mail."

It may not make sense to some of us, but to those who hear the Voice of Failure constantly, it's how they live.



Addressing The Voice Of Failure As Leaders:



When new employees begin their careers in a position, they will sometimes choose to avoid risk more often, and see themselves as more vulnerable. Make sure they understand that they have your support AND the support of the team.

When you give them a project, make sure they're clear on what success looks like, and hold people accountable for their progress. Encourage "What If?" thinking and get everyone involved in creative solutions to whatever challenges come up.

Get the help of your veterans to help mentor the new people in their roles. Make sure that everyone knows you appreciate good, calculated attempts, and the biggest risk is to sit back and do nothing.

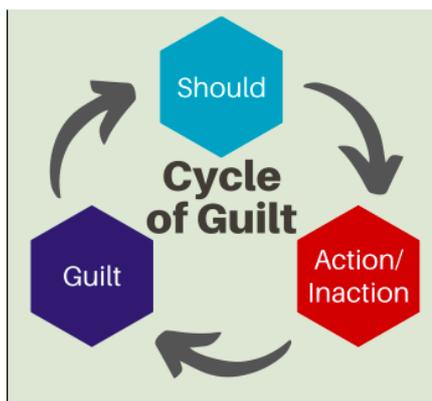


It's a well-known fact that the biggest breakthroughs often happen right AFTER the biggest FAILURES. I like to say that "there's lightning in every blunder". Some of the most famous people you've ever known have seen MULTIPLE failures along the way to their biggest successes.

When one of your people makes a mistake, sit down with them and ask them what went wrong, what they LEARNED from them, and how they'd go about the same thing differently now that they've experienced it.



All of us need space to wipe our mental hard drive clean and press on. You want to give your people permission to eliminate the negativity from their brain, so that they have ROOM for what needs to be done NEXT.



Psychologists have a 3-step guilt model called the "Cycle of Guilt". It illustrates those Catch-22 situations where people feel trapped inside their own inaction.

Here's an example of how the Cycle works: If a staff member has to call a customer to tell them about a delay in their order, they may put it off to avoid a confrontation. This is the first stage of the Cycle: the "Should".

The second part is called the "Action/Inaction" stage. If he calls the customer, they'll be angry; if he doesn't, his boss will be angry. Whatever he does, he's sunk. So he decides to think about it some more, feeling even MORE anxious.

The third stage, "Guilt", is where the negative feelings start to build up and make the whole thing worse for everyone. At some point, the decision comes around again -- "Should I or shouldn't I?" -- and the cycle starts all over again.

Voice #6: The Voice Of Guilt

Guilt can be an overwhelming force in people's minds. "I should have done this, I shouldn't have done that" can be a crippling element to our well-being.

When Guilt takes over, experts say it can cause inner tension, exhaustion, and even severe depression. Guilt can keep you from feeling any kind of happiness or satisfaction. It hits you when you're down... and KEEPS you there.



As a leader, it's important to recognize that the Voice of Guilt can be silently at work with your own people on multiple levels. Whether it's job-related or something at home, Guilt can cause people to space out, miss deadlines, and become a less functioning member of the team.

You may see them functioning just fine one moment, and then suddenly come across as strangely quiet, defensive or angry, or even lash out so they don't have to confront the problem. This is often Guilt at its deepest level.



Addressing The Voice Of Guilt As Leaders:

Create a Safe Space 1



It's embarrassing to fess up to something that should have handled differently. If you notice that something isn't quite right, address it with them one-on-one, and do it sooner than later. Create a safe space for the conversation and start out by saying something like this: "I've been noticing something that may be going on with you. I wanted you to know that if you'd like to talk about it, I'd be happy to listen. No judgments."

They may feel guilty about procrastination, of making a mistake, or choosing not to act right away on a situation. Whatever it is, hear them out. Let them know you care, you've seen that it's been affecting them on the job, and that you want to help make it right.



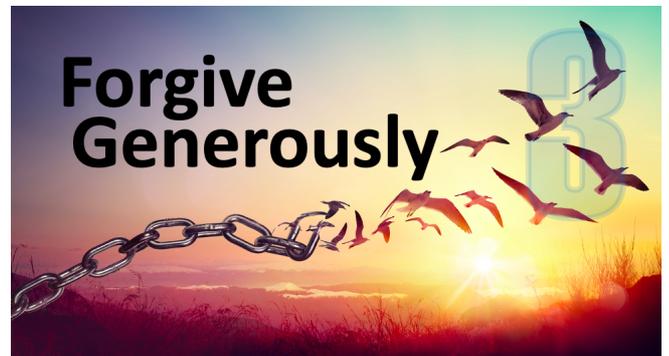
Thank Them for Sharing 2



If you get the truth about the situation, celebrate that. It's a victory. The Cycle of Guilt gets its energy from INACTION, when someone puts off what they know they should be doing.

Psychologists all agree that healing can only start when some sort of positive action takes place. They've confided in you, so now the two of you can start to work on the most viable solution right away. Be careful not to take on the problem yourself, but guide the solution with action steps, a deadline, and a time when the two of you will meet again to check on the progress.

Forgive Generously 3



You may be angry about what happened, but your forgiveness may help them get beyond their guilt AND earn their longer-term trust with you.

Those who spend their lives at sea use a simple phrase: *The sea has no memory*. It doesn't care where you've been, what you've done, or where you're going. The sea passes no judgment on anything or anyone. You can't change the past, but as a leader, you can be present for someone. You can be understanding, encouraging, and generous. A simple kindness to others often has the power to release the deepest guilt.



Voice #7: The Voice Of Heartbreak



Heartbreak is the Voice we may have the least control over, because it's often something that happens TO us.

It affects those who are angry or hurt; those who can't eat or sleep. Those who hear the Voice of Heartbreak are far more vulnerable to major illness. They're twice as likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke in the 30 days after a heartbreak like a partner's death. There may be no more difficult voice to hear than the voice

There's evidence that as many as 2% of the people that are brought to the hospital for heart attacks are actually experiencing what's called Broken Heart Syndrome.

It's a condition where the heart muscle actually changes shape and malfunctions after a huge loss. The death of a spouse or a family member, a bitter loss of a job or a relationship, even the loss of a beloved pet can bring on Broken Heart Syndrome; it mimics the very same conditions as a heart attack.

Emergency room physicians are now trained to ask key questions to patients presenting symptoms of heart attacks to check for Broken Heart Syndrome.



For many years, doctors and psychologists ignored broken-heartedness as a condition. They wrote it off as just something to "get over". There is now medical consensus that it is possible to die of a broken heart.



Addressing The Voice Of Heartbreak As Leaders:



To begin the healing process, those in pain must begin by honoring the fact that it's there.

These are strong, vivid emotions, and people around them might think they're helping when they tell them to suck it up or "just get involved in something or someone else". As a leader, if you identify someone that's suffering, encourage them to talk it out honestly – to you, a professional, or someone with an unbiased ear.

This is when people are most vulnerable to diving into food, alcohol or overworking. When you see that happening, recognize that they're only delaying the healing process, and encourage them to get the help they need -- to feel it, to cry it out, to scream if they have to. Help them to reach out to a counselor or therapist, or suggest joining a support group, even if it's online.



Those who hear the Voice of Heartbreak often wonder what's wrong with THEM. They may think that part of it is their fault, that they could have done something to avoid what happened, or to change part of the outcome. It starts with "If only I would have done this or that", and can quickly spiral into, "What's wrong with me?" and "I'm worthless."

As a leader, it's important to help your people find the strength within to recognize that every heartbreaking moment subsides in time, and that time is largely up to them. Give them the space they need to grieve and forgive themselves. As in any situation, there's a limit to that space, but make it a point to let them know they HAVE that space from you.



One simple exercise that you can share that can make a WORLD of difference is called Breathing Through Your Heart. This is a visualization exercise used, and it's used to ease the overwhelming stress that's created from things like Heartbreak.

It's all about directing your attention to the heart area and breathing a little more deeply, and imagine you are actually breathing through your heart.



Things You Can Do Today And Every Day

If you're a leader that cares about your people at all, you're probably saying to yourself, "Wow... I've got a lot of work to do!" If you're feeling like this at all, it means that you have the right HEART for the job you're in. Your people have a lot to give, but the negative Voices in their heads don't have to hold them back from being their best. Here they are again:

- **Comparison**, helping them realize that they're important AND valuable just as they are;
- **Regret**, of things they've done and things they didn't do... understanding their regrets CAN be overcome, and encouraging them to respond positively NOW and in the future;
- **Inadequacy**, the voice of Imposter Syndrome, realizing that we're all in the same boat and that no one has all the answers;
- **Genetics**, knowing that your destiny is stronger than your DNA;
- **Failure**, and knowing that success depends on trying, failing and gaining knowledge each time;
- **Guilt**, recognizing that breaking the Cycle is something your people CAN do to stop the endless spiral; and
- **Heartbreak**, knowing that everyone can CHOOSE to heal and to bravely go forward in what new adventures lie ahead.

If you'd like to work with me directly to incorporate the "7 Voices" philosophy and message to your group, I'd be pleased to work with you. Reach out to me at bill@the800poundgorilla.com or directly at 815.549.9134.

-- Bill Guertin

