

NINE WAYS
YOUR FATHER'S
INVOLVEMENT
(OR LACK THEREOF)
AFFECTS YOU EVERY DAY AT WORK

A Workbook Based on the Amazon #1 Best Seller
The Legacy of Absence

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INTRODUCTION

WHO ARE YOU AT WORK?

And who are all those others who show up there, too, your coworkers, bosses, customers, and clients? If I asked you to describe the personalities you see and deal with most every day (including your own), how big and complex would your vocabulary need to be?

Would you use words like nice, quiet, great person, argumentative, not a “team player,” or know-it-all, and then start to recognize characteristics and behaviors that tell a deeper story of fears, hopes, hurts, betrayals, and disappointments?

Have you ever wondered what’s behind the behaviors you observe in the work setting? It’s not uncommon to live our lives without noticing, seeing, or feeling what others are going through. We may not even pay attention to our own behaviors, feelings, or relationships with those around us. Perhaps we have the attitude “It is what it is,” and “people are who they are.”

The truth is that if we were to understand the source of and reason for most behaviors at work, particularly the ones that tend to be negative and irk us the most, it could make a positive impact on the work atmosphere as well as the lives and relationships of most everyone there. It would also have the capacity to increase the productivity and profitability of the company or organization.

Family business gurus such as John L. Ward in his book, *Perpetuating the Family Business: 50 Lessons Learned from Long-Lasting, Successful Families in Business*, tell us that if we take care of family issues, business issues will tend to take care of themselves. This is said in reference to the family within a family-owned business. However, every one of us is from a family of some kind, and those family experiences follow us to work, too, not to mention the family-type relationships that become very real between work associates. So, the principle applies to all of us.

There is another perspective, one that most people are unaware of, and yet when told, they say, “Oh, of course. That makes perfect sense.” We know that each one of us is unique. No two lives (even identical twins) are exactly alike in every way. And yet there is sufficient evidence to support the truth that each unique person is very much like—in fact, reflects—his or her parents, not only in physical characteristics but also in personality traits, character qualities, and behaviors.

HOW DOES DAD DO IT?

Over the years, I've held many different jobs, from cleaning toilets to being a school principal; sometimes, those two were the same job! I also owned and ran businesses and hired, managed, and dismissed employees. I worked as an employee and coached other owners and managers in their work. And finally, the list includes the jobs of being a husband, a father, and a grandfather.

EXERCISE

Take a moment here to list all the types of jobs you have held over the years. I did it above in general terms in four quick sentences, even though I have had nine different careers and many more actual jobs. Your list can include specific job titles or be as general as mine. Whether you've been faithful to one job or many, I've found this exercise to be a good one to evaluate and contemplate what you have done, where you soared and where you struggled, who helped you, and who you helped along the way.

As I look back at those experiences, I notice that I can see various traits from my father (and mother) coming through on the job in my behavior, attitude, and actions, some good, some not so good, and I'm sure you can relate. This is true of us whether we are rank-and-file employees, managers, or the top dog.

In fact, research, training, and observation show that a great deal of how we behave at work is a result of our parents' influence during the first 18 years in what is called our "preparation" years (preparation to fly from the nest to meet the world on our own).

Those past incidents from childhood can be ones that both formed and assaulted our character, personality traits, skills, physical appearance, rights, intelligence, and the list goes on. In most cases, they impacted our sense of self-worth, who we are, our identity, and our value as a person—things we must protect mostly because we may not have been protected in the past, especially as a child.

Most of the copied behaviors come from our father, even if he was mostly absent or uninvolved in our life during those years. I've heard relatives tell teenagers, "You're just like your father."

"What?" they respond. "He was gone before I turned three. I never knew him."

“Doesn’t matter,” Aunt Margaret says. “You’re just like him.”

And they aren’t only making comments about the shape of one’s nose, shoe size, or skin color—things we can’t control. Interestingly enough, the comments also include the inherent personality traits, character qualities, behaviors, tone of voice, emotions, ways of thinking, reactions, and even habits that have been passed down for generations. And, yes, they are behaviors that follow us into the neighborhood, church, our families, and especially into the workplace.

EXERCISE

Consider your own behaviors, habits, idiosyncrasies, and personality style at work, the ones you are proud of and the ones you may even be embarrassed by. Writing them out can be helpful. As author Richard Rohr said, “You cannot heal what you cannot acknowledge.”

Now, list at least five ways you are like your father and five ways you are not like him. Then identify which ones you think are great, which ones you’re okay with, and those you don’t like and may even be embarrassed by.

For extra credit, do the same by comparing yourself to your grandparents; then by observation, compare your children to you; and then compare your children to your parents. Each step of these exercises may provide interesting insights for you.

Recognizing the behaviors and finding appropriate solutions for the negative behaviors can literally transform almost any workplace setting from toxic, walking on eggshells, disliking (hating) our peers, and not wanting to get up in the morning, into a fulfilling, encouraging, and positive place where we enjoy ourselves and flourish—or at least someplace in between.

And of course, it's not all negative. In fact, most people we really admire as both friends and great work associates are those who have been infused with wonderful relationship skills, values, morals, integrity, and love and respect, most of which came from both their mom and dad.

Unfortunately, it is often the negative behaviors that come out at work, behaviors we attribute to current conditions, conflicting personalities, or circumstances, rather than their real roots—dear ol' Dad, and his dad, and his dad before that. This is equally true for daughters and sons.

Why is it helpful (even essential) to know about the source of our behavior, attitudes, and personality traits? Managing our negative issues is definitely helpful. Think, for example, of the benefit of anger management. However, knowing the real source of our attributes gives us the potential to address them at their source instead of merely managing them. The point here is to notice specific things about ourselves and then intentionally work to bring about change.

“If we do not intentionally deal with what has impacted us, we will most assuredly repeat the same thing”

- author Richard Rohr

Next, let me explain how this “past intruding on the present” happens: Essentially, we are reenacting our family dynamics from childhood, where we treat our boss as a parent, our peers as siblings, our employees as children, and performance reviews as report cards. We also see fairness, equity, and resource allocation according to the way things were done in our families. Whatever ways our childhoods taught us to respond to conflict, criticism, shame, correction, love, sharing, and respect will return to us in moments where circumstances in later life trigger that early-life memory.

The problem at work is that we try to solve current behavior and attitude problems without realizing they typically have their roots in the past. We rarely connect our behaviors in business to father-child relationships.

Technically speaking, this “past intruding on the present” is called transference. Transference is defined as a response of anger toward a person or event in the present that triggers an unrelated painful experience from our past.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

Sam was in a job he loved. For him, graphic design was second nature, and this advertising job was his dream come true. He loved the setting, the hours, and the pay and got along well with everyone. In an office down the hall, there was one woman in particular whom he enjoyed. Jane was about twenty years older than he was, and they seemed to have a natural connection of understanding each other's wit and way of thinking. They hit it off almost from the day he was hired.

One day at mid-morning break time, he and several other employees had wandered into Jane's office to hobnob about the weekend's big NFL football game. It was a fun conversation and included some jib-jabbing comments poking fun at each other. Jane was in the swing of it when she said, "That quarterback fumble looked like Sam the other day when he was trying to fix that copier—ink all over the place." Everyone laughed. Except Sam.

Normally, he would have, too, but this time something set him off. He got red in the face, threw his notebook across the room, and stormed out and down the hall.

Everyone was shocked, wondering what was going on with Sam. This was so unlike him—or was it?

We have all witnessed the extreme reaction of a person (maybe ourselves) to what we thought was a rather minor incident. Yelling, crying, accusing, blaming, even getting physical. We are shocked and taken aback. Where on earth did that come from?

Transference is not something we will be aware of in the moment, so it's important to take time to reflect and recognize when it may be transference bubbling (or exploding) to the surface. Reflection can help us react appropriately to the present situation, break the negative agreements against ourselves and the perpetrator, and prepare for future instances. Breaking negative agreements is essential to breaking the patterns of transference and the anger that comes from it.

Not only will each of us react with transference at various times, but we will undoubtedly be the trigger to someone else's transference, and we should try to recognize that as well.

Transference has such a powerful lifetime hold on us because the root memories involve being rejected, embarrassed, shamed, prejudiced, betrayed, abandoned, and otherwise not chosen. These are words of great pain, usually associated with suffering. They are words that primarily come through one's parents or others closely associated with them. The events may have happened through obvious abuse or perhaps in ways so subtle no one would ever consider them abusive, let alone remember them.

What matters is how the event was perceived by and impacted the child. I grew up as the second of four siblings. I was the only boy. In more recent years, we took the opportunity to talk about our growing-up years. Interestingly, my youngest sister and I had very similar interpretations of our relationships with

our parents. The other two sisters were also similar to each other, but quite different from ours. The settings were the same, but the ways we experienced them were not. That does not make two of us right and two wrong. How we experience and interpret what happened is what matters, along with how we manage and apply them to our adult lives individually, in our families, and out in society (at work).

Just as it is the father's role to help a child find his identity, Sam needs guidance to help him acknowledge his behavior and address its roots so that he and the whole team can move forward in a healthy way. When a true leader—even someone not in an official leadership role—sees conflicts that are more than what they ought to be or emotional meltdown reactions that indicate hurting people, they have a duty to step in, to come alongside, to console, to help. Only by finding the source of the negative reactions can the hurting individual uncover the influences that are masking their true self and progress toward the clarity and healing they need. This is the ultimate job we all have, to be responsibly caring for others. Not coddling or enabling or excusing, not intimidating, or berating or avoiding—caring.

In some cases, what the hurting individual needs may be far more than the father, leader, or friend is capable of doing, but helping is not all or nothing. In the tradition of the Good Samaritan, we are called to do what we can, when we can, with what we have, for those whose paths we cross.

EXERCISE

Think about times you have observed outbursts of anger at work in one form or another, perhaps from those under you, over you, on the same level—or even in you. Consider what may have led up to the incident, the resulting behavior, and how it was handled—the aftermath. Then reflect on whether the resulting anger matched the apparent cause of the anger. Is it possible that the behavior may have been caused by something totally unrelated to the present?

If there could be a “do-over” in terms of how the behavior was handled, what would you suggest?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

I'm going to develop this concept in three sections. The first is a list of behaviors that may be observed in work settings that most likely result from the influence of one's parents, primarily the father. The second section describes the possible reasons for those observable behaviors. Third, I will describe a way to deal with negative behavior as an example, and fourth, I will list some resources.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS AT WORK

Every one of us knows of employees and employers that have made us wonder why they are the way they are: those who are exceptionally great, and we wish we could clone, or those toward the opposite pole, who are obstinate, rude, passive, aggressive, or even passive-aggressive. We've also known supervisors who we wish would stand up to those employees and either "fix" them or fire them. I've listed several behaviors and attitudes that you have likely observed at work (and outside of work). They may be done subtly, in which case the behavior may be endured or ignored, or to the extent that you or they must be removed from the job to maintain a satisfying, acceptable work environment.

EXERCISE

As you read through that last paragraph, undoubtedly, various people at work came to mind. Before I list possible negative behaviors, take a few moments to think about and write down both positive and negative behaviors that you have observed at work. This needs to be practical and helpful, so be open to looking at yourself the same way. What behaviors from you and others tend to get in the way of or benefit productive work and relationships?

Maybe you'll recognize yourself and/or associates in these descriptions.

1. Passive, lack of confidence, self-esteem, maturity, or identity.
2. Defensive, blames and accuses others, creates rivalries by pitting people against each other.
3. "Not fair," feels left out, not listened to, consulted, or chosen, "poor me."
4. Outbursts and displays of anger or temper, either outwardly or smoldering internally.
5. Avoids conflict, does not address issues, can't say "no," people pleaser.
6. Controller/decision maker (can be positive), problem solver (can be positive), has to be right, has to "do it myself," can't empower others.
7. Perfectionism, can't accept failure, narcissism, superiority complex.
8. Doesn't trust or is untrustworthy.
9. Workaholic, addictive behaviors, avoids family relationships at home.
10. Misogyny (ingrained prejudice against women) and misandry (the same for men).

NINE WAYS YOUR FATHER'S INVOLVEMENT (OR LACK THEREOF) AFFECTS YOU EVERY DAY AT WORK

THE MOST OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR PATTERNS AT WORK

REASONS FOR MOST OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR PATTERNS AT WORK

1. **Lack of confidence, self-esteem, maturity, and identity:** the four primary attributes designed to be built in by the father during a child's first 18 years. When the lack of these attributes is modeled by a passive father, both sons and daughters will most likely become passive in those ways as well. All four attributes can be developed as the child moves on into adult years but will typically take much longer to do so and will need to be specifically addressed with the intention to change. Even so, the attributes will tend to form the basis of their behavior.
2. **Abandonment:** This may seem like an extreme term to apply to father absence. However, a father often not showing up as promised and choosing (as a pattern) work, sports, hobbies, TV, drugs, etc., over the child, is a form of abandonment. At the time, we may not be concerned about any lasting impact of making such choices ("kids are resilient, they'll get over it") but, in reality, children of absent fathers become adult children of absent fathers. There is much evidence to show the lasting effects of father absence in adults, particularly in the forms listed below. It's not unusual for these signs to show up in the workplace as much as they do in the home.¹

¹ <https://cptsdfoundation.org/2021/02/25/the-long-term-effects-of-abandonment/>

- a)Panic or anxiety
- b)Constant worry
- c)Fear of being alone
- d)Isolation
- e)Frequent physical illnesses
- f)Low self-esteem
- g)Addiction
- h)Disordered eating
- i)Self-harm
- j)Anxiety
- k)Depression
- l)Codependency
- m)Attachment anxiety
- n)Borderline personality disorder
- o)They fear giving too much in a relationship.
- p)They push people away to avoid rejection.
- q)They are often people pleasers.
- r)They experience codependency.
- s)They feel insecure in intimate relationships and friendships.
- t)They require repeated reassurance that they are loved.
- u)They feel the need to control others.
- v)They jump from one relationship to another.
- w)They often will sabotage their relationships.

One final comment on this category: Whether a father is absent for the reasons listed above under #2 (as a pattern) or whether he physically left the family through a divorce, chose to leave, was incarcerated, or died, the impact on the children is essentially the same.

3. Lack of skills: verbal, knowledge, conversational, relational, and job skills.

By simply being present and involved with his children, a father influences each of these areas. When working with the former superintendent of Minneapolis, MN schools, Dr. Green told us, “If children come to us for kindergarten without an involved father or grandfather, they are already lost to us.” Involved fathers have a greater impact on school readiness than preschool education. When I talk to educators about the impact of father involvement in their child’s education, they agree, but when it comes to acting on it, very little is done. They recognize how immense this barrier is and feel helpless.

Though children grow into adults, the impact of an uninvolved father continues their entire lives—affecting their schooling, work performance, finances, health, relationships, and emotional well-being. (See chapter 5, *The Legacy of Absence.*)

- 4. Anger:** As explained above, anger has its roots in transference, which is a response to a person or event in the present that triggers an unrelated painful experience in our past.

I define anger as both controlled and uncontrolled behavior responding to settings and people that intimidate. Further, anger is a false sense of power that consists in trying to control situations in inappropriate ways. Perhaps the child had to take over in cases where the father couldn't be depended on. "I won't be like my passive father."

Anger is conflict acted out through yelling, getting "big," hitting, stomping out, passive-aggressive silent treatment, giving the cold shoulder, getting back at others, making threats, demanding, or any other behavior that may be considered abusive. (See chapters 13-15 in *The Legacy of Absence*.)

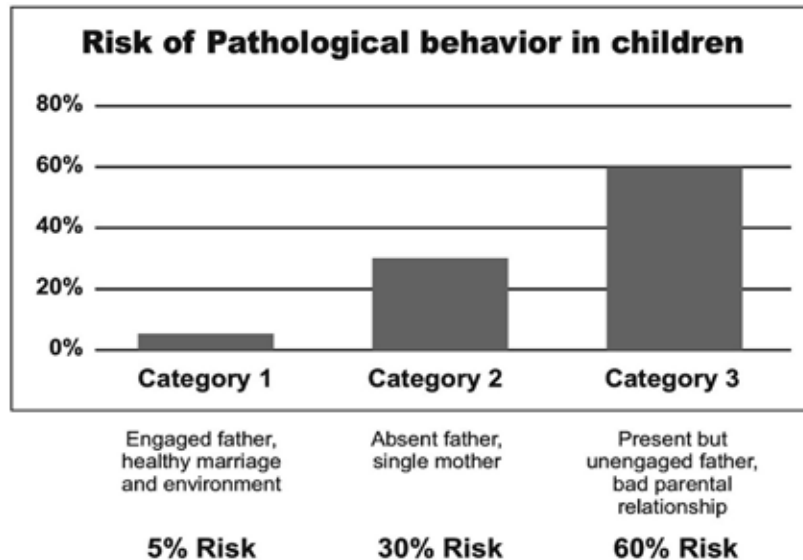
- 5. Negative agreements and vows, limiting beliefs, and strongholds** learned while growing up. These can all be summed up with the explanation that we agree with something someone else said about us and allow it to control our lives. It may be about our looks, abilities, potential, or any other aspect of who we are. If a person at work is so "tagged," it may become impossible for them to fit in or to realize their potential.

Others may find ways to sabotage their work without realizing they are living out the negative agreement from Dad that "you'll never amount to anything" and are still trying to prove to Dad that they really could be successful. This is often seen in both women and men who run a business with a determination and drive that mows people down who are in their path. They may not have outbursts of anger, but it seems to be running in them all the time—they have something to prove.

Still others seem to be hiding under a lack of confidence from rarely or never hearing the words that they are beautiful, smart, clever, or even loved. How often do we hear kids being called dumb, lazy, or ugly? Such words become self-fulfilling prophecies as they grow into adults and come to see themselves by what they are called.

- 6. The need to be right:** Studies have shown this to be the leading cause of breakups in any relationship. As humans, we have a built-in need to protect ourselves, our self-esteem, and our sense of self-worth, to the point of blaming and accusing others or making excuses if blame does end with us. If the father models this trait, it tends to destroy identity, self-esteem, and confidence in other family members and is learned by them as a possible way to treat others who show up in the workplace.
- 7. Perfectionism, pathological behavior, personality disorders (narcissism):** Perfectionism and pathological behavior may be a result of medical, hereditary, or mental disorders, in which case professional help should be involved. However, they may also be a result of an uninvolved father, as shown by a study of the risk of pathological behavior in this self-explanatory chart.²

² Henryk, Wieja, MD, "Spiritual Fatherhood," January 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3r_7McyENQ.



8. **Trust issues:** We know that trust is imperative to the work setting. We go to great lengths to build trust in our teams—and we should. Modeling trust and creating an atmosphere for it makes it easier to understand how impactful it is during the preparation years at home. In fact, conclusive research demonstrates that trust (or lack of it) is learned in the first six months of life. The father’s interaction is a primary factor in that learning.³
9. **Misogyny (ingrained prejudice and anger against women) and misandry (the same for men):** Consider the #MeToo/#TimesUp movement that caught fire in October 2017, a global, and survivor-led, movement against sexual violence, and its impact on the work setting. These behaviors are strongholds that grip and affect a person’s thoughts and behaviors and have likely been passed down through generations of ancestors.

They are typically reinforced by one’s mother and/or father, where the real bias is rooted and developed. The parent/child relationship is so powerful that the biases are received as truth and are expressed through anger. It may not look like anger—in fact, it may be justified by saying it is merely “having fun.”

When misogynist and misandrist views and behaviors become commonplace, they are masked by normalcy. They then become even more sinister, like passivity, because they are right in front of us but dismissed as “the way things are.” They can become so pervasive that they decay any business setting as a result. (See a more complete discussion of this topic in chapter 17 of *The Legacy of Absence*.)

HANDLING NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR AT WORK

The list in the last section is intended to be helpful, not scare you off. The following is a case study to demonstrate how one of those behaviors in the work setting was handled in real life. It is followed by a shorter, step-by-step description of the process I used in the story and in most behavioral confrontations listed above, from repeated lateness to outbursts of anger, to incompetence and firing. It is written from a supervisor/boss to an employee but may also work from peer to peer or, with adaptation, from an employee to a supervisor.

³ Kendra Cherry, “Trust vs. Mistrust: Psychosocial Stage 1, Learning to trust the world around us,” Updated July 16, 2019. <https://www.verywellmind.com/trust-versus-mistrust-2795741>.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

“Humpf!” Patti was visibly frustrated and upset. “Oh, just forget it!” she said dismissively.

Everyone else at our weekly staff meeting wondered what was so hard for Patti right now. It was obvious she had things to say, wanted to be heard, and yet couldn’t seem to do it.

This was the second time this had happened, and the last time, as a new employee, she effectively steered everyone to her way of thinking. It wasn’t because they agreed with her; they were just giving her some room to adapt.

It was embarrassing for the team. They knew she would learn soon enough and were already tired of walking around her as if on eggshells. For now, they left it up to me.

“What’s next on the agenda?” I said, and we moved on, much to everyone’s relief, including Patti’s.

As the meeting ended, I knew it was time for this behavior by Patti to be confronted. When we were out of earshot of the others, I said, “Patti, I would like to have a conversation with you. How about we take a five-minute break and meet in my office?”

My office is a great workspace with lots of table surfaces, light, and big windows out to the rest of the operation. It’s also private for conversations. Patti walked in, closed the door, and took the only other chair.

This wasn’t a social call, so I started right in.

Tim: “Patti, I want to tell you more about our staff. We are a team. Hopefully, you’ve already noticed that we support and encourage each other, we have fun and work hard together, and when needed, we challenge and confront one another—not to have our way, but to learn, to grow, and to be the best we can be as individuals, a team, and a business. Through it all, what I hear from them is that they appreciate the fact that regardless of which one of those things we’re doing at the time, they know we have each other’s back and we are in it together. We respect and care for each other.

“As the lead person,” I went on, “I feel it is my responsibility to model this relationship. Considering that, I want you to know that, even as a new employee, you matter to me and the team. Who you are, how well you fit in, and how fulfilled you are all matter to us. We want you to succeed. How does that sound?”

Patti: “I heard about that when I first started so it’s good to hear it reinforced. I have to say, however, that it didn’t feel that way in today’s meeting. I felt as if I didn’t fit in.”

Tim: “Well, I’m glad you noticed because that’s why I asked you to come in. That was uncomfortable for all of us. What do you think was going on?”

Patti: “Wait a minute. Are you saying this was all my fault?” Patti suddenly became defensive.

Tim: “No, I didn’t blame or accuse you of anything. I only asked your opinion, and as a new employee, I thought you might have some good insights. Plus, I think talking about it will help you become a stronger team player, as well.”

Patti: “Hmm, well, okay. I was frustrated because I felt like I had something to say about what we were talking about, something important, but I couldn’t think fast enough to put it into words. That happens to me a lot, and it makes me feel like an idiot. I hate it.”

Tim: “I know what you mean. I often feel the same way, so I can identify. But here’s the problem we idiots are creating, as I see it. The way you respond to the situation makes it hard for the team to figure out what you’re really trying to do. It seems manipulative, so they feel like they’re skating on thin ice. At the first meeting, it was so strong that they ended up not only helping you to express yourself, but going along with what you said, even though they didn’t really agree with you. Today, when it was happening again, I let it go on as a matter of observation.”

Patti: “Well, that’s embarrassing,” she said, her face turning a bit red.

Tim: “Do you have any idea where this kind of behavior came from?” I could tell Patti was thinking seriously now. Likely, pictures of former jobs and life at home were running through her mind. She spoke slowly, almost in a reverie.

Patti: “Wow, I know I do it, but no one has ever confronted me about it before. When you make me think about it like this, I start seeing the ‘behavior’ as you call it... Oh yeah, no doubt about it... This is even more embarrassing. When you describe it so clearly, I can see that that’s what I do—we do. It was very common at home when I was growing up, especially with my mom and grandma, although my dad would do it, too. It’s who we are. It’s how we relate. I thought it was normal. It’s even more embarrassing to think about how I come across to others.”

Tim: “Patti, I’m proud of you for being able to reflect like that and to see what’s going on. Yes, it will take a while to change, but let me remind you, we are ‘for’ you, and we want you to be successful here. Everyone on the team has idiosyncrasies that we have had to learn to deal with, and I have to say I think we’ve done rather well. You will, too, but I’m sure you will agree that that kind of behavior is not going to work in our team if it is not eventually changed.

“Let me give it a name you may be familiar with. It’s called passive-aggressive behavior. Simply put, it’s a way of expressing negative feelings indirectly instead of openly addressing them.

Those negative feelings tend to be ways to control getting what a person wants without saying it straight up. Does that make sense?”

Patti: “Yes, I can see it’s about control, but I need to think about it some more to get ahold of it. It is so ingrained from my childhood home life; I don’t know if I can do it, or how.”

Tim: “Even saying that is a step in the right direction. You probably won’t change without learning some techniques along the way. For instance, when you get stuck trying to evaluate your feelings, or what words to use, it is perfectly okay to say, ‘I have some ideas about this but can’t put them together yet. Could we take a 10-minute break? That would really help.’ Or you could just say you can’t find the words and ask for help. In other words, not having the words to express oneself is not a sign of weakness, it’s a sign of being human and a team player. It also lets the team in on what you need to work it out.”

Patti: “Well, that’s interesting. Just those ideas make it seem doable, more comfortable, less like a competition.”

Tim: “You can get more ideas from talking with team members or me, or even by going online to look at passive-aggressive behavior. Now that you know what you’re dealing with, I think it will be easier for you to be open with everyone about what’s going on inside. When you can’t put it into words, ask for help—they’re used to it. I really want you to be successful on this team. You matter. Since we both know what behavior we’re talking about here, let’s plan on meeting in two weeks to evaluate what else you’ve learned about it, how you’re handling it, or whether we’ve seen it show up. We want to be able to measure your progress.

“Thanks for coming to meet with me and being so receptive. I try to be available, so feel free to ask if you would like to talk.”

Here is the **step-by-step application** of the story. Apply this to almost all work-related relationship issues.

1. **Don’t ignore the behavior.** We don’t have to understand where and why, but don’t ignore a person’s negative behavior that may be detrimental to the business, fellow employees, customers, or even the person themselves.
2. **Address the person in private.** Even ask in private to talk with them. This means respecting them. All the steps that follow are based on respect. Create a safe place and let them know you are “for” them. These are fathering techniques that they may not have experienced. Stu Weber in his book *The Four Pillars of A Man’s Heart* says, “True fathering has very little to do with biology, but everything to do with responsibly caring for others.” And that is taking the father role straight into the everyday world of work and business.

3. **Be “for them.”** This means, “I want you to be successful based on your skills, who you are as a person, how you do your job, and how you relate to others on the job. I care for you. You matter.” This approach will change your mindset towards them. That does not mean you will coddle, excuse, or go easy on them, but you will respect them with your words, attitude, voice, and the steps that are planned.
4. **Describe the observed behavior** (whether it is your observation or from others). Do so without emotion, blame, or assumptions—just the true and clear facts—then listen to their explanations. “Help me understand.”
5. **Describe the desired behavior and design preferred outcomes.** List expectations and consequences—good and bad. If no change happens and it means being let go, be clear about the legal requirements and how it would come about. Do not use terms such as, “You have to get better at this.” They are not measurable. Be specific.
6. **Help them to self-manage acceptable behavior.** Offer other sources of help to do so, including an accountability partner. In the story above, I let Patti know that both I and the team would serve as partners.
7. **Remind them again that you are “for” them** by affirming them, forgiving them, and telling them you accept them for who they are. This is not to suggest coddling, enabling, or excusing, but caring—giving them self-confidence, self-esteem, maturity, and identity. It is likely they missed this approach from their own father, as most adults have (including bosses). It is also not to suggest that the outcome won’t be a stiff reprimand or even dismissal. But those, too, can be done with respect for all those who are involved.

EXERCISE

Good ideas are meaningless if they are not followed through. As a result of your thoughts from this workbook, what one behavior (yours or another’s) in your work life would make your job or the business better if it were changed?

In the end, what would that change look like if it were ideal? (This step helps in knowing what your goal is and in determining the various steps needed to get there.) Be specific.

What is your next step in moving in that direction? (i.e., talking with someone, committing to specific personal change, going back to the source of the behavior—your father, reading my book, getting professional help, etc.)

Like any resolution, change is unlikely without accountability. Whom can you trust to help you follow through on your action steps?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS AND RESOURCES:

The ultimate solution is to encourage the person to reconcile with their father (and/or mother). For a fuller explanation of this solution and the steps leading to it, please refer to *The Legacy of Absence: Resolving the Wounds from Uninvolved Fathers in Individuals, Families, and Society* by Tim Olson, available on Amazon.

However, in the meantime, tactics are needed in the work setting, such as those described in the story or through anger management, for example, to guide and direct solutions. Often, confrontation ends in anger and more negative behavior with all parties hurt and not helped.

The steps listed may be helpful in this regard but may best be done by a professional, experienced person depending on the behavior displayed.

If able to go deeper: Help them to think this through and not counsel them or suggest you know the answer to their problems. Your goal ought to be to restore a person's role, productivity, relationships, and dignity—even if the outcome is dismissal.

Other questions you might ask...

1. What are you afraid of? What do you see as a threat?
2. Where do you think that behavior or way of thinking may have come from?
3. Tell me what it was like as a child growing up with your father.
4. In what ways are you like your father and not like him? (It is amazing what this can reveal about one's behavior and way of thinking.)
5. What behaviors would you like to change if you could?
6. What steps could you take to bring about that change?
7. What thoughts, beliefs, and ways are holding you back?
8. Being aware now of your behavioral tendencies, in what ways can you learn to manage them when they show up? Offer suggestions in this regard.
9. Having the other person describe back to you what the problem is and then come up with their own plan of improvement, correction, etc., is often the best way to handle inappropriate behavior. It gives them a sense of dignity and control over their own situation, and they are often harder on themselves than you would be.