

"If you choose a job that you like you will never have to work a day in your life." ~ *Confucius*

"To say a woman is just a house-wife is degrading, right? Okay. Just a housewife. It's also degrading to say just a laborer." ~ *A Steelworker*

"A man who gives his children habits of industry provides for them better than by giving them fortune."
~ *Richard Wately*

"In work, do what you enjoy." ~ *Lao-tzu*

"Your work is to discover your work and then with all your heart to give yourself to it." ~ *Buddha*

"What is work and what is not work? Are questions that perplex the wisest of men." ~ *Bhagavand Gita*

"Don't condescend to unskilled labor. Try it for half a day first." ~ *Brooks Atkinson*

The Art of

WORKING

in your GREEN ZONE

The Art of
WORKING
in your GREEN ZONE

Lifelong-happiness and Relationships

DR. K. SOHAIL MBBS FRCP(C)

BETTE DAVIS RN BN MN

A book from Dr. K. Sohail's Library
Third in the Life-long Happiness and Relationship Series

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DEDICATED TO ...

those women and men

- business leaders and workers -

who inspire others to create the magic of

Green Zone workplaces.

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Sohail and Bette

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. K. Sohail

In recent centuries there have been profound economic, social, political and cultural changes in the work environment worldwide. Workers and managers have been forced to adapt to those changes and some have coped better than others.

There was a time people worked as farmers or lived in small villages as craftsmen and bartered goods and services with each other. They could do the same work and live with the same spouse in the same home all their lives. They died in the home and town where they were born. Throughout their lives, they were surrounded by their tribe and extended families. They lived and worked together, shared each other's triumphs and defeats, and helped each other in emotional and economic crises.

The Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions that began in eighteenth-century Britain saw major population shifts from small villages to small new towns and cities, from small cities to cosmopolitan municipalities, and eventually, from the Third World to the First World. Many had to leave their families and familiar surroundings to follow their dreams of economic stability and security. Some were

successful, but others became more unstable and insecure than they had thought possible.

In the new industrialized society, the owners of the means of production saw workers as no more than living extensions of the machinery. Workers' lives were spent in servitude to the factories. Gradually people became aware of their human rights and labor unions came into existence. Great gains were made in working conditions but in most corporations and businesses the relationship between workers and managers became more confrontative than cooperative. The owners refused to give away the power they had over the people.

Governments started building business schools, colleges and universities. Capitalists erected buildings – banks and industrial complexes, taller than churches – in growing cities around the world.

During the last century, the international relationship between socialist and capitalist philosophies became so strained that the conflicts resulted in a long, bitter Cold War. Now we have entered into the beginning of the twenty-first century, when almost all socialist countries have collapsed and capitalist systems are breaking down from inside because the respect for human dignity and labor is continuing to decline. In spite of all the rules, regulations and laws that were meant to improve society, many of the administrators who execute those laws have become morally bankrupt. Basic human rights (food, shelter, work, education and health care) have become privileges. Even in the United States of America, one of the richest nations of the world, there are thirty million people with no health insurance coverage and people must submit their credit cards when they enter a hospital seeking emergency treatment

for their children.

Studs Terkel noted in the introduction of the 1974 publication of his best-selling book *Working*,

It is about ulcers as well as accidents, about shouting matches as well as fistfights, about nervous breakdowns as well as kicking the dog around. It is above all (or beneath all), about daily humiliations. To survive the day is triumph enough for the walking wounded among a great many of us.

The scars, psychic as well as physical, brought home to the supper table and the TV set, may have touched malignantly, the soul of our society.

During the last quarter century, the lives of common men and women in the work environment, rather than getting better, have in many ways become worse.

There remain only a few countries like Canada that have been attempting to integrate the best of modern socialist and capitalist systems, where people can live and work with dignity, assured that their rights to funded health care and education will be respected. The democratic multicultural environment has welcomed workers from all societies to live and work peacefully and respectably; but unfortunately, those traditions are quickly being undermined by international economic agreements and political forces. What a tragedy it is to see dollars becoming more valuable than human beings!

Even in Canada in the last few decades the number of people experiencing anxiety and depression, having nervous breakdowns and getting burnt out because of work stress is steadily increasing. The advent of microprocessors has increased the speed and complexity of business and communication, leaving workers struggling to keep pace with constant technological change, while fearing the loss of their jobs.

More and more people are living in what is now known as, the stress-filled Red Zone at work, feeling hopeless and helpless. In the last decade psychotherapists have seen an increasing numbers of clients and families struggling with work-related tension. Their workplaces have become Red Zones that abuse and undermine their personal, family and social lives. They have become chronically dissatisfied and unhappy. How unfortunate it is to see insurance companies making it difficult for hard-working people to obtain proper sick benefits or long-term disability payments.

Workers requiring time away from the job because of work-related stress, injury and physical illness have been increasing in all work environments as work zones have been deteriorating into Red Zone stress. Managers and front line staff alike are feeling the impact of the push for more efficiency, often with fewer resources in the rush toward a bigger bottom-line, resulting in the sacrifice of human needs in our rapidly changing technological world.

In our Creative Psychotherapy Clinic, we have created the Green, Yellow, Red Zone model and combination therapy (individual, marital, family and group therapy), to help individuals and families review and reshape their lives into a happier more satisfying existence. They can develop their

abilities to cope more effectively with the Red Zone environment or have the strength to leave such jobs and find work where a Green Zone atmosphere abounds.

The impetus for this book came from my publisher, Bill Belfontaine and my friend Warren McCarthy, who convinced me that my Green Zone Model with its humanistic philosophy and easy-to-understand skills can provide effective intervention for both workers and workplaces. That healing model was the subject of my earlier books, *The Art of Living in Your Green Zone* and *The Art of Loving in Your Green Zone*.

Joining me in the creation of this book is my dear friend and long-time colleague, Bette Davis, who conducts workshops and seminars which help people to deal with work-related stress. She has assisted not only workers but managers toward improvements in quality of worklife and guided them to create healthier work environments for both individuals and corporations.

A comment about the way this book was written: We invited clients, friends and colleagues to contribute and then consulted each other extensively before writing each chapter. Some chapters, however, were written more from Bette's perspective, and others more from mine. Those that were written primarily from one or the other's perspective are identified with the author's name. Those from both perspectives are unmarked. Co-authoring with Bette was a wonderful experience and a creative adventure. This book is a good example of my grandmother's expression, "One and one makes eleven, not two."

Last but not least, I would like to thank the men and women from different professional and cultural backgrounds who shared their stories to create this "Working"

addition to our Green Zone library. Their words not only highlight the characteristics of Green, Yellow and Red Work Zones, they also inspire us to find different ways to properly manage stress at work and improve the quality of our lives.

This book is an attempt to share some of our ideas, hoping that you, whether worker, manager or owner, can create a better environment in the workplace for yourself and others, as you practise the Art of Working in Your Green Zone.

Sincerely,
Sohail

WHAT IS YOUR GREEN ZONE?

For those who have yet to read *The Art of Living in Your Green Zone*, we would like to share the descriptions of the Green, Yellow and Red Zones as an introduction to this third book in the series.

When living in your Green Zone, you are pleasant and cheerful, looking forward to the day and its events in a positive manner. You are capable of a free exchange of caring and affection with family, friends and co-workers and are ready for a rational discourse with people around you. If there is a difference of opinion, you are able to have a healthy and constructive dialogue to resolve and dissolve conflicts, which will smooth out the bumpy road of differences.

But if you find yourself in what we call the Yellow Zone, you feel somewhat distressed, weary or uncaring. You can become anxious, sad and sometimes easily angered. Because of this distress you are not able to communicate properly with others and are poorly equipped to deal with stressful situations or conflicts where an interpersonal solution is required.

When you move into the Red Zone, you become

extremely distressed, often exhausted, angry, unhappy or depressed. You will sometimes lose control and become abusive or completely withdraw from others. You will find yourself unable to have a rational dialogue that could lead to resolving your interpersonal conflicts. At times, in an extreme case, you may have reached the point where you are unwilling or unmotivated to take care of yourself to socially acceptable standards.

The easiest way to understand the Green Zone Model is to think about the traffic lights - Green means everything is okay so you can continue, Yellow signals caution, while Red warns you to stop. You would always prefer to see a green light ahead, wouldn't you; something that clearly says it is safe to keep going. Mentally, that is what your Green Zone is all about, the place where you want to remain, where you are happy, healthy and peaceful.

Part One



PASSIONS AND DREAMS

Dr. K. Sohail

It has been my observation that most children who grow up in Green Zone Families and are educated in Green Zone Schools, by the time they finish high school, have discovered a passion or dream they wish to follow in their lives. Lucky are those children who have a loving parent, a caring teacher or a dear one who takes a special interest in their personality and helps them remain in touch with their hidden talents, that special gift that life has offered.

In many cases the parents of creative children are not thrilled with their child's passion and dream because they feel it would not be beneficial from a survival point of view. Most parents, wanting to see their children lead a secure and stable life, encourage them to get a marketable education and adopt a profession or a business that would ensure economic security. Other parents, especially those who struggled financially in their own lives, are pre-occupied with the issues of survival. I have met many parents who coerced their children into becoming doctors, engineers, lawyers or teachers while the children were eager to become writers, painters, actors or musicians. The more creative the children, the more vulnerable they are to major

conflicts with their families, schools and communities who are concerned that the children will lead a financially unpredictable and unstable life if they live their creative dream.

As most communities are service oriented, they value those who offer them good service. A car mechanic who repairs a car at a reasonable cost or a carpenter who makes high-quality cupboards for their kitchen, is valued more than the best musician in an orchestra, a singer who can delight an audience in an opera or a painter who is skilled at creating abstract paintings. Is it any wonder that in some schools of fine arts, students have to develop a technical skill alongside learning the craft and tradition of fine art? Such students have a choice when they graduate. If they cannot earn a living through one of the fine arts, then they can seek a job as a mechanic, technician or welder to pay the bills, while still following their passion and dream. Earning a living through one's art often becomes a mixed blessing. On one hand, one can be the happiest person being paid for things one loves to do. The famous and popular Canadian hockey player Wayne Gretzky once stated in an interview, "I love to play ice hockey. I am lucky to be paid millions of dollars for it. I would have played it even if I was not paid." On the other hand, many artists who are paid for their services have to create for financial and commercial survival rather than for more satisfying emotional and creative reasons. I know a writer who has to produce far more articles to earn a living than to follow her own passion of being a creative person.

As well, I have noticed that many artists, writers and painters gradually lost their creative passion after they got married. Family responsibilities overcame their artistic

dreams and they became so involved in their day-to-day work and the tasks of looking after their children that they could not devote time to their personal interests and hobbies.

So to discover one's passion and dream and then find a balance between that desire and a family life is one of the fundamental dilemmas that all of us face. Wise are those who deal with that issue at an early age. But I believe that it is never too late to review one's life and discover a new balance, a balance in which the survival issues are in harmony with one's passions. I met many married women in my clinical practice who reviewed their lives after their children became teenagers. Many of them looked after the family from their twenties to forties and fulfilled their dream of being mothers but then in their forties wanted to pursue their personal dreams and discover a new profession or a new passion. I encouraged many of them to return to school and offered them a lot of support, as they felt nervous and insecure having to start a new career.

One such woman was Catherine, married for nearly fifteen years but not feeling fulfilled. She suffered from Dysthymia, a chronic dissatisfaction with life. When I asked her about her unfulfilled life-long dreams she said, "I always wanted to be an aesthetician." When I suggested that she volunteer in a beauty salon to gain confidence and make contacts, she said, "Nobody would want me." I thought her attitude was more a reflection of her lack of confidence than reality.

I shared with her that after becoming a medical graduate, I went to see Dr. Ahmed Ali, the only psychiatrist in Peshawar, Pakistan and told him, "I would like to learn the art and science of becoming a psychiatrist. I would like to

sit in your chair one day.” Dr. Ahmed Ali was quite thrilled to see the spark of passion in my eyes. He accepted me gracefully and I attended his clinic for three months. After those three months I was quite confident that I would like to follow my dream of becoming a psychiatrist. After listening to this story, Catherine promised to volunteer at a salon in the local mall. The next week she was thrilled to inform me that the salon had accepted her. After a few weeks of volunteer work, I encouraged her to enroll as soon as possible in the local community college. Before she started school, I wrote her the following letter:

Dear Catherine,

After being a wife and a mother for fifteen years, you have decided to go back to school. At this important juncture of your life, you are nervous and wonder if you can focus in the classroom, understand what is being taught, retain what you read and pass the courses while, on the other hand, you are excited to have an opportunity to learn again and become an aesthetician. For you it would be your life-long dream come true.

I feel very optimistic about your future. You have chosen this route because you are in love with that profession. You are fascinated by it. When you talk about it, I see a twinkle in your eyes and a smile on your face. It is obvious that you are not trying to please your parents, teachers, husband or someone else, just yourself.

Your anxiety and worry are quite natural. I think most students who have been out of the classroom for a number of years feel the same in the beginning but

after a few weeks of studying, getting proper guidance from their teachers and enlisting support from their classmates and friends, they get quite comfortable and enjoy it.

Being a mature student you can work at your own pace. You don't need to rush. You don't have to have high and unrealistic expectations. You are fully aware that you are not a full time student. Only you know that you have family responsibilities. You have to do the cooking, cleaning, washing, vacuuming and help your children with their homework. I know you have a loving and caring husband. It would be worthwhile to ask his support with the family responsibilities, especially at this time. I am also pleased to know that you are volunteering in a beauty parlor and learning the procedures and traditions of the trade to become a qualified employee.

An aesthetician is a special form of artist, and artists, like other creative people, usually have difficulties with formal and traditional teaching methods. When my oldest niece was enrolled in school, I sent her a button on her first day of school saying, "Don't let school interfere with your education." School is an institutionalized form of learning that might help people find a job and livelihood but in many cases it stunts creativity.

*Psychologists have found that children who had 80% creativity in Grade 1 had only 20% left in Grade 10. Where did it go? You must have heard the famous song by Pink Floyd from their album *The Wall* that was banned in many countries:*

"We don't need no education

*We don't need no thought control!
Teachers leave the kids alone."*

Creativity is very crucial for productive and healthy living; so don't get preoccupied with your performance in the classroom and let your creativity fade away.

Another important factor in serving and working with others is developing the ability to relate and communicate with people. I have met many health care professionals who were able to achieve 90 % in their courses but were unsuccessful in their profession because people did not like their attitude. They lacked the ability to connect with others. In your case, I am optimistic because you are not only fascinated with skin; you are also fascinated with people. You have an amazing sense of empathy. Touching people's skins and hearts comes naturally to you. Going to school is only a bridge you have to cross to get to the other side of the river where you will be able to have a profession that will not only be enjoyable but it will also make you a healthier and happier person. I wish you all the best in your new adventure. It is exciting to see you grow at this stage of your life.

*Sincerely
Sohail*

How rewarding it is for me to see Catherine enjoying being an aesthetician, which has not only helped her Dysthymia but has also given her a more meaningful life. Now she radiates happiness. She is adored by her clients, whose

lives she touches in her unique caring and creative way. When I asked Catherine to share her feelings and experiences she wrote:

Dear Dr. Sohail,

Going back to school was hard. It was hard to remember stupid things that teachers asked of us. It was a struggle to memorize all the medical terminology and find time to study.

I complained about one instructor in particular and probably drove my friends crazy with that. The course was very stressful for me. I thought I would never get through it. I had supper cooked every day before leaving for school. I also did not know how to study. Some of the young girls in the class shared their easy-to-remember tricks with me. That was so great. I also felt guilty ignoring my family responsibilities and doing my schoolwork. Most days I got up early at 4.30 a. m. to study until 7.30 and then helped my kids get ready for school.

I always felt that I still needed to know more when I wrote tests and exams. Nobody would believe that I graduated with honors. I was so proud of myself. My husband and children were, too, but the rest of my family was not. That made me sad.

I wondered who would hire me because of my low self-esteem. Then I thought I would open my own business. I was so excited working again. My first business was a disaster. Clients were great but my landlady treated me as if she was my boss and stupid me, I let her. I was actually afraid of her.

My next step was to find a job. So I went to a salon that I knew was using the same skin care line I used. On my 40th birthday I got the job. I love the job now and feel so confident. I have a lot of clients now who trust me and I am having fun...working in my Green Zone.

*Sincerely
Catherine*

Catherine is one of those people who explored their passion and dreams in their late 30s and 40s when their children were teenagers. On the other hand, I have met many young people who feel lost after they graduate from college and university. They have degrees but no job. One of them was Michael.

Michael came to see me, as he was feeling frustrated and angry with his life in general and family in particular. He was unsure of his professional future.

After the initial assessment I realized that I had seen him over ten years ago when he was 12. I had made a home visit with my nurse to see his mother who suffered from Schizophrenia. I had lost touch with the family after I left the hospital and started working in my psychotherapy clinic.

When I asked him what his problem was, he said, "I have a university degree but I do not have a sense of direction in my life." When I explored his relationship with his father it became apparent that his father was a traditional, conservative man who never shared his affection and love with his children. Michael seemed afraid of his father. That relationship played a significant role in his self-esteem. He

did not receive adequate nurturing from his mother either because of her mental health problems.

As he got involved in therapy, I offered him support and with encouragement he grew stronger and more confident. I encouraged him to apply for different jobs and seek out interviews. I was aware that he was quite bright and hard-working. He merely lacked self-esteem. At one stage in therapy when I asked him to write me a letter sharing his passions and dreams, he wrote the following letter:

Dear Dr. Sohail,

In this letter I would like to share my values, goals and dreams with you. In terms of values, I need to be working in an environment where I am always learning, where I am constantly challenged intellectually and where I am growing professionally. I also need to be working in an environment that is dear to my heart and where my contributions have a direct impact on society. I would like to mentor youth and to help my black community economically.

In the work environment I do not like the politics that goes on. I need to work in an environment where I can voice my opinions and concerns as well as ask questions.

I would like to help the black community grow economically on a global scale. I have always been fascinated with international trade. I believe a country is as good as what it can buy and sell in the international market.

In terms of money I would like to be financially secure, have a nice house, a nice car, but nothing

glamorous. Money is definitely not the primary motivating factor for me.

In terms of my education, my marketing degree has taught me the basics of business and how business operates within society. I have been involved in public speaking and learning other languages, like Spanish and French. I have also volunteered in the church and entrepreneurial program in my community. I want work that will make a difference, for the black community in particular and the world at large.

*Sincerely
Michael*

After Michael developed a trusting relationship with me and an understanding of the Green Zone concept I invited his father for an interview. He remembered me from the time when I was caring for his wife in the hospital. During the interview I shared with him, “Your son is very smart. I am impressed by his intelligence. I am confident he will be successful one day. I know you love him and care for him in your unique way but it would be helpful if you could express your feelings and tell Michael that you love him and you are proud of him.”

After that meeting Michael’s relationship with his father improved and the tension between them subsided. Within a few months Michael was offered two jobs, one with a courier service that helped him learn about trading and marketing and the other teaching mathematics to Black children.

He loved tutoring children. He was so happy not only to make money and pay all his debts and student loans but

also to be able to help his community. Within a short time he rose out of his Red Zone and started living in the Green Zone in his work environment. He hoped to save enough money to be able to live on his own.

He was very appreciative of the help received. I said that I enjoyed working with him and that I was very optimistic about his future. How rewarding it is to help young people in the early part of their career so that they can start their life on the right track to fulfill their passions and dreams, lead a happy and healthy life in the Green Zone and serve their communities in the best way.

REASONS PEOPLE WORK

Dr. K. Sohail

To become aware whether you work in a Green, Yellow or Red Zone, one of the fundamental questions to ask yourself is, “Why do I work?” Every human being is unique, so different people have different motivations for working. Knowing oneself is the first step to changing oneself.

When I asked this simple but profound question to all those people that I meet in my day-to-day life, I received varied but interesting answers. Whether they were waitresses or chefs, tellers or managers, teachers or principals, secretaries or presidents in multi-million dollar businesses, their answers could be classified under the following groups:

Survival

Most people stated that they worked regularly to put bread and butter on the table for their families. They also wanted to buy books and clothes for their children and to pay the bills. Many lived from paycheck to paycheck. They did not have extra to take a friend to a fancy restaurant for dinner and were in a financial crisis if their car broke down or their dog got sick. Many used credit cards on a regular

basis and had accumulated debt over the years that refused to disappear. They paid large amounts of interest on their monthly debts, primarily credit cards. In spite of having regular, often well paying jobs, they lived hand to mouth. I remember asking a colleague to join me for lunch at the hospital and she told me that she did not have the money. She was waiting for her paycheck the next day.

Security

Many said that they were not happy with their jobs which provided them mere economic security but no growth. They knew they would have the security of a regular paycheck however; they were worried that if they left their jobs they would be jobless and could become homeless. Many were pleased to have health benefits for themselves and their families. Some were waiting for the day when they would retire and live on their old age pension. They had lost all interest and enthusiasm in their jobs. They were not living and enjoying, they were just existing and surviving. Every tomorrow was like yesterday, a mundane routine, a heap of boredom. They felt so emotionally and financially insecure that their regular paycheck, which sometimes they resented and hated, was the only thing to provide them a sense of security.

Structure

Many told me that work provided them with a daily and weekly structure, a routine that they liked. Yet they did not know what to do with their free time. Rather than enjoying and having relaxing fun, they felt frustrated and bored. Many had two or three jobs and often liked to work over-

time. Some worked 60-80 hours a week. When I asked about family time, I realized they rarely had dinners with their families, nor were they part of family outings. Some had become strangers to their own children. Others felt lost when they retired. I met many couples, who got divorced after forty years of marriage when they retired because they were not used to spending time with each other and didn't know how to start over. Their children and jobs kept an illusion of togetherness but when their children left the nest and they were retired they could not tolerate spending time with each other.

Status

I met workers who were financially comfortable and could afford not to have to work hard but their motivation was the social status their jobs provided. Being called a doctor, an engineer or a lawyer was good for their ego. They enjoyed the sense of power and respect the job offered. They frequently mentioned their professional status as it added to their self-esteem. Many were very ambitious and were willing to take more responsibility and sometimes less pay if they had a higher profile, for example Vice President or General Manager. It is interesting how the titles of the jobs have changed; the janitor has become Superintendent or Property Manager, the head sweeper, the Housekeeping Supervisor. Such titles have added to the self-esteem of the workers and given a boost to their egos.

Greed

Many workers who live comfortably keep working two jobs and overtime, as they want to save money, money they would never spend. Many experienced a financial crisis or

disaster in their families when growing up and always felt insecure about their financial future. For them collecting, saving and hoarding was not a means for a better lifestyle, but rather an end in itself. They sacrificed their present for an unknown future. Insurance companies are quite tuned into people's greed and insecurity and take full advantage of it in what they sell as "coverage." Some even plan the details of their death, and make funeral arrangements, saving far more money than would be needed for a respectable funeral or cremation. Many retirees ruminate about their yesterdays or worry about their tomorrows, rather than enjoying their today's.

Fulfilling a Dream

Some love their work and look forward to starting their day. Is it because they have a dream job that brings out the best in them and helps them grow every day? Such jobs either fulfill their creative potential or help them serve their community and serving their community helps them transcend their selfish and egocentric motives. These people are the fortunate ones, but not very plentiful in many communities.

After talking to dozens of people about their jobs and their motivations, I feel that they can be included in two groups:

- A. Those who think they should, must, and have to work, and
- B. Others that like and love to work.

It has been my experience that people who like and love to go to work spend more time in their Green Zone while people who think they should, must or have to work are vulnerable to spending time in their Yellow and Red Zones depending upon other factors which will be focused on in future chapters of this book.

WORK PERSONALITIES

Dr. K. Sohail

Before making any positive changes in your work habits or moving to a different work environment, it might be valuable to know what kind of personality you have and whether it is compatible with your work and work environment. Although many psychologists have developed sophisticated psychological tests to assess people's personalities, most of them are quite time-consuming and often expensive. In this chapter I will share some of the characteristics of people's personalities that I feel play an important role in their work satisfaction.

Solo/Team Worker

Some people like to work solo while others prefer to work within a team. Solo workers are usually shy and introverted. They are not comfortable with interacting with too many people in their day-to-day work lives. They have less need to socialize than others. Many cherish their independence. They do not feel comfortable in giving and taking orders. They are also not comfortable carrying out negotiations with others. They like to make their own choices in their work lives and then face the consequences.

They are like musicians and singers who play solo or athletes who play singles and avoid group sports. Many such solo workers have flexible schedules in their businesses or their freelance work. Their work might be quite satisfying but it also has its unique limitations. Because they work alone their productivity may be low or sporadic, and if they become ill or are faced with a crisis their work can suffer. Because of the unpredictable nature of their work, for solo workers to live and work in the Green Zone, I suggest that they have an alternate plan as well as a support network so that if they cannot fulfill their responsibilities, their customers or clients will not suffer.

Team workers, on the other hand, like working with others. They are usually outgoing and extroverted. They enjoy the social interaction with others in their work lives. They like negotiating, planning and executing their plans as a part of the team. Such people realize they can produce bigger and better results by becoming parts of teams, organizations and institutions. Team players can be further divided into two groups:

Leaders/Followers

Those who like to lead prefer to become presidents and directors of organizations. Many like to work as vice-presidents and assistant directors and gain appropriate experience before they take full responsibility. Leaders who work in the Green Zone are democratic and appreciative of their colleagues. When they delegate *responsibility*, they also ensure that co-workers have the *authority* so they are able to accomplish the job and feel an integral part of the team. Democratic leaders are not threatened by the independence of their workers. If the leaders are not liked and

respected by their workers then the work environment is vulnerable to fall into Yellow and Red Zones.

There are many others who like to be followers. Such people might look forward to work but do not want to take the responsibility of leadership. Those people work in the Green Zone and accept the need to respect authority and to be comfortable with sharing their concerns and resolving conflicts at work.

Conditioned Self/Natural Self

In my first book, *The Art of Living in Your Green Zone*, I shared that there are two parts of our *Self*. One is the *Conditioned Self* and the other the *Natural Self*. For those who have a very well developed Conditioned Self, their life is guided by should, have to and must. Many develop perfectionistic and idealistic personalities and have very high expectations of themselves and others. When those expectations are not met they feel disappointed and become either angry or depressed. Such people tend to judge themselves and others very harshly, which gets them into painful interpersonal conflicts with others, especially those who are carefree, as they perceive carefree people as careless. Those with a conditioned self are very conscious of their responsibilities and obligations. It is not uncommon to find that such people were brought up in families with high expectations. People with idealistic personalities tend to have obsessive-compulsive traits. They are very particular about:

- *time*
- *money*
- *cleanliness*, and
- *morality*.

In some cases, such people get so obsessed with work that they become workaholics and find it hard to take time off work to relax and enjoy life. In many cases these people work in the Yellow Zone and are quick to fall into the Red Zone if they experience a crisis.

Bertrand Russell wrote about such people,

“One of the symptoms of approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one’s work is terribly important, and that to take a holiday would bring all kinds of disaster.”

For those who have a well developed *Natural Self*, their life is guided by like to, want to and love to. Many like to have fun. They create, play and go with the flow. Many such people have creative personalities and carefree lives. Their attitude towards time, money, cleanliness and morality is quite relaxed. They have a tendency to accept rather than judge people. They are generally easy going. If they work in an environment with high expectations, they feel very frustrated. They also have difficulties following traditions, rules and authority. Many such people prefer to work solo and have freelance work lives.

I have met many people who were chronically dissatisfied with their work and work environment but never reviewed their attitudes and personalities. When leaders (business owners and managers) and workers are not aware of their personalities and are unable to resolve conflicts, then it is not uncommon for them to get into Red Zone working relationships. One of my patients shared with me the following:

“When I first started working with my last company, my first day on the job, my boss gave me a project to do over the phone. Being a hardworking carpenter I built the cabinet to the best of my ability. But when he returned to the shop he shouted, “NO! NO! This is not what I wanted!” and kicked the end of the cabinet with his work boot which made the end piece fall off.

I felt like I wanted to put his head through the cabinet but held my cool because I wanted to keep the job. Perhaps this was his way of testing to see how I would react. This was typical of his attitude but I learned to ignore his tantrums and I often wondered how my foreman could put up with his attitude for ten years. One of my ways of coping was to joke with the other workers that it was their turn the next day, because our boss was quite unpredictable. He picked on different individuals on different days.

Our boss was very obsessed about starting at 7 a.m. He used to bring that to our attention periodically and I used to say, ‘Would you rather I had an accident rushing into work or lose a few minutes of production?’”

Becoming aware of whether you are a solo or a team worker, whether you prefer being a leader or a follower, and knowing whether you have a predominantly conditioned or natural self is one of the steps in reviewing your work life as well as making realistic plans for your future and in transforming your Red Zone work environment into the Green Zone. Knowing the zones that others are in can keep you focused and out of their unhealthy Yellow and Red Zone environments.

Part Two



WORKING IN YOUR RED ZONE

Dr. K. Sohail

In the last couple of decades more organizations are leaving the well-being of their Green Zone and spending increasingly more time in the Yellow and Red Zones. Whether in factories or banks, schools or hospitals, private companies or government organizations, work environments are becoming increasingly more stressful.

Men and women who are not well-educated and who work as skilled or unskilled laborers are staying in those toxic environments because they do not see any other choice. Many work hard till they become sick or burnt-out mentally or physically. Many have difficulty fighting with insurance companies about benefits and payments. Some have to accept unemployment insurance and when it runs out have to live on social assistance. Those who have worked hard all their lives find it humiliating to be on social assistance. One such worker shared her dilemma in these words:

"I wasn't happy with the job I had. I made good money, good benefits, had weekends off but hated the place. I have been in this factory for seven years, walking into

the plant felt like entering the dead zone [Red Zone]. I needed drugs, alcohol and my radio. But I got tired of that too. I wanted to leave. I felt the only way I could stay would be to have a lobotomy. I wanted to do more with my life."

She tried many times to return to full-time work but did not last more than a few weeks, so finally she went on long-term disability.

Alongside factory workers and working class people, there are also many professionals who are struggling in a Red Zone work environment. The prejudice, discrimination, interpersonal conflict, political battles and harassment have reached a stage where it is becoming very difficult for dedicated and committed professionals to do their work in a respectful and meaningful way. Each attempt they make to rectify the situation makes it worse. If they do not get cooperation from their managers and administration to resolve conflicts then their work suffers and they are not able to serve their communities (students, clients or patients) to the best of their ability.

One such professional is Susan who has a bachelor's degree in Education and a doctorate in Fine Arts. She had a rewarding career as a university professor in the United States where she enjoyed working in a Green Zone environment, but then she returned to Canada to contribute to the cultural development of her own country. Since she did not obtain a university appointment right away, she started teaching high school students, as she loved teaching. Unfortunately within a few months the conditions got so bad that she started working and living in the Red Zone and came to see me for help. Within the Green, Yellow, Red

Zone model she worked hard in therapy and learned to cope with her stressful work environment. I interviewed her one day and asked her to share her struggles. I am quoting a part of that interview:

Sohail: Can you share with me what kind of professional activities you were involved in the United States before coming to Canada?

Susan: I taught in two different universities, preparing people to teach art. I did introductory classes, elementary and secondary methods class and I supervised student teachers in several states in the United States. I developed an interdisciplinary Masters focus, including new courses and I taught graduate studio seminars. I met my students all over the city in museums and art galleries. I invited artists from New York City and Canada to my program; as well I was on the Education Team. I was invited to workshops nationally and internationally on design because of my PhD thesis. I was also invited back to Canada to do several presentations.

Sohail: You were also part of publishing a book?

Susan: Yes, I was senior author of a textbook with an emphasis on design and technology. It sold extremely well and up until 2002 it was still listed in the publisher's catalog.

Sohail: What was the feedback of the students in the United States regarding your work?

Susan: They said I did excellent work. My students actually wrote me a lot of letters when I was leaving begging me to stay. They also wrote letters to the Dean. I was their favorite teacher because I went the extra mile for my students. I was quite popular and my courses were always full.

Sohail: Did you enjoy teaching there? Which Zone were you working in?

Susan: I was definitely in my Green Zone. I loved teaching there. I had great students and they loved me. I excelled, everything that I did I did extremely well.

Sohail: What made you decide to come back to Canada?

Susan: I thought I could actually get a job in a university teaching back in Canada. I am a Canadian and I wanted to contribute to the Canadian university and teaching system.

Sohail: How did you end up in a high school?

Susan: When I applied in Canada I was short-listed in three provinces. In two of the universities they took people who graduated from that university and at the third university they took a relative of somebody at the university. So unfortunately it did not work out for me. Finally I decided to look into the high school system and applied to the school district. I went back to my old high school where I taught in 1982. I noticed there was a job working with the year book

and photography. Since I had a photography portfolio in my hand, I walked in and applied for the job. I knew a lot of people who knew I was an excellent teacher and I got the job right away. I had an excellent track record in this school district when I left.

Sohail: What year was that?

Susan: That was four years ago.

Sohail: Now share with me how things have been in the last four years for you teaching in the high school system.

Susan: Even before I started working in the school, I was warned about another teacher (let's call him Max). One of the former female teachers told me that she used to work out of the trunk of her car, as she was afraid to go into the Tech Department office. It was an all male department. She told me that she almost went crazy working there, as she felt embarrassed by some male colleagues' comments. She asked me whether I was sure I wanted to work there. I thought, I need not worry as I had worked with men in the past. The Head of Tech Department also took me aside and expressed his concerns. He had seen what had happened to the last female teacher. When I started working in that school, I had to work with Max right away. It did not take me long to realize that he was difficult to

work with. He used to yell and scream at me and belittle me in public. He would insult me in front of the students. We shared the classroom. We were supposed to work together but he never cooperated. I got so fed up that I reported him to the Principal.

The Principal told him that I reported him and his behaviour went from bad to worse. Max took me aside and told me that he was not going to tell me anything. After that software went missing. I would set up the equipment and he would move it without telling me where he moved it. It was a nightmare working with him. He also used to delete my work or scramble it. He was purposefully trying to stress me out.

When I reported him again to the authorities, I was told that there would be a meeting with both of us and he would apologize. There was a private meeting but the second private meeting wherein he was supposed to apologize never took place. This increased the harassment. When I reported him again I was told that he would not be working with me in the next semester or in the same classroom. But when the semester started, I was working with him again. They did not arrange for another classroom for me. They broke their promise and I was very upset.

Gradually other male teachers joined him and it became a gang effect.

They started making degrading remarks about women. One of them used to stare at my breasts and crouch and lick his lips. I felt embarrassed and humiliated. Then they started bringing nude pictures of women. When I objected they said, "Next you will object to us bringing pictures of cars."

Sohail: How did it affect your physical and mental health?

Susan: I became anxious. I could not sleep. It affected my memory. I was afraid my mind would go blank and I would not be able to teach my students. Luckily my students respected me and liked me. I loved teaching them but I was fed up with the politics.

Sohail: Did the teachers' association help you?

Susan: They did not consider it harassment. They said they were supposed to help both teachers. They said it was a private conflict between two teachers and we should figure it out ourselves.

Sohail: You had an accident?

Susan: Yes, in the meanwhile I slipped on the ice and hurt my wrist, which made it hard for me to write and type on the computer. I also had two car accidents. I was in a lot of physical pain alongside the emotional stress at work.

Sohail: How did the insurance company cooperate?

Susan: They were not very helpful. I sent dozens of letters but they still did not approve my

disability. They even sent me for an Independent Medical Examination but the case is still not settled. I am working half time now.

Sohail: Do you feel any different since you came to our clinic?

Susan: Yes, a big difference. When I came here I used to live and work mostly in the Red Zone but after a few months of therapy I am mostly in the Green Zone.

Sohail: What made the difference?

Susan: You introduced me to the Green, Yellow, and Red Zone Model. I started keeping a daily diary and recording how many hours I spent in each Zone. I also became aware what things pushed me to the Yellow and Red Zones. I gradually learned to ignore certain things and people and not be emotionally affected by them. I started having more control over my emotions. I am now able to cope better with stresses in life.

Sohail: You also found doing creative work helped you stay in the Green Zone?

Susan: Right. Actually that's been the thing that has centered me and it helps focus me. I'm a creative individual and when you are that stressed out you're so exhausted, you have no energy to even have a creative thought let alone do a creative activity, but I realized that it also gives me a focus and a sense of

purpose in life to be able to do my art. It's something that with all of the demands of teaching and all the harassment in the poisoned work environment that I'm working in, you tend to get away from the very thing that you need to do which is to get back to your creative self. So it's helping to keep a lid on all of the Red Zone stuff and stay in the Green Zone.

Sohail: What are your future plans?

Susan: I have applied to two universities, in two different provinces. I am quite hopeful that I will be accepted in one of them next year and then I can start a new chapter of my life and start living and working in my Green Zone.

It is sad that many teachers, especially female teachers have to put up with these types of stressful work conditions. Alongside the stresses of teaching and dealing with challenging students, they also have to put up with harassment from their colleagues. It is ironic that the management and the administration are not always supportive. When they told Susan that they had to support both teachers and asked them to sort the conflict on their own, they were not providing meaningful mediation to bring their relationship into the Green Zone. Susan had to deal with all those stresses alone.

Many more teachers would have left the school or the teaching career, but Susan stayed in the system working part-time. She is aware she cannot change the Red Zone Work environment, but she has learned different skills and

tools to cope with those stresses to the best of her ability. She is now actively pursuing teaching in different universities hoping to leave the Red Zone environment for good, and start a new life in the Green Zone. It was wonderful to see her husband being very nurturing and supportive. His support helped me in helping Susan to deal with her work related stress and make realistic future plans. Support from friends and family members is always crucial in dealing with work related stresses.

While we were editing this book, Susan shared with me the good news that she was accepted by a reputable university. She is now looking forward to starting a new chapter of her life and working in a Green Zone work environment.

CONFLICTS BETWEEN YOUR WORK AND FAMILY LIVES

Dr. K. Sohail

In my clinical practice I have had an opportunity to work with a number of men and women who had great difficulties keeping a balance between their work and family lives. I met many men who were so committed to their jobs that their families felt ignored and rejected. I also encountered many women who were so dedicated to their children that they felt guilty about working outside the home.

Initially, they struggled unsuccessfully to balance family and work responsibilities but finally encountered emotional problems. One such person was Monica, who came to see me when she was experiencing anxiety problems and panic attacks. She had gone to see her family physician hoping that it would be a physical problem, but when he told her that all her tests were negative and she would have to see a psychiatrist, she was shocked. During her therapy sessions it took her a long time to appreciate the connection between her anxiety and her emotional conflicts. After she developed some insights and made changes in her attitude and lifestyle, she started to get better. When I asked her to share her thoughts about her

conflict between family and work lives, she sent me the following letter:

Dear Dr. Sohail,

I knew the day I got pregnant my life would change forever. Thank God it changed for the best. My kids bring joy to my life. They also bring me worries. Most of all joy, though. I don't know where I would be without them. Before I got pregnant, Dominic and I had agreed that I would stay at home with the kids. It was not very long after the birth of Gabrielle that I got pregnant with Anthony. I arranged to work night shifts. It was hard but we did it. I took care of Gabrielle during the day and Dominic looked after her at night. And then Anthony came along. Being one year apart, it was rock and roll, worse than twins, I was told.

After my maternity leave expired, I wanted to keep one foot in the door with my bank, so I proposed to work Saturdays. That was a great thing for the staff, because nobody enjoyed working on the weekends. So I did that for nearly two years. When Gabrielle was three years old and Anthony two, we registered them at a Montessori School three full days a week. As a result, I had to go back to work to earn the cost involved. That was okay with me. I think I was managing pretty well. I did that for another two years.

When Gabrielle had to go to school five days a week, we put Anthony in for five days as well. Again we needed to pick up the tab for the additional cost. So I went back to work five days a week. That is when I believe things got bad. Being who I am, I did not trust

anyone with my kids, even my husband. I had to drop the kids off and pick them up myself. For sure Dominic wanted to help and did but I was always worried when I wasn't doing it myself. I was worried that the kids would be dropped off too early, they would not be dressed according to the weather, there would be a car accident, they would not be picked up on time, what would be cooked for dinner and when would I get time to do all of this and HOW?

So I proposed that I work Monday to Friday 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with a half an hour lunch break and they accepted the idea. I started my full time position in September 2000. I used to get up at 5:00 a.m. every morning, did some housework (cleaning, laundry and lunches for the kids) and was out the door 6:15 a.m. Dominic drove the kids to school. From work I called home at 7 a.m. to make sure everybody was up and okay. Again at 7:45 a.m. I called Dominic to remind him not to forget this and that and especially to call me as soon as the kids were in school. I had to know this otherwise I could not go on with my day. During my lunch break, I ran to the grocery store. Came 3:00 p.m. Whoopee! Went to pick up Gabrielle and then Anthony and got home by 4:15 p.m. A little more laundry, preparing a good meal, homework, dishes, bath, pajamas for the kids and then to bed. Day after day the same routine.

Prior to my working full time, I started to have warning signs about my health. I ignored those signs as I could not afford to be sick. I just assumed that it would go away the same way it came, but it did not. In November 2000, two months after I started my full time

worker status, I cracked. I did not know at that time it was that. I was convinced I was having a heart attack and was going to die. Dominic took me to emergency. When I got there they took my vital signs and instead of asking me to wait, they rushed me into a room full of machines. They could not find anything physically wrong. I went to see a new doctor who did numerous tests and after several visits, told me I was suffering from Depression and wanted to put me on medications. I refused. Depression and me - impossible. 'I am too strong for that,' I thought. 'Depression is for weak persons, not me.' She recommended I see a psychologist. I did. She also confirmed that I was having a Depression. Throughout all this time I was having regular attacks and was convinced everybody was wrong. I believed something physical had to be wrong with me. I thought if I kept on going to doctors and emergency departments, eventually somebody would find a tumor, a cancer or something else that is physical. I am still waiting for that day.

Obviously at this point in time I was not working, on Short Term Disability and feeling guilty. My name was put on Dr. Sohail's waiting list. In the meantime I met with the bank's psychiatrist who supported the previous assessments. He also recommended some medications. I still refused. In early March I got the call I was waiting for. I was finally going to meet Dr. Sohail. He had been highly spoken about and recommended. A new door was opening. He was nothing like I expected but I had faith in him. I don't know why but I did. The first few sessions were difficult. As time went by, I developed a trust in him, something I had lost

fifteen years ago. Now Dr. Sohail knows me better than I know myself. He knows what is in my heart before I can even admit it to myself. Today I know I suffer from Anxiety Disorder and I know why. It is because of my lifestyle. I have an obsessive, idealistic and perfectionistic personality and my biggest conflict is being a full time mom and a full time worker. My heart wants the full time mom because I want to be the caregiver for my kids. For me there is nothing more important than Gabrielle and Anthony in this world. But I also want money so that I can give to my kids the very best in everything. So I am stuck. I need to make some choices, very important choices and I cannot. I am not there yet.

Today I know what I need to do in order to get better but it is hard to put it into practice. I have to learn to live in my Green Zone. I have been living in my Yellow and Red Zones most of my life. I have to learn to relax and enjoy life. I need to do things that I like to do and not what I have to or must do. I am learning to switch gears when it comes to cleaning the house. Now I clean it once or twice rather than 3 or 4 times a week. I am trying to get to my Green Zone. It is a long process and I am not a patient girl.

In regards to my work I have realized that full time is not for me. With the help of Dr. Sohail, I am going to propose a part-time return to work. I am also realizing that my work environment in the bank is also in the Red Zone. I am contemplating finding another career. I would love to teach children. When I do volunteer work in my children's school, the teachers and students love me. Being bilingual I can teach French. Dr. Sohail is

asking me to seriously consider that option in my life. He told me that my situation at work is no better than an abusive marital relationship. Abused wives also keep on going back the way I am doing with my work. I am going back as it is an easy choice, because it is good money. The answer seems pretty obvious, you would think, but I am not there yet. If only I could win a big jackpot! I would stay home where I want to be and take care of my family, the way they deserve to be taken care of."

*Sincerely
Monica*

It was quite fascinating to see how Monica worked hard in her individual, marital and group therapy sessions and developed insights in a short time. The loving support of her husband through the process was a valuable component for Monica to spend more time in her Green Zone. She also became aware of her pace and her limitations. It was important for her to realize that her family was her priority. It was her primary focus, the job was secondary.

Update: Monica recently shared with me that she had said goodbye to the bank. She had received a severance package, enough money so that she could relax for a few months then pursue teaching French in the school system, her dream job. Monica will finally be able to live and work in her Green Zone.

STRUGGLES WITH YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY ABOUT DISABILITY BENEFITS

Dr. K. Sohail

It is sad to see how many dedicated and committed workers who have served their organizations whether they were schools, hospitals, banks or business institutions for five, ten, fifteen, twenty, even twenty five years and contributed to their insurance plans but do not get help when they need it the most. After an accident or illness they do not receive the emotional and financial support from their organization or from their insurance company to help them heal and recover. In many cases the bureaucratic process increases rather than decreases the stress.

For workers to get the approval for short term and long-term disability payments, they have to cross numerous barriers, each more formidable than the previous one. Many patients who are already exhausted because of physical or emotional illness cannot cope with this extra stress and finally give up. It is unfortunate that many insurance companies do not trust the patients, their families and physicians.

Over the years I have tried to help many of my patients fight for their rights. In the beginning I was trying to assist them with their toxic Red Zone work environment

and now I am helping them with the Red Zone legal process of their insurance companies. If the insurance companies had been sympathetic, I might have been able to discharge them from my care. One such person was Barry who worked hard in therapy to improve his attitude and heal his relationships with his dear ones. The only disturbing part of his life is his ongoing battle with the insurance company who is denying him his rights. Barry shares his struggles in this letter:

Dear Dr. Sohail:

It has been nearly two years since I first met you and sought your counsel. When I first met you I was totally stressed out, emotionally drained and miserable. After a few sessions, you concluded that my poisoned and stressful work environment was detrimental to my health, and was the underlying cause of my failed family relationships. You suggested that I need to take some time away from my work, and try to rebuild my health and my relationship with my family.

Though in agreement with your assessment, I felt that I could not leave my job, as my students needed me. In retrospect, I think I needed my students just as much, for they seemed, at the time, the only meaningful thing in my otherwise unhappy life.

A few months later, my health had deteriorated even further. Physically ill and exhausted, I continued to do my job as a teacher, working at the same relentless pace. Eventually it became almost impossible for me to stay focused on my job. I realized that I had to take some time off work.

Leaving my job was extremely hard to do. Though unhappy about it, I began to better understand my relationship with myself, my family, friends and co-workers. I began to comprehend the seriousness of my illness, and accept the fact that I was leading a dysfunctional and self-destructive existence. My job had become an all-consuming obsession, and had over the years, overshadowed and poisoned all other aspects of my life.

As time went by, I began to feel better. My physical problems became bearable. My family relationships were becoming more normal. Our communication became more frequent, meaningful and spontaneous. We began to relax, laugh, and see each other in a totally new light. Over the last twelve months my relationship with my family has significantly improved. We are getting along as never before, and enjoying each other's company. I am enormously happy to once again be a part of their lives.

Regretfully, I have not yet returned to work. I have made several attempts to do so, but each time I go back, I experience severe anxiety and physical discomfort. The sounds, the smells, the memories of that environment suffocate me. My sinuses shut down within minutes; my head feels like it wants to explode, my chest tightens up; my heart rate increases, and frequently appears to stop. This is usually followed by an extremely powerful contraction inside my chest cavity, which produces a bright flash in my brain. This experience is most disconcerting. My abdomen tightens up, which always results in stomach cramps, painful colon spasms, irregularity, and diminished body func-

tions. Subsequent to my visits there, I experienced sleeplessness, anger, restlessness and severe mood swings. This has undoubtedly had a negative effect on my relationship with my family and friends.

I have come to the realization that I cannot go back to that stressful work environment, which causes me a great deal of sadness, anguish, and even shame. This is not the way I envisioned my teaching career to end. However, I no longer have any doubts that the educational work setting has very much been detrimental to my health, and that returning there would be the end of me.

With the realization that I could not return to teaching, I decided to apply for long-term disability benefits through my insurance plan. My doctors and I completed pages upon pages of forms and questionnaires; provided details of my illnesses and treatments. Three months later I was informed by the spokesperson for my insurance company that my application for long-term disability benefits had been declined. The insurance company representative(s) responsible for that decision suggested that my job as a teacher was of a sedentary nature, and that I should be able to continue teaching. I was shocked, frustrated, and very angry. These ignorant bean counters were trivializing my profession and the work I did for 28 years. No one who knows anything about the demands of teaching would ever do that.

In their correspondence they made me aware of the appeal process, which after conferring with my doctors and the teachers' federation representative, I promptly launched. Since that time I have been

contacted by no less than five different persons from my insurance company, each one pretending to require more information, each one demanding that I complete additional questionnaires. (All the questionnaires sound and read more or less the same; i.e. "Describe how do you feel when you don't feel well?" "How do you feel on a bad day?")

I have to admit that I find these questions and indeed most of their repeat questionnaires offensive and unsettling. After receiving one such questionnaire for the third time, I called the person who sent it to me and asked her how she felt when she didn't feel well. I mean, how the hell do they think I feel when I don't feel well, or am having a bad day?

I was indeed having a bad day, and they were contributing to it. In fact I am having a lot of bad days, because the very people who are supposed to be there when one needs support manipulate you, insult your intelligence, and cause you additional stress. Unaware of the tactics and the games insurance companies play, I expected to be treated with fairness and respect. I also expected them to treat my physicians' reports and conclusions with due respect. That apparently is not the case. This was brought to my attention during a recent television documentary, which exposed the unethical tactics of the insurance companies. It was subsequently further clarified in the movie "The Rainmaker," which deals with the unethical conduct and practices of a fictitious insurance company.

In that movie, the principal witness in the lawsuit against the insurance company is one of its former employees. She details the claims and the appeals

process, which insurance companies make deliberately long and frustrating for the claimant. All claims are initially declined. Individual claims are deliberately delayed by having the claim reviewed by several representatives, all along betting that the claimant will not seek legal counsel, and eventually give up. The process can take years, and unfortunately many people do give up, often at a great personal and financial sacrifice.

After watching the movie, I was ready to jump out of my skin. The similarities to my personal case were startling. The delays, correspondence and questionnaires from different representatives; all seemed like they came from the same insurance textbook. I was extremely angry, and contacted the teachers' federation representative. I demanded that he contact the insurance company, and inform them that we set a deadline for their reply to my appeal, which is now in its sixth month, failing which, we should initiate legal action.

The following day I was informed that the insurance company was working as fast as they could, but because of the number of claims, and missing correspondence from one of my doctors, they were somewhat backlogged. More than one month later I was finally informed that my insurance company is requesting that I undergo an "independent" medical evaluation, paid for and administered by their doctor(s). I can't help but wonder just how impartial this independent examiner is going to be if he is paid by the insurance company? I consented to this "independent" evaluation even though I find this whole exercise quite offensive to me, and to all the medical practitioners who have treated me over the years, and who have

provided the insurance company with detailed assessments of my illness over the last eight months.

Thus far, I have found the whole long-term disability application/appeal process very frustrating. The delaying tactics which are widely practiced by the insurance companies can be quite demeaning, stressful and demoralizing for the claimant. They have certainly had an adverse effect on me, and indirectly on my family; and I am certainly not an exception. I am aware of the delays, frustrations and hardships other disability claimants have recently experienced, while dealing with their insurance companies. It almost seems like they are being punished for not being well. I can't help but wonder about the long term effects on the health and relationships of those who are least able to deal with additional stress, bureaucracy and even hardship. It can't be positive.

Yet there seems to be very little recourse for the claimant. The insurance companies can delay the claim/appeal process almost indefinitely, by requiring the claimant to complete more forms and questionnaires, and request that more assessments be completed by his/her treating physicians. They are able to do it with impunity, and with the full backing of the law.

I guess he who has the money, the power and the means to hire lawyers and lobbyists, can influence the law to suit his own agenda.

Welcome to the new corporate world order. Bloody repugnant!

*Cheers,
Barry*

TRAVELLING ON THE ROAD TO BURNOUT

Bette Davis RN MN

Downsizing and mergers along with technological advancements have markedly increased the pressure experienced by individuals in the workplace. It is not uncommon to see the workload doubling or tripling for most employees requiring that they become even more productive and multifunctional. Organizations that were once small and fostered a family-like atmosphere have given way to the large, impersonal corporate world. With this dramatic decline in support between co-workers, employees have lost one of the main buffers against workplace tension and have begun to feel isolated in their pain.

Hilda was referred to our clinic by the Employee Assistance Program Coordinator in her organization and described as a very caring, well-respected, competent manager with over 25 years of experience. She came to see me because she was on leave from work due to burnout and workplace stress. Her story highlights the extreme consequences to her physical and mental health that occurred as she attempted to maintain the supportive, family-like environment for the extremely overworked staff in her department. Through her company's recent merger

and downsizing process, Hilda's department shrank from a staff of 30 down to 5. In addition, their workload increased to include three other worksites across the country. As a middle manager she was sandwiched between her strong values about how staff should be treated and the pressure to fulfill the mandate given to her by her managers, most of who were in other parts of the country. The symptoms she experienced are some of the most dramatic I have encountered in over 25 years working with stressed individuals. Here is part of my interview:

Bette: Hilda, as a result of your challenging experiences over the last year you have developed some valuable insights. I think it would be helpful to share what you have learned. To begin, how did you come to work with this company and how did you progress to where you are today?

Hilda: I started to work part-time with the company when I was nineteen years old and going to university. As I completed my education I was promoted, first to senior clerk and then to management in the finance department. Since my leave I have been working in payroll support.

Bette: How has the company changed during this time?

Hilda: When I started to work with the company it had a family atmosphere. Every worker felt cared for by the company. People were concerned about each other. Everybody had the best interest of the company as well as

the employees in mind. If one employee had a personal or a family problem others were there to offer support. The management and workers were very thoughtful of each other. Then the company in this province merged with other similar companies in three other provinces and that changed everything. It became a big corporation and the personal and family atmosphere was undermined. Workers lost their personal identity, integrity and respect; they became numbers, cogs in a big wheel and parts of a big corporate machine. It was dehumanizing.

Management lost their sensitivity. They were more interested in business than people. They just pretended everything went smoothly. The atmosphere at work became negative.

The company threw parties in an effort to recapture that old family-like atmosphere but people felt that they were not genuine. Workers were not happy. The genuine caring had disappeared. Workers started to feel alone and isolated. I remember once the management circulated a questionnaire asking people to suggest improvements but the feeling was that it did not matter what they wrote. It was an exercise in futility. Workers had lost faith and confidence in their managers and administrators. And when that happens workers get

demoralized. They lose any hope for reform and improvement.

Bette: How did you react when you saw those changes?

Hilda: To be honest with you, as one of the managers of the company, I tried to treat my staff with great respect, but at times I lost that sensitivity. With tight deadlines, I couldn't wait until the next day to get the work done. I could not stay in my Green Zone when the whole organization was falling into the Red Zone. I remember feeling frustrated when people called in sick or needed to air their distress by talking in my office. On the one hand I was genuinely concerned and also knew the person would be more productive if she was able to talk the frustrations through, but on the other hand I would be saying to myself, 'We don't have time to be in here talking!' I had certain goals as a manager and I needed the support of the workers to fulfill those goals and objectives. When the provincial companies merged the organization lost control and credibility.

When the situation worsened I remember having a meeting with other managers and taking some control of the situation by telling our workers that we cared about them. I would arrange time off for my staff at times when they were working long hours and were too tired to

go on. They were so happy someone recognized how hard they worked.

But by then I was getting emotionally tired and exhausted and the stress at work was also affecting my family life. I felt removed from my family, they were paying the price.

The thing that I was most uncomfortable about was that as a manager I was supposed to push workers to their limit. A time came in the organization when there was no respect and genuine recognition for the workers. And that was very upsetting for me.

Bette: You experienced a conflict between what was expected from you as a manager and your own philosophy?

Hilda: Yes, I did. As a manager I had deadlines and I did not know how to do my job without putting pressure on workers. It gradually became a very pressured job. Everybody in the system was feeling the tension. People started to get sick and go on disability leave. I used to feel in conflict. I wanted to be sensitive to the needs of the workers and also do what I was expected to do. And that conflict created a lot of tension in me. While the organization was falling in the Red Zone, I fell in the Red Zone too.

After the merger people were doing a lot of overtime. It was not unusual for my staff and me to work from 9 a.m. until 3 or

4 a.m. the next morning, go home rest a little and come back into work for 9 a.m. to do it all over again, day after day. I had to work with people who did not have proper training and that was very frustrating. On top of all that there was no support from upper management.

Bette: I remember the intense physical and emotional discomfort you were experiencing when I first saw you in therapy. Can you share with me the symptoms you experienced working in this Red Zone environment?

Hilda: As you know it was a very difficult time. Even thinking about it gets me upset (tears in her eyes); I was so physically and emotionally exhausted. I could not sleep worrying about work the next day – would we be able to get certain things done; would this person (who didn't feel well the day before) be in to work? I also realized that we were doing things that we were not formally trained for. There were no manuals or written guidelines, we were going by word of mouth. I always had this feeling that we were forgetting something or it wasn't being done right and there would be a disaster because of something we missed. I also realized that as I became tired I did not have the energy but I still could not say 'no' to things, we weren't allowed to say 'no'. After saying 'yes' to a meeting I used to

wish that the meeting would be cancelled.. It got so bad that I could not concentrate or focus on things. I would read but forget what I read.

There was a time I felt so weak physically I was afraid to walk to the bathroom. I wondered if I got up from my desk, would I be able to get from point A to point B and then get back. I felt so weak that I was afraid I would crash. When I got hungry I was so weak I could not go to get a sandwich. When I did, I was afraid I would faint. I used to hold the railings to walk. I did not have strength even to talk. I used to feel dizzy. I could not concentrate on the conversation so I used to avoid talking to people. I was mainly focused on staying on my feet and looking as if I was coping.

There were times when I went to church and I could not stand. I used to have physical symptoms. I was afraid I would have a heart attack as I had chest pains. I used to feel numb all over my body especially my face. I was nervous I was going to have a stroke. At night in bed, I would have chest pains or numbness and think I was having a heart attack. Just before I went on leave I began to welcome the possibility of a stroke or heart attack because I would not have to go to work and the torture would be over.

In the morning, when I used to get ready for work I wasn't sure whether I would make it through the day or I would be taken to a hospital in an ambulance. I used to be too tired to eat and too hungry to sleep. I was definitely in my Red Zone.

Bette: How did your relationships at work change through this difficult period?

Hilda: There was a time we all respected each other. I respected the Presidents and Vice Presidents and they respected my skills and my work. They listened to my opinion and appreciated the workload and the pressures. But after the merger things changed and I started to lose respect for some people. I reported to a new person in another province, he was insensitive to the workload my staff were responsible for. He would demand to have work done that was not urgent so that it made him look good. He did other more unethical things to get a higher position and finally managed to get it.

I was asked to do things that I was not comfortable with; when I refused I was made to feel incompetent. My boss said very nasty things to me. He would repeatedly say that the only management person ever fired from this company was the person who had been in my job before me. I would have to say I didn't say such nice things to him either. I told him that I thought he shouldn't

have his job. He always focused on all the negative things. If I brought something positive to his attention he ignored it. The whole working atmosphere became negative. Relationships were damaged and I could not do much about it. It got so bad that it became abusive. The senior management people became like pit bulls. My staff was abused by them. It came to the point that I felt they wanted me to leave but I refused to leave. I did not want him to do to me what he had done to other managers. But finally I had to leave, as I could not take it anymore. I realized I was putting my life in jeopardy. I felt beaten down.

Bette: How would you describe your work environment when it entered the Red Zone?

Hilda: The environment became negative, really negative. Management did not respect workers any more. They were expected to work long hours with no appreciation. People had to sacrifice their family lives to do the work. People were asked to do jobs that they were not trained for. There was no way to change the conditions. Workers did not feel partners with the management. The communication gap kept on increasing over time and finally people lost all hope for a positive change.

I remember going to a meeting to talk about the work conditions and the work environment. I shared what needed to

happen to create a place where people would enjoy coming to work and leaving at some reasonable hour to have a life outside work. But they ignored me. I felt distressed. I wanted to bring to the attention of management that more and more people are going on stress leave and on disability but they did not care. I pointed out that I had five or six people off on average on short-term disability at a time, people off for six months at a time. Two people in my department had heart attacks. They were good people. I asked senior managers if they thought that there was any correlation between the workplace stress and these events. My comments were repeatedly ignored. They believed they could easily replace those workers. I believed workers were not valued and cared for and appreciated.

Bette: Did you feel that way yourself?

Hilda: Yes, I did. I started asking myself, 'If I am not valued and appreciated then why am I working here? Why am I beating myself up for nothing?'

Bette: Was it a flexible environment?

Hilda: Definitely not.

Bette: What about following the rules and regulations?

Hilda: They were very rigid about it. Rules became more important than people. And if I did not

follow unreasonable rules, I had to pay the price for it.

Bette: How were you feeling when you finally left?

Hilda: I was stressed out but I felt guilty leaving. It was hard to leave because I felt that I was abandoning my staff, they were feeling no better than I was.

Bette: During therapy we did some exciting and rewarding work and gradually you felt you could go back to work. Can you share with me how you were feeling and how were you received upon your return to work?

Hilda: As you know, I was very nervous returning to work. As I was away for a long time, it took a lot out of me to go into that environment. I was hoping there would be a work-station set up for me. But my office had been moved to an isolated area of the department and there was no chair, no files and no computer. I thought, "Oh, my God! I don't belong here. They don't want me back." I remember standing in the middle of corridor for twenty minutes. Then a man from housekeeping came along and told me he would get me a chair. I did not have a computer for a few days. Then everybody ignored me, not so much the managers at my level or the clerical staff but the other senior people. They would pass by me and not talk to me. They did not respond when I spoke to them. I felt ignored. I did not know why they were treating me like that. Nobody

said 'Good Morning' or 'Hello' to me. It was awful. Once I was going to enter an elevator, a manager pressed the button and the door closed in my face. It bothered me for the whole afternoon and for the next three days. But gradually I realized that I had done nothing wrong. It was not my fault. Over the months I felt stronger. Now I can go to work and focus on my work and not be distracted by the negativity.

Bette: I am glad you went back to work otherwise you might have left a very long and successful career feeling like a failure. Can you talk about what you have learned in therapy that now allows you to create your Green Zone at work?

Hilda: I have learned to accept and respect myself. Now I focus on my job. I know I do a good job. I am aware of my boundaries and when I am being pushed out of my Green Zone. I don't let other people and situations get me into the Red Zone. I use relaxation breathing techniques when I need to. I have learned to reframe my thinking and now have more control on my emotions. I exercise. I also have a dog. I enjoy going for walks with my dog.

Bette: Hilda, the changes you have made are quiet remarkable. When you first came you were deeply entrenched in the Red Zone but now you live and work in your Green Zone. I am so impressed with how you cope with the

stress at workplace now.

Hilda: I really appreciate all the help you gave me to heal and recover. Thank you.

Bette: You are quite welcome.

Hilda not only vividly highlights for us the symptoms of an individual in the Red Zone and the characteristics of a Red Zone work environment but also outlines how she now effectively copes with the same environment. Equally as important her story emphasizes the detrimental effect that the reactions of colleagues and managers can have on employees coming back to work after disability leave. Unfortunately Hilda's experience is not an uncommon occurrence. Many organizations focus singularly on getting the person back to work but give little attention, if any to the importance of easing the transition. Few companies appreciate the emotional and interpersonal distress associated with returning to work. Of the many people on disability leave that I have worked with in therapy, all have expressed moderate to extreme anxiety about how they will be treated by co-workers and managers upon their return. For most it is an obstacle that delays their return to the workplace.

When I initially saw Hilda, one of my suggestions was that I would like to see her return to work. She had only one year left in her otherwise noteworthy career and this experience would have most likely tainted her memories of all of her working life. In the beginning, she was extremely opposed to the idea. Understandably, she was reluctant to return to an environment where she was torn between her natural inclination to be sensitive to the needs of her staff and the excessive demands of an organization in transition.

She had had such a traumatic experience that it took her a while before she was open to even considering returning to this Red Zone workplace. Soon she will retire feeling empowered, having learned many valuable lessons, particularly in the last year and with the acknowledgement of her achievements through all of her long, accomplished career.

SYMPTOMS OF PEOPLE WORKING IN THE RED ZONE

People who have to work in a Red Zone work environment for a long time to earn their living have to find ways to cope with the toxicity of the system. There are many who, unable to maintain their health and happiness, slide into the Yellow and finally the Red Zone. When we study such people and listen to their stories we realize that they experience some or all of the following symptoms:

Emotional Symptoms

Some workers in the Red environment experience a wide range of emotional symptoms, from anxiety and panic to anger and depression. Many cannot work efficiently because they have difficulty concentrating and making decisions. Over time they begin to harbor negative thoughts about themselves, their work and their co-workers.

Physical Symptoms

It is not uncommon for many to experience physical symptoms resulting in gastro-intestinal, cardio-vascular and skin conditions due to high levels of stress. Many suffer from psychosomatic symptoms and experience increased

heart rate, muscle tension, upset stomach and sleep disturbance leading to feelings of fatigue and physically exhaustion.

Social Symptoms

Alongside experiencing physical and emotional symptoms some workers also have interpersonal problems with their colleagues. They can become aggressive, manipulative, withdrawn and irritable. As a result it becomes increasingly hard for others to communicate with them and resolve conflicts or problems.

Political Symptoms

Frequently people who have problems with their colleagues also have conflicts with their bosses, the administration and the system at large. Such situations can be complex and may not be easy to resolve making it difficult to enjoy work and be productive.

Affecting Other Aspects of Life

When people are frustrated and angry at work, the tension may spill over from the work system to their family and social systems. Some people are able to leave their problems at work but there are others who share their work problems with relatives and friends to get support or unknowingly bring work-related stress home. The problems that start at work can engulf people's entire life.

Experiencing a Breakdown

As the dissatisfaction at work increases, for some people a stage comes when they cannot cope with stress at work and finally they are overwhelmed. Some experience so

much frustration that they feel hopeless, helpless and even depressed and suicidal. That is the time many people realize the need for professional help and occasionally hospitalization. One of the goals of writing this book is to help people help themselves in assessing the severity of the problems and seeking help before it is too late.

MOBILIZING YOUR POWER TOOLS: COPING WITH RED ZONE WORPLACES

Bette Davis RN MN

One client who has shown both courage and creativity in her healing process, coined the phrase “Power Tools”, to describe the skills needed to deal with more intensely challenging life situations. We had often used the analogy that we were working on strengthening and increasing the number of “tools in her toolkit.” One day when she was feeling overwhelmed she commented, “With these types of challenges, we really need power tools!”

In our clinic, we often see individuals ranging from senior managers to front-line staff whose goal is to more effectively handle workplace stress. The wide variety of Power Tools used to buffer workplace stress, can be learned by workers in seminars or in therapy. Some of these tools are specific to the work environment while others apply to increasing one’s coping mechanisms in general, which in turn helps to improve quality of life.

Awareness

The first step in planning any significant change in life is awareness of the problem. In the back of this book is a questionnaire we have devised for people to assess in

which Zone they work. We ask people to use the charts *Discovering Your Green Day* and *Discovering Your Green Week* so that they become aware of the circumstances and people in the workplace that push them into the Yellow and Red Zones. Since it is not uncommon for people to also be in the Yellow or Red Zones in other aspects of their lives beyond the workplace, we suggest that you complete the other Green Zone questionnaires, which are part of the other books in the Green Zone series.

After people become aware of the time they spend in different Zones in their day-to-day lives, we help them to take steps to increase their Green Zone hours in a day and a week and decrease their Yellow and Red Zone hours. As the Green Zone hours increase people feel more confident and optimistic that they can improve the quality of their lives.

Most who spend a lot of time in the Yellow and Red Zones feel generally quite anxious or stressed. They have not learned the art of relaxing. As they become aware of their anxious state, we encourage them to find ways to relax. Different people find different techniques effective; therefore we recommend that individuals choose techniques that are compatible with their personality and lifestyle. The most effective stress reducers described below.

Relaxation Techniques

Progressive Relaxation is one of the most effective and frequently recommended interventions to alleviate muscle tension and feelings of anxiety. It is a process of learning a conditioned response to the word “Relax.” For example, focus your attention on a specific group of muscles, such

as your shoulders and now tense those muscles by drawing them up towards your ears for a short period, then let them go. As you let your muscles release, remind yourself to 'relax' and repeat that word in your mind. Repeat that process two or three times then redirect your focus to the next group of tense muscles.

Another part of Progressive Relaxation is periodically taking a deep abdominal breath, holding it momentarily, then as you breathe out repeat to yourself the word "relax." Many people find that when they practice these techniques during peaceful times they can become so good that they can remind themselves to relax in a tense situation and their body will respond because it has been conditioned to do so. There are a number of books and tapes on this subject that you can consult, but many people like to learn this technique with the help of a knowledgeable professional.

During the workday a number of our clients have learned to use this technique in the form of short relaxers to prevent the build up of stress generally throughout the day and also in crisis. These are some creative approaches which our clients have discovered to find time in a busy day to relax:

- Every hour or two Paul will close his eyes for a moment and mentally scan his body for tension. Since he carries most of his tension in his neck and shoulders, he will then tense those muscles, hold the tension momentarily and then relax. He includes repeating the word "relax" to himself which really enhances the effect.
- Every hour or at the beginning of a stressful event, Celine takes three slow deep breaths and reminds

herself to “relax” or uses her favorite positive affirmation, “I can handle this.”

- In her office, Melanie dedicates a part of her office to helping her relax. She surrounds herself with family pictures, recent vacation postcards and other things that remind her of her goal to relax.
- Another creative person who attended one of our Stress Management Groups changed the screen saver on his computer to read relaxing suggestions, so that every time he looked at his computer screen he was reminded to relax his usually tense shoulders. He was amazed at the difference he noticed in only a few days.
- You may consider pairing up these short relaxers with other daily habits as Alice did. She remembers to do her relaxation breathing because she has associated it with brushing her teeth.

Physical activity of any sort is one of the most efficient methods to rid ourselves of stress. However, planned exercise that enables you to use all of your muscles for a sustained period of time reduces stress more effectively by building physical health. Physically fit people perform better under stress and recuperate more quickly from a crisis. One client, Suzanne, who came to our clinic because of work-related stress, was initially taking three medications for anxiety and depression. After a period of intensive therapy she was able to reduce and then stop her medication. She was surprised to realize that exercise was her primary technique for improving her mood and reducing anxiety.

Your regular lifestyle habits have a significant impact on the amount of stress you experience. The negative habits you select such as eating an inadequate diet or using caffeine, nicotine or alcohol, are ways that you will directly influence the intensity of stress you experience. Caffeine and nicotine are substances that actually produce a stress-like response; they increase your blood pressure and heart rate as well as making your nervous system more reactive. As little as two and a half cups of coffee per day (400 mg of caffeine) can double the adrenaline in your blood stream. (Ref.1) If this occurs at a time when your body is already struggling to deal with other stressful events, then the negative effects are noticeably compounded. Individuals dealing with anxiety and insomnia are often shocked to realize how detrimental the effects of caffeine are for them and how much easier it is to reduce their anxiety when they are caffeine free.

A long hot bath can be very relaxing. The ritual of preparing a hot bath as well as the bath itself is soothing, especially prior to bedtime. Subdued lighting, relaxing music and a scented bubble bath can soothe the senses and intensify the process of relaxation so that the bathroom becomes a sanctuary. A warm cup of decaffeinated tea or a glass of wine (all things in moderation!) can also augment the relaxation of the bath.

Others have discovered that certain music calms their nerves and puts them in a peaceful introspective and contemplative state. Music can be an important part of building a safe place where you can create calm both at home and at work. Calming music while traveling to and from work is a very valuable method of decompressing from the day's stress. Workers who spend a lot of time in

their cars can enjoy a relaxing experience as they travel to and from work or between appointments – used regularly throughout the day it aids in preventing the accumulation of tension.

Still others prefer to see a professional for therapeutic massage therapy to deal with their tension. The combination of long, light strokes, deep kneading and gentle repetitive movement of therapeutic massage is a very effective way to calm tense muscles. Individuals find that as their bodies relax, they also discover peace of mind.

Wearing an Emotional Raincoat

One of the emotional techniques we help people develop is wearing an Emotional Raincoat. It is a technique people can use to buffer themselves against stress so that they are less affected by the toxicity of the environment. One worker recalled that whenever she went to see her boss to discuss a serious problem, she took her union representative with her, as she felt reassured in his presence. In that case, the union representative acted as an Emotional Raincoat. Another individual used creative visualization when she was in a negative situation and imagined that she was wrapped in an enchanted cloak, similar to one she remembered her mother wearing.

Learning Not To Over-react Emotionally

Many people learn to change their attitude to more effectively cope with stressful situations as they become aware that irrational and negative thinking is a frequent source of anxiety and tension. Experts in cognitive therapy, such as Albert Ellis, teach that it is not the event, rather the interpretation of the event that is the source of our distress. No

one can make you feel a particular way unless you choose that feeling, and even when a genuinely negative event occurs; it is the meaning you attach to it that determines the intensity of your response. We all have powerful inner conversations with ourselves that judge and analyze our life situations. It is this “self-talk” that mainly influences our reactions to the events we encounter daily. When people change their thinking so that they do not, for example, take things personally, their stress response decreases.

Distorted self-talk is also the main component of negativity, which is a major predicting factor of how healthy, functional and productive a work environment will be. Reducing negativity in the workplace seems to have the most beneficial effect in improving the workplace. Not surprisingly, negativity is very common in workplaces primarily because it is one of the symptoms of group stress. Interestingly, it is the issue most frequently identified by both managers and employees as needing to be addressed. When we bring to people’s attention that they can change their negativity by changing their self-talk, they feel empowered and more able to cope with challenges they face.

Increasing Resilience

Another way to cope with stress at work is to increase your resilience and hardiness. It is like increasing one’s emotional immunity. People who have high levels of physical immunity are less vulnerable to infections and illnesses. Similarly, people with high emotional resilience are less affected by stressful environments.

In 1979 Suzanna Kobasa compared two groups in the workplace. (Ref.2) The first group had a high level of stress and also a high level of illness while the second group had

a high level of stress but a low level of illness. She discovered that those who had a lower level of illness even in high stress situations had a personality characteristic called hardiness. Kobasa believes that hardiness is connected with the following three psychological factors that can be learned:

- **Commitment.** Your capacity to be involved in your life (work, family, relationships) rather than being a passive observer.
- **Challenge.** Your belief that changes in life are challenges to be embraced rather than threats to be avoided.
- **Control.** Your attitude that you, not others, are in control of your life.

People with hardy belief systems not only cope with stress more effectively but also have a better quality of life.

Getting Support from Colleagues

There are many people who find support from colleagues to be a very useful tool to buffer stress. When colleagues regularly meet for lunch or after work, they have an opportunity not only to vent their feelings but also to discuss different ways to deal with stress. By discussing issues with colleagues the tension becomes diluted and more manageable; people get ideas for problem solving and also feel they are not alone in their concerns. Support from colleagues can be something that simply develops out of mutual interest or, as we will discuss later in the book, it can come from gatherings intentionally organized to reap the benefits associated with support networks.

Resolving Conflicts

It has been our observation and experience that people who develop stress at work sometimes exhibit poor communication styles, leading to difficulties expressing their feelings or resolving conflicts. We encourage people to share their feelings with their co-workers, identify problems and request special meetings to smooth out differences. Sometimes an exchange of letters is quite useful as it is an opportunity for the other person to take time to think more deeply about the problem and come back with a practical solution.

Finding a Mediator

We encourage people who are unable to resolve conflicts on their own to seek help from a Mediator so that they can more objectively identify and manage their problems. A friend, colleague or trained professional can be a mediator but consideration needs to be given to which of these individuals is more likely to mediate a successful outcome. Choose wisely, as some friends and colleagues may be very supportive but may not be good mediators.

Creativity

The first book in the Green Zone series, *The Art of Living in Your Green Zone*, noted that one of the roads that people take to discover their Green Zone is creativity. We encourage people to develop a hobby, something they like or love to do. As they explore the hobby and enjoy it they become more passionate about it and that passion becomes an endless source of positive energy.

One of the ways to develop one's creativity is through positive imagery. That exploration of one's imagination is

not only useful in developing recreational interests but also in problem solving.

Another way to develop the creative side of one's personality is by developing and using one's sense of humor. Our sense of humor helps us to take things lightly and cope with the seriousness that becomes a source of stress.

There are also many people who had a special interest in poetry, music, painting, acting or other fine arts as teenagers but they lost their interest for a number of reasons. We encourage them to once again seek the happiness that it brought them. Such exploration also helps people not only to get in touch with the creative side of their personality but also to meet other people with similar interests, hobbies and passions. That is one way of making or enlarging a circle of friends that we call "the Family of the Heart."

Spirituality

A special interest in the spiritual aspect of life can garner many benefits when pursued wholesomely and wholeheartedly. In that journey we learn to meditate and spend contemplative time with ourselves. Such a process not only helps us relax but also brings us in touch with our hidden talents and gifts. The more we meditate the more we develop a spiritual lifestyle which helps us to cope with the materialistic aspect of life and buffer the negativity when we encounter it. Using a spiritual lifestyle helps distance oneself from the institutional aspect of religion and church, especially where "Thou shalt not" is an oft-used term, and helps us follow the trail of the heart rather than the highway of tradition. Many times we meet other

people who are also pursuing the freedom of a spiritual path and we become a source of emotional support and spiritual inspiration for each other.

Serving Humanity

Those who do not have a special interest in creativity or spirituality are encouraged to do volunteer work to help others who are under-privileged or suffering. Helping others helps us to have a better perspective on our own misfortunes. Doing volunteer work in a hospital, nursing home or school does not require a master's degree. When people are appreciated for their volunteer work it builds their self-esteem and increases their Green Zone hours.

Seeing a Therapist

If an attempt to cope with stress at work and improve your lifestyle on your own has not shown a difference after a few months, it is time to discuss it with a health professional. A therapist can offer you support, help you resolve your conflicts at work or help you find another environment where you can work in the happiness and productivity of your Green Zone. It could be worthwhile considering going back to school and starting a new chapter in your life. It is never too late to pursue one's dream.

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REHABILITATING YOURSELF BACK TO WORK

Dr. K. Sohail

In our clinic, we have met a number of men and women who were on short-term or long-term disability. Many felt frustrated, distressed and depressed, as well as hopeless and helpless. They were living in their Yellow or Red Zones. In many cases the idea of returning to the same stressful and unhealthy work environment precipitated nightmares. It has been our observation and experience that the longer people remain off work, the less is the likelihood of their going back.

We have been able to help many such people to fully rehabilitate themselves and return to productive work. Our Green/Yellow/Red Zone Model and combination therapy (individual/marital/family group therapy) has helped many start a new, more satisfying work life. In one situation the patient called the Human Resources Department of her organization to let them know that she was planning to go back to work, they were shocked. They had closed her file. They had not imagined that after years of disability she would want to return, or even be capable of returning to work.

Another client, Sharon, had been off work and suffering from Depression for two years. With professional help, she was not only able to control her Depression, but also felt so confident she wanted to return to the workforce. She started with a part-time job and gradually started teaching full-time in a different school. She shared her story in the following letter.

Dear Dr. Sohail,

In March 1995, I began having difficulty while working at an elementary school teaching Grades 2 and 3. As a teacher with a family, a husband and two girls aged five and ten years old, I had pushed myself to the point where my health was beginning to deteriorate. The result was increased time away from school. The new principal at the school was not pleased with my absenteeism, and began writing letters to me stating that fact. With the increased stress coming from my boss, I definitely began to operate in my Red Zone at work. I felt my only recourse was an administrative transfer to another school.

I was transferred to an inner city school, with no classroom supplies and very difficult, needy children. In April 1997, when I was evaluated, the principal stated she felt I was below standard in teaching. I was devastated. I had spent many hours on planning and making teaching aids, but felt as though I was operating underwater and in slow motion. I was definitely working in the Red Zone. I talked to my family doctor about how I felt, and she suggested I go on sick leave, so I could

become healthier and therefore more able to cope with the stress at work.

Hoping there was a physical explanation, I decided to go to the Lockwood Clinic in Toronto to obtain a complete physical. The doctors did many tests, and there were some minor physical problems, but none that would explain all of the symptoms I was having. It came back to Depression. The doctor prescribed Effexor, and gradually increased the medication until I was taking ten pills a day. At that point I had a reaction. I went to my local hospital and received a Gravol shot to control the nausea and vomiting. The psychiatrist at the hospital said I needed to be off all medications for three months.

I attended a group session at the hospital during the day and groups at the Salvation Army, to help me cope during this difficult time. Without my paycheck, my husband and I were having financial difficulties. The School Board wanted to know when I would return to teaching. I could not give them an answer as I did not know myself. The insurance company, the Long Term Disability carrier, refused to give me long-term disability, which I had paid into during my teaching career. To help me cope, the hospital recommended a VON [Victorian Order of Nursing] nurse come to the house three times a week. She went with me to the Federation Office to ask them to intervene with the District School Board. This relieved some of the pressure from them to return to work.

When I had my first appointment with your clinic, I finally felt as though someone was really listening and I was going to get help. I told you and your nurse, Anne

Aguirre, about my two previous depressions and my genetic predisposition to mood disorder. You suggested a combination of medications and psychotherapy. Anne made an appointment for me to see Dr. Seeley, another psychiatrist at Ajax Pickering Hospital. Due to previous drug allergies, he admitted me to the hospital and the nurses monitored me while they were trying a new drug. You met with my husband and explained the treatment. My husband also met with Anne to get further support to cope with changes he needed to make while I was on my way to a slow recovery.

As I continued to see you, I learned the Green / Yellow / Red Zone Model. You asked me to record my mood on a daily basis. I used to live in the Red Zone because of my Depression. With support, medications and therapy I entered the Yellow Zone. You also saw my daughters and offered them support. Your approach of family therapy was very helpful in coping with this devastating illness. You also helped me in fighting the battle with the insurance company. After seeing a psychiatrist of their choosing [Independent Medical examination], they grudgingly paid me the amount owing, but not before entering arbitration between the union, the board and the insurance company.

After two years of being away from teaching, the insurance company began to pressure me to return to teaching or face the prospect of no income. With your support and the support of my family and friends, I began a Back-to-Work Program. I began by volunteering twice a week for half a day, then three times a week in the classroom of a friend, until I felt more confident.

In September 1999, I began teaching half days in Grades 1 and 2. At Christmas I went full time at another school teaching Grade 2. Both assignments went well.

In September 2000, I began teaching Grade 2 in a middle class area, about five minutes from home. I have received a glowing evaluation from the Principal and have had parents thank me for being so caring with their children. I am thankful to be working in the Green Zone with teachers I like and respect.

Each lunch hour I walk for half an hour to dissipate some anxiety. I still attend group therapy each week; take my medications for depression and anxiety and see you when something is bothering me.

I will be able to retire with a full pension from teaching in March 2003. I may continue to work as long as I enjoy teaching. Thank you Dr. Sohail and Anne, for showing and helping me get my life back.

*Sincerely,
Sharon*

One of the significant questions for workers who are on long-term disability and counselors and therapists who are involved in helping people in their rehabilitation is, "What are the factors that differentiate between those workers who go back to work and those who remain disabled for the rest of their lives?" In my mind the following factors played a significant role in Sharon's complete and successful rehabilitation to work:

Positive attitude of the patient

In spite of the pain and suffering of Depression, Sharon had a positive attitude. She had not given up and was hopeful that she would go back to work one day. We have met many men and women who become so disheartened after being disabled for a few months that they lose their spark, enthusiasm and motivation. Sometimes even therapy does not help them regain their positive outlook and hope.

Meaningful connection with the therapist

Although Sharon had seen a number of doctors and therapists in the past, she was successful in having a solid therapeutic relationship with me. I believe a meaningful relationship with the therapist is very crucial in rehabilitation. I have been very fortunate that my humanistic philosophy has helped me to connect better with my patients. Even reading some of my books helps my patients to develop trust in me. When they read that my Green / Yellow / Red Zone Model has helped many other patients, they feel more optimistic of success.

Motivation

Sharon was quite motivated to change. She benefited from individual and group therapy. She did her homework responsibly and applied the suggestions of Green / Yellow / Red Zone Model. Group members were quite impressed by her recovery and healing. She became a source of inspiration for others. She worked hard and reaped the benefits of her hard work.

Supportive Spouse

The support of Sharon's husband was very important in her healing process. He was willing to meet with us to understand her illness. He was quite flexible in his work schedule and did his best to accommodate her limitations. He was surprised that previous doctors and therapists did not get him involved in her therapy. I believe that the emotional help should not only focus on the identified patient, it needs to include the whole family system. I like to reassure the family and answer their questions. It is a golden opportunity to educate families about mental health. I am usually pleasantly surprised when they want to learn and read more about the Green Zone Model.

Holistic Approach

Sharon was open to dealing with her problems in a holistic way. I discussed with her how her physical, emotional, social, professional and political problems were interconnected and that we needed to find a way to deal with every one. Being a psychologically sophisticated person, she was able to appreciate our approach.

Supportive Work Environment

Sharon's workplace allowed her the benefit of arranging a graduated return to work program. She took a few baby steps before she could walk and run confidently. She was also fortunate that the principal and teachers in the new school welcomed her. She did not feel isolated. She could start a new chapter of her life with respect and dignity. It is unfortunate that many people who go back to work have to experience discrimination or harassment since it isolates them. I feel that getting out of a Red Zone work

environment and into the Green Zone helps workers in their complete and successful re-integration and rehabilitation. Sharon was indeed fortunate to have that support.

Part Three



LOSING YOUR JOB UNEXPECTEDLY

Dr. K. Sohail

Losing one's job unexpectedly can be a major crisis. Such an event is more devastating for those people for whom work identity has become their primary identity. I have seen far more men than women in this category. Most men have been socialized to take the role of breadwinner seriously and if they lose their job, they are overwhelmed by a great sense of failure. In many cases the job loss may not even be their own fault – they may be the victim of re-organization, budget cuts or downsizing. In the last decade in North America, the numbers of multi-million dollar organizations that have gone through downsizing have increased many-fold. More and more people are feeling insecure, fearing that they may be called into the President's office and given a pink slip [a memo announcing their termination from the organization]. Many have university degrees and their families are accustomed to a comfortable, affluent, even luxurious lifestyle. In some cases the stress at work has already undermined the marital and family life so that the support of family is unavailable when it is most needed.

One such individual was Ted who faced a double crisis. He lost his job and his family in the same week. When I asked him to share his feelings about standing at the crossroads of life, he wrote:

Dear Dr. Sohail,

*“NO! NO! NO! No family. No home. No job!
Let me back up a few months. For years my wife and I have been participating in marriage encounter groups and seeing several marriage counselors. This past March things reached a crisis when my wife asked me to move out, but I did not. I was devastated. Those days I was crying myself to sleep night after night. I wondered where my life was leading me. If I only knew!*

Dr. Sohail had suggested earlier for me to vacate the house but I had resisted. I thought I could work things out with his help. This was not possible because the Red Zone, my family and I were living in, prevented any constructive and meaningful dialogue. We were arguing and fighting with each other all the time.

On July 31, my wife asked me, almost ordered me, out of the house once again. I reluctantly agreed as I thought it was the last selfless act I could do to show my love for my family. However my personal hell got a lot worse the next day. On August 1, I was laid off after five and a half years of service to my company. “What had I done to deserve this?” I asked myself. Now I had no family, no job and soon no home.

I was still reluctant to move out, but my wife said, “Move out now, find a job later.” On August 2, my wife called the police when I threw an empty beer can down

the hall. I will never forget the look of hate in her eyes. Afraid to be thrown in jail, I left that night and slept on an air mattress in my new basement apartment.

Trying to find a job in this unstable environment is difficult to say the least. I had constant bouts of self-doubt and anxiety. My feelings of self worth were at an all time low. I could keep neither a job nor a family.

Thank God, I had the support of my family of origin and friends, in particular my sister, brother-in-law and my brother. They brought me out of my swamp of self-doubt and made my living day to day bearable and sometime even enjoyable. All of them supported me. They even helped me in distributing my resume and my search for a job.

In this difficult time two events helped me the most. In late August when I met Marg, the senior partner of my out-placement service, she sensed my despair and told me that I had nothing to be ashamed of, that my resume showed that I was a valuable individual who had accomplished a great deal over the past 25 years of my working life.

The second event was with my ex-colleague Michael who received a call from his ex-colleague John from the U.S. for a new position. He immediately contacted me and forwarded my resume with profuse praise about my qualifications and service. He has gone out of his way to promote me and help me get a nice job.

In the last few weeks I went through a series of interviews. The last one was in California. I was pleasantly surprised when they sent me a ticket to fly to California to meet with the executive team and discuss

areas of mutual concern. I was hopeful that I would be offered a job after the interview but they wanted to interview a few more candidates before they could make up their minds. I was disappointed. I could not be patient, as I was feeling desperate. I still have not heard. My friends are supporting me while I wait. They have not said "No" but they have not said, "Yes".

For me the waiting has become unbearable. Whatever happens I will survive with the help of my friends and my family of origin. In the last few months their support has helped me whenever I felt myself sinking further into despair."

Ted

It has been my observation that people who have been enjoying a luxurious lifestyle are faced with several levels of challenge when they lose their jobs. They not only have to face survival issues (paying mortgage, bills, and fees for child education, etc.), they are also forced to review their lives from an existential and philosophical point of view. They have to discover what they value, what their priorities are and what gives them meaning in life. Those people who have a materialistic philosophy are forced to review their lifestyle.

One such person was Lisa, who consulted me because she was experiencing panic attacks. Her husband had recently lost his job and she was worried about her financial future. She was obsessed with the 'what if's'. While I was helping her in therapy to build her confidence and self-esteem, I also wrote her the following letter, which she found quite helpful and meaningful:

Dear Lisa,

Your mind has been plagued with questions like:

What if I lose my job?

What if I lose my house?

What if my husband never finds a job?

What if my son has to leave school?

And all these “what ifs” make you nervous and worried and you have sleepless nights living in your Yellow Zone. The tension keeps on building and finally you lose control, fall into your Red Zone and have panic attacks. While you are preoccupied with all these worries you withdraw from your friends and even contemplate missing therapy sessions. Sometimes your frustrations turn into resentment and anger and then you take them out on those who are closest to you. In this way you push away the ones that care for you the most. As your worries increase, not only your emotional world but also the physical world shrinks and you feel nervous driving far from home. That also restricts how far you can go to work.

In the last few months of working with you in therapy, trying to help you live in your Green Zone, I have been encouraging you to see that:

*you are stronger than you give yourself credit for,
the situation is never as bad as you imagine it to be,
and*

your attachment to material things and people in your life is too intense for your own good.

I hope that gradually you can trust yourself to be adventurous and further explore life emotionally and geographically. You can start that journey in your imagination and as you feel comfortable with situations in

your mind, you will find it easier in your real life. Our outside fears are the projections of our inner ghosts. When we are ready to fly then there are no limits. You are lucky to have caring people in your life, that I call “the Family of the Heart”, ready to offer you support when you need it. You are aware that every crisis is a mixed blessing. It can be a point of regression or an opportunity to grow. And anything that does not kill us makes us stronger. After every crisis either we become bitter or better and I am optimistic you will become better.

I think life is forcing you to review your attachments and your philosophy. My father used to say that the human heart is like a boat and life is an ocean. As long as the boat is intact, the millions of tons of water it floats on does not hurt it, but when there is a small hole and two gallons of water seeps in, those two gallons become more dangerous than the millions of tons of water outside.

The bigger existential question that we all have to face is: What does life mean to us and what is all that we own worth?

Let me share with you one of my father’s folktales which has always been a source of inspiration for me.

There was a king who loved to hunt. One day he went to the jungle with his friends. He saw a beautiful deer, and followed him on his horse leaving his friends behind. The deer was fast and the king determined. After a few hours of chase not only did the king lose the deer but also his friends. The king looked for his friends all day long but all in vain. He had no food or water with him. Even the next day the search was unsuccess-

ful. The king became so thirsty and dehydrated, he was ready to faint. From a distance, he saw the hut of a saint. The king went to the old man and asked for a glass of water.

The saint smiled and said, "Everything has a price in life."

"How much for a glass of water?"

"Half of your kingdom", he said and offered him a piece of paper to write it down. The king had no choice but to give away half of his kingdom to save his life. The saint gave him water from his pitcher and kept the piece of paper.

The king left again looking for his friends. This time not only did he not find his friends he also developed abdominal pain and could not pass water. He was in agony. The next day he went back to the saint asking for help.

The saint said, "I have herbs that will relieve your pain but everything has a price in life."

"How much for the herbs?"

"Half of your kingdom", he again said and offered him the same piece of paper. The king had no choice but to give away the rest of his kingdom to save his life. The saint took the paper and offered him herbs. The king passed water and felt relieved. As the king was leaving on his horse, he looked behind and saw the saint throwing the piece of paper into the fire burning next to the hut. The king was shocked. He came back and asked, "Why did you throw away the piece of paper?"

"What was it worth?" the saint asked.

"My whole kingdom."

"Your whole kingdom is only worth but a glass of water and a few herbs."

Lisa, I strongly believe that our emotional reactions to things, people, circumstances and crises depend upon what meaning we give them. People living in the Green Zone do not let crises push them into the Red Zone for a long time. They might drive through the Yellow and Red Zones but do not park there. I hope the recent crisis becomes a turning point in your life and you come out of it as a healthier and happier person. I will keep on offering you support as long as you need it. I have faith in you. I see potential in you that you don't see yet.

*Sincerely
Sohail*

A few weeks after receiving that letter, Lisa's worst nightmare came true and like Ted she lost her job. But two weeks after losing that position she was unexpectedly offered far better employment that enabled her to move to a better place to live. As she felt stronger and happier, she wondered why she had worried so much knowing that she had a wealth of valuable experience. Now thinking about those days she is able to laugh at herself.

It has been my observation that people whose identity, worth and meaning depends upon who they are rather than what they have; cope with life's losses and financial crises far better.

BECOMING FINANCIALLY SUCCESSFUL THE SECOND TIME

Dr. K. Sohail

Over the years I have met a number of men and women socially and professionally, who faced a major financial crisis which shattered their dreams. Some even had to declare bankruptcy. Those who drove expensive cars and owned million dollar homes reached a stage when they could not pay for their next meal. Many became so disheartened that they lost all hope of financial recovery and sank into a chronic depression. There were others who recovered and entered the mainstream one more time by trying a new organization or a different job market. They were able to learn from their mistakes and did far better the second time. One such person is Zahid Ali Lodhi, a successful businessman and a well-respected member of the Asian community. I have seen him transform his financial breakdown into a breakthrough. When I expressed a desire to interview him to find out his secret to financial success, he readily agreed. I would like to share a few glimpses of our lengthy interview.

Sohail: Zahid, over the years I have seen you experience financial crises but each time not only did you recover, you also did better than before. I am curious about the secret of your success. Let me start from the very beginning. What were the circumstances that compelled you to choose to leave Pakistan and make Canada your new home? Was money the primary motivating factor for you to come to Canada?

Zahid: No, the primary motivational factor for me to leave Pakistan was not financial. It was a mission, a journey to find personal freedom. In Pakistan I belonged to a family who were involved in manufacturing. I was given ample opportunity to work in the family business. I started my career from the lowest level and within a short time I was running most of the management side. At the age of 18, I proved to be a responsible manager supervising all purchases and sales. I was comfortable financially but I wanted a bigger challenge in life.

My family had their own dreams for me; they were expecting the second generation to take over their business. Needless to say they did not support my decision to leave Pakistan to go abroad. They tried their best to stop me. They wanted me to stay and run the factories. They even bribed me with incentives like buying me a new car and a new house, if I

would stay. But I was feeling suffocated in that environment. There was no personal freedom. If I stayed, it meant that I had to follow the family traditions with overpowering cultural and social obligations. Definitely there was a constant conflict between my reality and my dreams.

Finally I convinced my grandfather who understood my frustrations. He convinced other family members that if they did not support me there was a possibility that not only would I leave with out their blessings but I might also never come back. Reluctantly the family agreed. They had witnessed that of my seven uncles, six had left the country and never returned to Pakistan to live. They knew it would happen to me as well. I was adamant about discovering what my dream world had to offer. The social and political system in Pakistan was much more liberal compared to now but was still very oppressive from my point of view. Meeting the opposite sex was taboo even as friends, forget about dating or having any romantic relationship openly. In short, I felt restricted in practicing what I believed socially, intellectually, philosophically, politically or spiritually, so I migrated to Canada with my dreams and hopes, Canada has now been my home for the last three decades.

Sohail: When you arrived in Canada, what was your dream?

Zahid: I wanted to become an aeronautical engineer but in those days it was a dying profession. I was also fascinated with cars so I decided to become an auto mechanic, hoping one day I might own my own repair shop. In a couple of years I learned the trade and I was given a job with a local GM dealership. I worked there until just before Christmas. One day my boss called me in his office and gave me the pink slip. I was shocked and asked him, almost crying, "What did I do wrong? Why are you letting me go?"

He said, "You did nothing wrong. We do this every year. For the next few months you collect unemployment because the season is slow and then come back next spring, we will hire you again."

"Will this happen every year?"

"Yes" he said in a matter of fact way. "But why do you worry, you get your unemployment insurance."

I was shocked. I could not imagine not working a few months every year and collecting unemployment. As I was driving home from work I passed by the university. I decided to explore what else I could do and ended up registering in Business Administration. In three years I graduated and even before I got the results I was

offered a job in a fish processing company.

Sohail: How long did you work there and why did you leave?

Zahid: I was there for three years. There were several factors that influenced me to leave. First, the management was impressed with my different [Asian] training in problem solving; they made me an internal auditor. As an auditor, I was expected to travel to all fishing and canning facilities. Most fishing villages were very small in the Maritime Provinces, so whenever I would go for an audit, everyone in the village would know about my presence. I got a lot of attention because in many places they had never met someone from an Asian background, someone different than them. I enjoyed traveling and meeting people; in addition I got a lot of exposure and was able to taste the local food. That gave me a tremendous opportunity to understand and appreciate the warmth, honesty and hospitality of Maritimers and my new home Canada. The only discouraging part I did not like was that workers were intimidated by me as an auditor. I was perceived as someone who was sent by head office to look into their faults. They were afraid that I would report their weaknesses and shortcomings. I tried to be helpful and friendly but they remained nervous. Being a friendly person, I did not like the tension. I realized that my job was

in what you would call the Yellow Zone and I felt uncomfortable.

The other thing that bothered me was the expectation of management; they expected me to find faults. I am a positive person. My focus was to find ways to improve overall performance, but they had a punitive attitude. I did not like that either. I felt management was also in the Yellow Zone by not being very supportive. Personally, I enjoyed the attention, respect and appreciation. I was very happy that my Asian training had become an asset for the company. But soon little differences started to interfere in my personal growth and happiness. The last straw came while I was auditing the higher management accounts – I realized that my boss who worked 15 hours a day seven days a week, made just a little more salary than I did. I was shocked. I thought even if I stayed there for another twenty years, I would not go very far.

After working for two years as an internal auditor I realized that I had again chosen the wrong profession. I was totally confused and on top of it my family was upset at me for resigning from such a wonderful job and living on unemployment. All my life I was optimistic about my energies and strengths, this was the first time I really felt that I had no time to restart a new career. I honestly believed it might

become my introduction to helplessness and depression. In other words I was totally in the Red Zone.

Sohail: What motivated you to come to Ontario and what were you hoping to achieve when you came here?

Zahid: I explored a totally new field in order to become a millionaire in a short time – I became involved in international commodity trading. I made a number of deals but they all fell through. I was involved with many financial institutions, banks, international buyers, sellers and brokers. I made lot of contacts but soon realized I could not prosper in this business due to having to work with too many unscrupulous individuals. It was a cut-throat business. Everyone worked in the Red Zone. At one point I was involved in making deals for thousands of tons of sulfur, sugar and wheat for governments or for large multi-national companies. In this period of my life, I learned a lot about commercial trading from currency to metals to oil. You name it and I was involved in it, from Japan to Peru to the highest level in Mexico. Unfortunately, none of my deals ever materialized and that drained all my cash. I reached a point when I had no money, so I decided to leave New Brunswick hoping to start a new chapter in my life again in a new city, in a new province. I moved to Ontario.

Sohail: In Ontario you had been involved with the restaurant and motel business before you opened a factory. How did your businesses start in Ontario?

Zahid: Ontario was totally a foreign land for me. I had no contacts and no network of people except for a friend's apartment to sleep. To start any business I needed some financial support. Usually this comes either from one's own family or from outside sources such as partners, a bank or other lending institutions. I knew that I had neither money nor credibility with any bank so I had to find a partner to support my ideas with his financial credibility. I made a presentation to a person who was introduced to me and I convinced him to go into the restaurant business. I shared with him that I did not need any money from him but rather his credit worthiness and his name. He agreed but on the terms that he would do everything for a return of 75% of profit for him and 25% for me. At that time I had no choice. So I agreed as a stepping-stone to enter the business world. This was necessary to establish my credibility, to create a network of resources. In two years the partnership dissolved and since then I have been financially independent.

Sohail: What was the first business you initiated and how did you grow?

Zahid: The first business was in the hospitality industry, the restaurant field. It provided me with a lot of fulfillment and pleasure, because this was my kind of business, this business gave me the opportunity to meet many good people from all walks of life and in addition I made them happy by serving them to the best of my ability.

This excitement was also short lived because the restaurant business demanded full time commitment with very long hours. I was feeling tired and had very little time to socialize with my friends and family. Since I enjoyed the hospitality industry I switched to the motel business, thinking; 'Now I do not have to serve 500 people every day anymore.'

During this period I moved to various new towns and cities making friends all over. I felt I was very fortunate because by now my dreams were in the making to become a millionaire before my fortieth birthday while climbing the social and political ladder with dignity and pride. My dreams came true. But by then nature had something else in store for me. In the late 1980s the economy started to slow down, economists and pundits started talking about a slow recession. So I started my research to create a cushion to ease up on the financial bump coming shortly. I found out that in the last major recession twelve

years ago, the only community that survived in Ontario was Timmins due to its gold mines. Thinking that during recession investors would hedge themselves by buying precious metal, Timmins would be an ideal place to relocate. I took a calculated risk or you can say gambled and bought a motel in Timmins eight hours drive from Toronto. I was hoping that during the recession the motel in Timmins would help me deal with the crisis. But there were many surprises waiting for me. By the time I moved to Timmins, the labor unions at the gold mines went on strike, this strike was expected to be short but it was long enough to drain all my savings and other investments. Like many North American businessmen I lost all that I had built and saved including my other businesses in Collingwood.

By 1992, I was penniless and homeless once again. This time it was even worse than the first time. The first time I was alone, but the second time I had my brother, sister and parents, who had emigrated from Pakistan and I had to support them financially and emotionally.

Sohail: How long did you struggle before you got back on your feet?

Zahid: The hard times started in June 1992 and I struggled till September 1994.

Sohail: Most people who go through such a prolonged financial crisis become depressed

and lose all hope. What kept you optimistic and what helped you to be successful one more time?

Zahid: I never give up in life. Even the day the bank took over my last motel and I was sitting on the floor with no furniture and nowhere to go, I asked myself, "What's next?" The hardest part was to see my dreams shattering in front of my eyes. Everything was crumbling and I was helpless. In those desperate moments my strength was my belief in my support structure and myself. I kept assuring myself that if I could do it once; chances are I could do it again. I felt confident even when I was at my lowest. I was also fortunate to have a circle of good friends, family members and business colleagues, who always supported me. I could trust them, lean on them and rely on them. I was also sure that people trusted me in business because of my fair and just dealings. I looked deep down to see if I had ever cheated anyone or had created any hard feelings, resentment or bitterness. It was quite comforting that I had the trust and support of my family, friends and colleagues and I think it was an important factor in my becoming successful again.

There were times in 1993 and 1994 when I felt sad and depressed but it was for short periods of time. But there was a voice

inside me that told me that hard times would not last and I would be successful again. I did not know when and how but I had faith in life and in myself.

During those difficult times I developed another habit that helped me cope with my depression. Every day I got up, took a shower, got dressed and went out. Sometimes I went to visit a friend, sometimes to a library to read newspapers and magazines to find out about the market and sometimes to visit business friends. I did not stay home and sulk. Finally in late 1994 I had a breakthrough. A friend in Pakistan showed interest in importing some plastic scrap from Canada. I did not know anything about plastic or even the name of different types of plastic. The offer was interesting, so I devoted all my energies in learning about plastics and its business aspects. Soon I realized the potential and worked very hard to become what I am today.

Sohail: What have been some of the highlights of your second successful career?

Zahid: Confidence is the foundation for all business relations. The degree of confidence a man has in others, and the degree of confidence others have in him, determines a man's standing in the commercial and industrial world. In the last eight years I have established myself once again in the

business community. To do this my brother and brother-in-law helped me a lot. We all work together. They run the day-to-day business while I do customer relations and create new business opportunities. I love talking, so negotiating and making deals comes natural. I have a wonderful relationship with the buyers, sellers and brokers because I believe that a perfect deal is the one in which every one is a winner. Business is perceived as purely a money game in the world, however in Canada due to the small market size, if one can see beyond money the doors for success start opening. Initially, one needs money to make money but in the long run the most important factor is networking to become successful. There is a mystique to money, many of us do not realize. It is a medium of exchange among people all over the world regardless of race, creed or religion. It possesses a mystical power of its own, once the secret to this power is understood it starts multiplying. Finally money becomes a sharing game. The more we like to share with others, the more others are willing to share with us.

Sohail: Many people who do business with their friends or relatives and mix a Business Model with a Love Model experience tension, conflicts and problems. How do you deal with those issues?

Zahid: It all boils down to trust and confidence. I trust my family and they confide in me. They run the day-to-day business. We meet every week and discuss issues. I give them my opinions and suggestions and then it is up to them to take those suggestions or leave them. We respect each others' opinion. We are quite democratic in running our businesses. I do not impose my opinions on them. It is respectful and democratic. And we keep our family issues separate from business matters. We work as a team and in team work I need to overlook other people's weaknesses and hope that they overlook my shortcomings. Nobody is perfect but we are good for each other. Now we have very successful businesses and are happy about it.

Sohail: At one time you shared with me that you used to be a businessman and then you became an entrepreneur. Can you share with me the difference between a businessman and an entrepreneur?

Zahid: In my opinion a businessman is more of a risk manager. He is trying to minimize the losses while maximizing the profits for his business. On the other hand an entrepreneur is a person who creates new business opportunities. His vision is his motivation to create a viable, successful project and when the project is successful, making profits, he loses his interest and

moves on to a new project, which can provide him more excitement and challenge. I'm not very good in doing day-to-day administration. I'm not very good in minimizing the risks on a day-to-day basis. I prefer to manage risks on a yearly basis. If I assess our financial involvements, we are involved in five different businesses, some of the businesses we have bought and some of them we have created including telecommunication, food, plastics and steel. They're all totally separate lines of business. I have been involved in creating all those businesses because of my enthusiasm. When a new business opportunity presents itself, we have a family meeting and decide whether we would like to be involved or not.

Sohail: Now that you have become a successful entrepreneur from an Asian background, why do you think many Asians and other immigrants do not succeed?

Zahid. There may be many reasons but some stand out more in my opinion. One of the reasons is a difference in culture and in personalities. In the third world people are seen as guilty until proven otherwise, while in Canada you are perceived as innocent until proven guilty. Canadians are very trusting. I think that trust needs to be respected. Many businessmen from the third world misuse and abuse that trust and after

a while people stop trusting them which results in many failures.

The other reason is lack of respect for time and its limitations. Creating trust and respect demands patience and consistency. Many Asians believe in short cuts, expecting the same principals that they are used to. In addition most Asians wish to be involved in ethnic businesses catering to their own community. They limit themselves due to their own insecurities and conveniences. Personally I choose business focusing on mainstream needs, the scope is much larger and also provides an excellent chance to assimilate and integrate into the mainstream culture. Many immigrants only do business with their own ethnic community and compete among themselves, which also works against their success. I always suggest to immigrants that they need to become part of the mainstream culture if they want to be successful in the long run.

Sohail: When you look back at your last twenty years in Canada, what kind of thoughts come to mind?

Zahid: I feel very fortunate to be part of this community called Canada; I live my life as I dreamed long ago, to become a conscientious citizen living a free life with respect, dignity and honor. I have developed a rational and logical approach towards life,

which is passionate, and fulfilling. I am a futuristic person. My vision for tomorrow decides my action today as I believe today is what I did yesterday when yesterday was today and today was tomorrow. I try to analyze the problems and then solve them. That is my secret of living in my Green Zone. I am also a great believer of dreams and passions. We need to do things passionately to enjoy them. I think our mind is the greatest source of energy and we need to use it to its fullest potential. I think success cannot be measured just in dollars. I believe successful people love what they do and gradually they earn what they desire the most.

Sohail: Many people had passion once but then they felt betrayed and lost their passion, never to get it back.

Zahid: I believe the secret of survival is believing in one's self, knowing your weaknesses and strengths. The answer is flexibility not rigidity. When people feel betrayed by their families, business partners, institutions and governments, one has to learn to go beyond that, heal and then move on to a new project, a new passion and a new dream. I love to work and I do it every day. Some times what we fear to be the most difficult thing to do often holds the key to our future success. One should let go of the things that hold them back – either a process of

physical migration or letting go of old relationships or feelings. This is very similar to going back a step to make the next step forward. A person who is used to a prison cell should not complain about the open doors for bringing a cold draft, but rather should recognize the opportunity of freedom that open doors are offering.

Sohail: What are your views about retirement after working hard for 30 years of your life?

Zahid: I ask myself the same question every year, especially during RRSP season. I tell my accountant that I am contributing for a retirement plan but I have no intention of retiring because I am already retired. I am relaxed and love what I do. Then why am I saving for retirement? I would love to keep on working until the day I do not feel energetic anymore to come to work, even if it is at the age of ninety. I love growing and learning. I learn something every day. It keeps me happy and is a driving force in creating a better future by making the right choices today.

LACKING INNER DISCIPLINE, STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Dr. K. Sohail

I was always fascinated by the people in my clinical practice who were intelligent, bright and very effective in their career but still struggled in their work life. Some became unsuccessful and unhappy but did not know the reason why. Many had seen a number of doctors and therapists. They shared with me that they had received a number of diagnoses including psychopathic and narcissistic personality disorders, which bothered them.

After my assessment, when they asked my opinion I told them that they had a creative personality and because of their unconventional thinking and non-traditional lifestyle, they experienced problems in their life. Since they had a well-developed *creative self* they were successful in doing what they liked and loved to do but because they had a poor *conditioned self*, they had difficulties following rules and becoming part of institutions. Some lacked inner discipline and structure and needed external help to become a part of the organization in which they worked.

If such people remained single, they learned to accept their disorganized lifestyle, but when they got married and had children; their families had difficulties dealing with

them. They found them engaging and frustrating at the same time. Because of their intelligence and creativity, the spouses and children found them exciting, but because they lacked inner discipline and did not fulfill their promises, their families also found them frustrating.

After establishing a good connection with such people in therapy, I made them aware of their limitations as well as their strengths and asked them to get help from others to follow the rules and fulfill their promises.

One such person was Bruce. He was an excellent lawyer and did well in court but had great difficulties keeping record of his services and sending invoices. Although people owed him thousands of dollars, his wife struggled with paying bills. She was so frustrated that she was contemplating leaving him. She took him to see a number of therapists but they could not help him. When Bruce and his wife met me I told them that a few months of therapy would control his problem. She was quite skeptical. As I worked with him I asked her to stop judging and criticizing him and let me make him aware of his deficiency.

After a few weeks of therapy, I started giving him homework, which he followed. At one stage I asked him to make a list of the money owed him and send invoices out to his clients. Within a few days he received more than fifty thousand dollars. He not only paid his debts but also took his family on a vacation. That was a major step in the improvement of his relationship with his wife and family. After Bruce realized his problem he started designating work to his staff and asked their help to stay on top of things.

At one stage, I asked Bruce if he would be kind enough to share his experiences in therapy so that others could learn from his story. I was confident that his answers

would help many to review their lives and work. He readily agreed, but even after making a commitment he took the longest to complete the questionnaire. He was the last one to send me his story for this book. It did not frustrate me as I knew his interview was worth waiting for. These nine questions are from my letter to Bruce with his responses.

- Which one of the three Zones were you working in when you first came to see me?

Response:

When I first came to see you in December 2001, I was working almost exclusively in the Red Zone with occasional forays into the Yellow. I did spend some time in the Green. This would occur shortly after the commencement of submissions and argument in Court. I would get a natural high or rush from litigation and during these times there would be nothing else in my mind or my life but the intense focus on the judge and other lawyer, as well as the joy of a good argument or cross examination of a witness. Other than those brief periods in Court, I was pretty miserable all the time.

- What symptoms were evident in your day-to-day life?

Response:

I was very stressed and unhappy for most of my working hours (not to mention non-working hours). I had a very full practice with some great clients and challenging, enjoyable files. I spent many hours at work, probably close to 100 per week. The legal work that I did was very good, at times brilliant, and those clients

would be extremely pleased and had no trouble recommending me to others. Indeed, my practice has been built exclusively by word of mouth, I have never advertised or promoted in any way.

However, I was unable to consistently complete any of the practical, easy or mundane aspects of private practice. The docketing of my billable hours was inconsistent and incomplete which always made billing, when it happened, a very time consuming, difficult and frustrating chore. As a result, the income in no way reflected the amount or quality of work and my debt load just kept increasing. Moreover, there was work-in-process strewn all over my office. Files would often be taken to a certain point and then not finished (which also contributed to billing problems). There was no organization and very little planning or follow-up, which always left me on the verge of missing something crucial and potentially facing a negligence suit.

- How was this affecting your personal and family lives?

Response:

Working the extremely long hours meant that I rarely saw my family. I left before my wife and children were awake and came home after they were asleep. My first wife left (with the kids) and my second wife had become completely baffled and estranged. I had missed out on so much of my children's lives and I really had next to nothing to show for it.

- How long were you struggling with those problems?

Response:

Upon reflection, I can see now that I have struggled with this problem my whole life. My academic career had been a continuous series of incomplete assignments, last minute cramming and mediocre results interspersed with occasional brilliance. I have credits from four universities but did not get a degree (law is my only degree) until I was 40. I have held many different jobs in a very wide range of fields and have been almost universally fired from each one.

- What did other doctors/therapists suggest as diagnoses and treatment?

Response:

From my perspective, Ontario is a horrible place to seek help with mental health issues. There seems to be a real shortage of practitioners and it is next to impossible to find one person or organization who is able and willing to dispense drugs and provide counselling or therapy. Before seeing you, I was diagnosed with a number of personality disorders and other emotional conditions including Narcissism, Anti-social Personality, Depression, Anxiety Disorder and Attention Deficit Disorder. There were others, but I can no longer recall what they were. Treatments included drugs such as Paxil, Effexor, Dexedrine, Ritalin, Prozac and cocktail-like combinations of the above. For those who are not doctors or patients, I was taking anti-depressants, stimulants and anti-anxiety drugs at various times. The only therapy or counselling available was privately offered through psychologists but not on any kind of regular or consistent basis. It was all quite ineffective.

- How did therapy at our clinic help you?

Response:

You told me right from the beginning that there would be no labels because no one fits neatly into any so-called “disorder” (although I suspect that a standard analysis was made for OHIP and file purposes). You approached my treatment by determining the practical and day-to-day effects of my problem and not spending months trying to find out what trauma in my infancy have caused it. So long as the problem is identified, and the patient takes ownership of it, you assist in the treatment by helping to create a long term plan for dealing with it and provide practical advice on dealing with specific, personal issues. There is plenty of encouragement and feedback. The weekly sessions establish and review what you call baby steps which are a breakdown of the longer range plan into small, relatively easily achievable steps towards correcting the problem. As well, after more than a year of dealing with the negative side effects (and lack of positive effects) of many drugs, I was pleased to learn that you resorted to medications only as a last option.

- How did you learn to live in the Green Zone and not be affected by other people’s moods when they are in their Yellow or Red Zone?

Response:

Through speaking with you, I came to the realization after about five or six months that the only person I can control is me. My wife had been reacting quite badly to my problems and as a result, was very moody, depressed and withdrawn. Unwittingly, I had been

letting her feelings infect me, which not only made me miserable all the time but also interfered with my attempts to correct my problems. You helped me to develop what you call an “emotional raincoat” to deflect the moods of others and let me concentrate on making me better, letting me live in my Green Zone despite what others were feeling.

- When did you realize that you lacked the inner discipline, structure and organization in spite of being a very intelligent and creative person?

Response:

After about 9 months of therapy, I came to accept that there was something actually missing inside me that could not be overcome merely by force of will or practice. I know that I am intelligent and that I am capable of great creativity, but I don't have any self discipline, self organization or any kind of internal structure with which I can meet the demands of my law practice and the daily requirements of being a good husband and father.

- When did you realize that you needed help from your colleagues if you were to be successful in your professional life?

Response:

Once I came to the acceptance that I don't have the necessary internal structure, I concluded (with your gentle prodding) that the structure must be built externally. My father once told me that the only thing I needed was to hire someone to follow me around and record everything I do, which would take care of the

docketing and let others have the necessary information to do all the billing. As it turns out, he was not far off the mark, although I scoffed at the time. I have had to, and am in the process of assembling a team of people (so far parts of three clerks, a secretary and a junior lawyer) to create the structure, organization and discipline which I lack internally.

For mental health professionals, it is interesting to note that creative personalities that do not exist in the classification of personality disorders do have some characteristics that they share with narcissistic and anti-social personalities, but there are also significant differences. Narcissistic and anti-social personalities have a bad conscience as they are manipulative, selfish and sometimes exploitative. They do not have any sense of remorse or guilt after they hurt the people dear to them. On the other hand, creative personalities have a good conscience and they genuinely care for others, especially their families and friends. They hurt others because of their laziness and carefreeness and feel guilty afterwards. Their dear ones see them as careless rather than carefree, impulsive rather than spontaneous and irresponsible rather than free-spirited. In my clinical practice, I invite spouses, relatives and close friends of such people and explain the condition to them. After they understand the dynamics they are better able to cope with them. Creative people are so pre-occupied with the things they love to do that they become oblivious to other people's needs.

When those creative people understand the dynamics of their problem and realize that their creative personality is a mixed blessing, they are able to reorganize their lives

and become more productive and successful. They need other caring people in their lives to support them. I believe that the strength of secretaries and assistants is that they can organize and coordinate the work lives of those individuals who are very creative but disorganized. I think it is unfortunate that because we do not have any room for creative personalities in our classifications, we label them as psychopaths, which is a big blow to their self image and creates a crisis for them and their dear ones. I am not suggesting that there are no psychopaths who can be creative; I am suggesting that we need to differentiate them from those creative people who are not psychopaths.

My special interest in creative personalities and their emotional and social problems led me to interview dozens of writers in my literary career. After reading numerous biographies of scientists, artists, mystics, reformers and philosophers, I was inspired to write a book titled *Break-downs and Breakthroughs, Creativity and Insanity*. In that book I discuss such personalities and their existential dilemmas in more detail.

STRUGGLES OF FREELANCE CREATIVE PEOPLE

Dr. K. Sohail

Those who have creative potential and a fascination with colors, sounds and words and have a passion for fine arts face special challenges. For them to become artists, whether writers, actors, painters or musicians, they are required to make special sacrifices in their lives. Whether they have formal training in schools, colleges and universities or they are self-taught, they have to deal with special existential dilemmas sooner or later. They find it very hard to have a balance in their professional, creative and family lives. Creative people have difficulties following routines, rules and traditions as they want to create new traditions. They love their freedom to create and that is why they have difficulties coping with institutions, whether academic, professional, social, religious or political. For many it is very hard to have 9 to 5 jobs. No wonder many of them find freelance work so enticing.

Creative people seldom fulfill their dream of finding a job in their specially tuned creative field. And if they are able to locate a respectable job in their area of interest, they are continually worried that they could lose their spark and enthusiasm if their creative job becomes monot-

onous and routine. One such creative person is Jeremiah who was always in love with sound. When he took a position in that profession, his enthusiasm gradually transformed over the years. To capture the essence of his transformation, which many other creative men and women go through in their chosen careers, I interviewed him. A few glimpses from that interview follow:

Sohail: I would like to discuss with you the nature of your freelance creative work. How long have you been doing it? Has it changed over the years?

Jeremiah: Yes, It has changed subtly over the years. When I first began it was still freelance but it would be for long-term projects where I might be employed for eight months and then off for two or three months. That was the cycle for a long time. But in the last ten years, the pattern has been one of working for a day or a week and then being off for a day or a week and then working on a different project. It has become more unpredictable.

Sohail: How old were you when you left school and started to work?

Jeremiah: I guess I was about twenty-one.

Sohail: What was your educational background?

Jeremiah: I did three years at a community college in media arts. It was a pretty broad spectrum and I specialized in audio.

Sohail: What was your dream when you were

going to school? What kind of work and lifestyle did you have in mind?

Jeremiah: I'm not sure that I was mature enough to think that through. I just felt that I wanted to do something that I loved for a career. Since then I found out that if you do something that you love it may well turn into labor and you begin to lose the love that you had for it. You start doing it to make a living from it rather than doing it out of love.

Sohail: How was your lifestyle when you had long-term contracts?

Jeremiah: I was a young man and had a young family, so it was good to have stable and predictable work. I used to work on television series and films. It was very much like putting on a play. You felt you were part of the family with the people you worked with. When the job ended, the family dispersed and then you joined another family.

As I got older, the difficulty with that kind of lifestyle was the working hours, which were very, very long. From the moment you left your house until the moment you got home, it was a minimum of thirteen or fourteen hours working, and with travel time, it was more likely to be about sixteen hours. So when I was working I did not really have any life outside work. I worked, ate and slept.

I sort of shifted my career about ten years ago in order to get some of my life back. I now have more of a 9-to-5 kind of schedule but the price I paid for that was that I don't have as much income and the work is more sporadic, and even more seasonal. But the benefit of this kind of lifestyle is that I can have dinner with friends and go see a movie on occasion and spend time with loved ones.

Sohail: So when you were doing sixteen-hour shifts, it was good financially but it affected your personal, social and family lives. How did your family deal with that kind of lifestyle?

Jeremiah: My wife, my ex-wife now, was quite understanding, but over the years we grew in different directions.

Sohail: Do you feel that your work situation in the long run undermined your marital life?

Jeremiah: Yes, it did. I think that's a very common experience in the film side of the media business. Divorce is very common among media people. How can you help the family grow and nurture your children when you don't spend any time with them?

Sohail: How did that kind of lifestyle affect your relationship with your children?

Jeremiah: It's hard to say. They were very young at that time. I recall that when I was growing up, my father was a pilot and he was often

away for a couple of weeks. When he came back and it was the big home-coming, I used to be so happy to see him after the long absence. With my children, they may have seen me for only a few minutes a day when I was working in film. We would have a day or two together on the weekends. That's how it was for us. I can't say how it affected them.

Sohail: What made you change your lifestyle ten years ago?

Jeremiah: It has a long and complicated answer so I'll just try and make it as concise as possible. I was working on a show in 1989 that had absolutely no social value whatsoever. It wasn't even good entertainment. It was just a wretched, horrible product and it was a wretched, horrible show. The crew was one of the so-called families that I didn't get along with at all – they were totally dysfunctional. At that point, I realized I had to do something different with the rest of my life. It took me about three or four years to just make a simple lateral shift within the industry from film into video, which would give me more of my life back. I started that journey in 1989 and I still am not sure I'm where I need to be, which is to be doing something that I enjoy but which has some kind of value. I'm not sure that I'm there yet.

Sohail: How did you build your freelance business?

Jeremiah: It's slowly building up through word of mouth. I have been trying to earn people's trust so that they will actually hire me. At this point I can just wait and I know that people will be calling me as work becomes available. If there's not a lot of work in the city I can't expect to work much, but if there is a lot of work, then I can expect to work all I want. In the beginning, I had to constantly be on the phone, calling people and introducing myself. Making a lot of phone calls to promote myself was something that I had to learn. It was very nerve-wracking to begin with but it became second nature after a while.

Sohail: Are you satisfied with your creative work?

Jeremiah: I think in the media world only some parts are creative, the rest is the technical work and that's more what I'm in to. I am more of a sound technician as opposed to doing much in the way of creative involvement. The only creativity I have is problem solving, for example, trying to think of a new way to cover the microphone in a scene.

Sohail: Do you feel satisfied with what you do?

Jeremiah: No, not now. Between the age of twelve and twenty-five it was exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to problem-solve. I wanted to be deeply involved in the technical aspects and I enjoyed the equipment. I just think I've grown out of it and maybe I would like

to have a little more creative input now but I don't have the training for that.

Sohail: So what Zone have you been working in?

Jeremiah: At this point it's probably Yellow. For the first twelve years it was definitely Green, a bright Green. But it's probably Yellow now for this specific task that I do on sound. And there are lots of reasons for that. There are times when the nature of the business causes it to dip into the Red Zone – it's very, very, busy through the fall but then I can be almost completely out of work from January until maybe May, depending upon how the year is going in the industry. It can be very, very stressful, wondering when I'm going to get some work, feeling as though I'm never going to work again and realizing also that I don't really have training to do much else. So I feel trapped.

Sohail: It seems that the Yellow or Red Zone is associated with some financial unpredictability.

Jeremiah: There is certainly some of that, and it's also the fact that you are just sitting around the house and nobody's calling, and you don't feel very wanted. You also know that the feeling is irrational because nobody is really working at that given time. But my own self worth is connected with working. I'd say when I'm going through a long period of not working; I'm definitely hedging towards the Red Zone.

Sohail: In the last few years when you didn't have a regular contract, did you consider going back to long term contracts?

Jeremiah: That would mean giving up my personal and social life again. I don't want to sell my soul for an income. So I didn't really give any serious consideration to going back to the film side of things with the extended hours. I also think I'm getting a little bit too old for that, too. I think I'd wear down pretty quick if I couldn't get eight hours of sleep on a regular basis.

Sohail: How do people who work in the media field feel now as compared to twenty years ago?

Jeremiah: I guess that depends on whether or not they're in a corporate set-up, like the CBC or TVO or something like that. Those who work in the corporate set-up are experiencing more and more stress because the corporate mindset is changing. There is a lot of downsizing so people are afraid of losing their job. Also more people are expected to multi-task, do more than they may be trained for.

But in the freelance world, we don't have the same kind of politics because there's no downsizing. In fact there are more and more of us every day because they're coming from those corporate setups into the freelance world. Most of them feel happy after they leave corporations and become established in the freelance world.

Sohail: Are you saying that the loss of the corporate world has been the gain of the freelance world?

Jeremiah: Absolutely. And it's not just restricted to the media world. I'm sure it's right across the board. I'm sure that everybody with a skill-set is contemplating leaving the corporate world and going out on their own. The ones who have left are probably doing all right.

Sohail: In the beginning of the interview you mentioned that the people who were involved in this media world have a certain price to pay in their personal, social and family life. Can you tell me a little more about that?

Jeremiah: I think that on the television side there isn't a tremendous impact. I think that there are many happily married couples raising very healthy children and they're doing quite well. I found more of it on the film side of things. There are still many people that were doing quite well and holding it all together, but there seemed a bit of a ragged edge to the whole thing that creates marital problems.

Sohail: What do you consider the best and the worst part of the freelance world?

Jeremiah: The best part is having freedom. If I have something that I want to do in my personal life, and somebody calls me up to work, I can simply say that I'm already booked and

they should look for somebody else. So I have the freedom that people with a full-time job don't have unless they want to use up their leave days. So that's wonderful. I can take my holidays whenever I want.

Sohail: And what is the worst part of this kind of business?

Jeremiah: The insecurity, not knowing if I am going to have enough money to pay the mortgage or whatever at slower times of the year – having to be responsible for things like collecting my own taxes. It is also unfortunate that freelance workers have a hard time getting bank loans because banks like people with steady incomes and stable jobs. It is hard to convince them that you will get regular contracts.

Sohail: Looking back at where you started twenty years ago and where you are with the knowledge, experience and the wisdom that you have now, if you had it to do over again, would there be anything that you would do that would be different?

Jeremiah: Absolutely. If I could take this mind now and put it into my seventeen- year-old body, I would have stayed in school and continued on through university and become a professional of some kind. I would then have the liberty of choosing where I wanted to live, I'd have a better financial situation, and I'd be doing something a little bit more worthwhile than

I'm doing now.

The direction that I took was based on an immature love of sound. I used to love every minute of it. But then it became a routine and lost its charm. My father used to love airplanes and flying, but when he became a pilot he lost interest after a few years because the love turned into a job. He began to feel like a sophisticated limousine driver. By the end of his career he had lost all his passion.

So one has to be careful what path to follow; if you follow something you love, you have to be careful how are you going to feel about it twenty or thirty years down the road.

Sohail: Are you suggesting that people have to be careful before they make their passion and dream into their job?

Jeremiah: For some people it never becomes a problem. They love it all their lives, but then there are others who lose their passion. I just found that for me personally it just became boring and there's no challenge now. I'm not learning much any more.

Sohail: It has become more of a routine kind of thing.

Jeremiah: Yes, it is routine now.

Sohail: Although you're good at it, you still don't find it intellectually challenging or creatively stimulating.

Jeremiah: Exactly, that's exactly what's gone on in the last few years. The more experienced you are, the fewer the surprises.

Sohail: Why don't you pursue something completely different from what you have been doing?

Jeremiah: I have been entertaining that idea since about 1989 – about the last thirteen, fourteen years. I've wanted to make a major shift but once you're out there working and you have responsibilities like mortgages and children, you have to keep on making an income. It's hard to go back into the student mode, get retrained, and start again, on top of handling of all of your responsibilities. So that's another aspect of feeling trapped.

Sohail: What would be your advice to teenagers who love music and want to make it their career and also work in their Green Zone?

Jeremiah: That's a very difficult question to answer because I just know what happened to me in my experience. I do quite regularly meet up with young people who are just coming out of colleges, so when I'm talking to them, I do suggest that they stay in school long enough to train in something that they would enjoy for thirty years and not get bored with after a few years. But I wouldn't advise somebody not to go into the media just because of the experiences that I've had. For instance, my own son is seventeen now, and all his life I've been thinking that

it would be good if he found something else to do other than what I do. However, when he occasionally comes out with me to a set, although he doesn't know a lot yet, he's learning a little bit and he's showing all the right characteristics to work in this field. He's interested; he's got great social skills. I just want my son to be successful and happy - and who's to say that he's not going to be really happy twenty years from now if he chooses to go into the media side of things. How can I make that decision for him? I just feel I made the wrong decision for me.

Sohail: I've heard that in Europe when some of the universities and colleges accept people for fine arts programs, whether it is music, art, painting or directing, they also teach them another skill which might be carpentry or becoming an electrician so that they can have a regular job to support themselves if they cannot be successful as an artist. But I have not seen that approach in North America. What do you think of that idea?

Jeremiah: I think that is brilliant. I think that's exactly what should happen. I would not make it compulsory but I think that there should be strong encouragement to have training in something else that one can fall back on if one needs it. In many ways, Europe is ahead of North America when it comes to fine arts and creativity.

Sohail: I did that in my personal life. I saw my uncle who was a well- established poet always struggling financially like other writers and artists in Pakistan. So as a teenager I decided to become a doctor to earn a living and pay the bills, and do my writing as my passion and dream. Now I enjoy both, my practice as a psychotherapist and writing books. It helped me create a balance between my creative and professional lives. My profession helped me pursue my passion and dream.

Jeremiah: I think that's a very wise idea. I think that it's a sign of your own intelligence even at a young age. Good for you. Just a note that I want to add is that when I was starting out and going through school, for the first couple of years I did think of working in audio as a creative occupation. I felt like I was being creative and I guess I didn't think it through clearly. But it dawned on me rather quickly after a while that I didn't really have any creative input whatsoever. I had a technical job but with my immature thinking, I didn't see things realistically. And now I think it is too late to start all over again.

Jeremiah feels it is too late to go back to school or start a new profession because he is in his forties. But then there are others at his age that get their second wind. They are willing to travel on new roads to follow their passion. One

such artist is Wayne who is in his forties but still willing to make sacrifices to follow his dream. When I asked him to share with me the story of his dreams, dilemmas and sacrifices, he sent me the following letter:

Dear Dr. Sohail,

You have asked me to write about the dreams, dilemmas, and sacrifices that I've encountered in the past few years, as I endeavor to honor the creative gifts of music and writing that have been granted to me. It is appropriate that you should choose such words for me to contemplate, as they accurately characterize the nature of my experience.

I am fond of quoting the composer Johannes Brahms, a very devout man, who said, "Let the beauty that you love be what you do." While Brahms may have been innately tuned to his creative drive, and recognized it for what it truly was, a Divine gift, I, on the other hand, have spent much of my life struggling to accept the inevitability of my calling to create words and music, even though there has always been a song in my head and a passion for the written word that has rarely diminished.

From ages six to sixteen I was devoted mostly to athletics, especially hockey, and although I began playing piano by ear at age eleven, my interests in it were mainly as a hobby, something that came easily to me, and provided enjoyment for myself and those who enjoyed listening. I was never offered formal lessons, nor did it occur to me to ask for them, although my five sisters all studied piano at one time or another; ironi-

cally, none of them persisted at lessons for long. It is I who has continued to develop my musical skills, developing them to a point where I can and have played music semi-professionally for many years. Today, at age 46, it is music and writing that dominate my life, much to my joy and detriment, for there has been a cost in having arrived at such a destination.

Having spent most of my life at various jobs, drifting in and out of educational facilities, and playing music on the fringes of my existence, I found myself married at the age of 30, and involved with my new wife in the activities of being foster parents to various children and teenagers. Although this line of work was more in line with the education my wife had received, and an extension of the various work and experiences that typify what she did, I was genuine in my initial support and enthusiasm for this undertaking.

Creatively, between ages twenty to thirty, I played music with a few bands, but had not really recognized the impact and importance of it in my life. I dabbled with some poetry and lyrics, as I had for some years, and kept a semi-active interest in performing with other musicians. It seems there was always a piano around for me to play, so naturally I continued to develop my playing skills. It is important to note that I have never been disciplined in what others might refer to as practice. For me, it has been enough to sit and play interpretations of the music that I love, and my natural ear and musical sensibilities have provided for me very well. Yet the ease at which music came to me undoubtedly influenced my taking it for granted, less seriously than I could have, yet it is often during my ramblings on

the piano that the seeds of an original melody will germinate, and result in another creation. But my acceptance of my talents over the years was still an elusive pursuit, and I directed my energies into the more immediate and demanding needs of being a husband, employee, foster-parent, and, eventually, a father.

Eventually, after 8 years of fostering, we reached the decision that giving so much of ourselves to others was beginning to negatively affect our lives, and a change was in order. Throughout these years, I was maintaining employment outside the home, participating in music occasionally, and writing even less. Although I had friends and acquaintances who were as active and interested in music as I was, and I got to practice and perform with them, I still did not realize that the underlying cause of much of the unhappiness I felt might have anything to do with the need for me to pursue my art with more fervor and intensity. I may have sensed it somewhat, but my awareness of my creative drive was not fully fathomed. In addition, my marriage had been suffering for sometime, having sacrificed the intimacy that bonds a husband and wife, to the needs and demands of our foster children. My forays into the music world began to take on more urgency as I naively sought the therapeutic benefits of performing, of escaping from the tense existence within my home. I say naively because although I still wrote some and played, I still hadn't made the connection between my innate sense of discomfort with my life and my unrealized creative desire. Although some people are able to balance many elements of their life with ease, and attend to their creativity as well, I now realize that I was

unable to achieve this sense of balance that I so desired, living as I was.

In the time after we discontinued foster parenting, my wife, son and I tried to make the most of our new freedom, but something had irrevocably changed in me, and although I did not realize it at the time, I was in the beginning throes of Depression that would take me years to rise above. A few years earlier at age 37, I had been injured in an industrial accident that resulted in partial loss of the use of my left hand and arm, and after much consultation with specialists, it was determined that the loss was permanent and that I would require extensive therapy to regain some of it's use. This meant a return to college on the Workers' Compensation ticket, but also a significantly reduced income, and the more subliminal threat of not being able to perform music as well as I had. My marriage problems were aggravated by financial ones, and the prospect of returning to college and possibly having to begin a new career were daunting. Furthermore, my wife's health was declining, and the inherent frustrations of all that was happening to us began to have further negative impact on us. Although I eventually completed two years of college, I opted to return to modified duties at my auto assembly job for the health benefits and earnings potential. I was still married, although unhappily, and my return to work provided me with some sense of security in that it took me out of the tense environment that existed in my home, and into a place where mind-numbing repetitive labor offered a sense of escape; but not the kind that I needed.

My musical activities greatly reduced through work

and my injury, I began writing songs and poems that in retrospect accurately chronicle the discontentedness that I felt in my life. I took very little joy in anything, and my words were inflected with dark references and imagery that characterize how I was feeling. Such is often the nature of prose and poetry, and I find this true now more than ever: the words that we record in reference to our lives take on more depth and meaning as the years pass. I can view my words these days, and with the benefit of hindsight, gain greater comprehension into the states of my heart, soul, and mind during those times. The irony of it is that as I was becoming more frustrated with life and my lack of opportunity to perform and create, I was archiving it all in songs and poems, thereby employing some of the things that I so loved to do, just not in the sense and to the degree that I wanted. To this day, I question whether or not to share these writings with others, as they are quite personal, and metaphorically, apply to my life as I saw it then. But a writer rarely discards anything, and I'm aware that a past-written phrase may aptly apply to a more current writing, timing being everything, as they say.

Eventually, as my depression worsened and my marriage was failing, I suffered a relapse of my work-related injury that aggravated existing frustrations. And for so long, distracted by the demands of the choices that I'd made in my life, I had neglected the very thing that seemed to provide me with the greatest sense of satisfaction and accomplishment; my music and writing. The gifts that had been bestowed upon me, the ability to create and share my talents, never fully realized, had been relegated even further to the backburner

of my life. My unhappiness was profound, seemingly endless, and although I was doing some writing, it did not feel creative to me. My wife and I began counseling with you in an attempt to save our marriage and, subsequently, my individual sessions with you enabled me to gain valuable insights into myself.

Contemplating the feelings and desires that dominated my thoughts and dreams since I was a teenager, I realized that the words and music that flowed out of me with such consistency were meant to be attended to with the same conviction that I once applied to other areas of my life: sports, relationships, parenting, studies, employment. For too many years I had taken my talent for granted; a self-taught pianist and poet with no related education in the arts was not to be taken seriously! The lack of self-esteem that I associated with my talent (and it did exist, for the acceptance of talent is not always a given), and my doubts about my abilities were present for years. My concerns about the content and quality of my creative efforts withheld me for years from the more satisfying endeavor of sharing my art and gaining feedback about it, the exception being my sporadic participation with bands.

After my separation, I began to become more actively involved in music, attending jams and hoping to become more recognized as a capable musician. This resulted in an improvement in my playing and accompaniment skills, and raised the awareness of my talent somewhat within the musical communities that I frequented. But at the same time, I sensed that the musicians that I was most actively involved with, the ones who professed to have high ideals and commit-

ments to their craft were the very ones who seemed content with the status quo, while I was becoming less satisfied with my involvement with them, and felt under-appreciated. I felt that I had reached a creative, cultural cul-de-sac; I wanted more, and having finally realized and accepted the importance of creativity in my life, I decided to make a significant change that would enable me to start over, continue, and advance within an environment that was hopefully supportive, encouraging, and accepting of my talent.

Circumstances had changed in that my wife and son were required to live some distance from me, and I had an opportunity to re-locate to a part of the world where I strongly sensed that opportunities lay in wait. So in the latter part of 2002, after many months of estrangement, I took advantage of my situation and moved to the south, in greater proximity to the music and culture that I love, and am now involved with two musical groups who are strongly committed to the performance and sharing of their art. I am also in demand as a studio musician, able to contribute to others creative efforts. Additionally, I have begun collaborating with other musicians and writers, and have gained a much greater sense of comfort and accomplishment of my efforts through my association with them. I no longer feel as though there is something unusual in my desire to pursue my art to such a degree; my gift is as natural as breathing to me, and the acceptance of such is what has enabled me to make the decisions, difficult as they have been, to apply myself to the things that I most love to do. It is within this zone of comfort, the firmness of my decision and commitment

that I find the stability to deal with other issues of my life as they arise, knowing fully that in my heart and soul, I am doing that which is most important and solid to me.

I believe I am a better person for the change, although the price to arrive at this point has been emotionally and mentally expensive. Still, when I think of the alternatives, the living of my life without having at least attempted to pursue my passions, I realize that I have done the right thing, and that all of my decisions and actions largely circulate around my love for creating words and music. I try not to dwell on the regrets that I've created and sustained over the years, nor the naïve attitude that I maintained with regards to the importance of creativity in my life. For some, it's enough to have creative abilities and incorporate them into the balance of their lives, but for others like myself, the need to create and pursue our art is at the very essence of our being, and everything that we do is inherently connected to our pursuit of doing what we love the most.

*Sincerely,
Wayne*

Part Four



UNRESOLVED POLITICAL CONFLICTS AT WORK

Dr. K. Sohail

There was a time when people worked in family businesses and tried their best to cooperate with each other. As the industrial revolution spread throughout the globe, family businesses transformed into bigger and bigger industrial complexes, where economic factors became the most important consideration. This led to an autocratic and hierarchical structure in the work force. As a part of capitalistic philosophy, the workers felt that they were being exploited and manipulated. That led to the formation of unions to protect their rights. Unfortunately rather than working together, management and unions adopted an attitude of confrontation that increased rather than decreased the tension. Those in middle management were plagued with a special dilemma, sandwiched between the workers who wanted to fight for their rights and the owners and senior managers who sought to make more money by squeezing the most effort out of their workers.

In this new milieu responsibility and authority did not go hand in hand. Middle management had more responsibility than authority, which led to ongoing tension amongst them. Many coped the best way they could but many finally

had a nervous breakdown and needed professional help to cope with their anxieties and depressions. One such person was John, who saw me when he was deeply depressed and submerged in his Red Zone. After a few months of therapy he felt better and returned to work. I asked him to share his impressions of how the recent political and economic changes that drove him into his Red Zone have affected the work environment. Glimpses of his interview follow:

Sohail: Can you introduce me to the kind of factory you work for and your job?

John: The factory I work for produces automotive parts for General Motors, Chrysler, Ford, Honda and Toyota. I have been a process engineer since I started there twenty-nine years ago.

Sohail: Are you part of management or union?

John: Part of management – I have been a supervisor for nearly eight years. I have never been on the union side.

Sohail: Would you share with me your observations and experiences working in that environment, especially focusing on the relationship between management and union?

John: Over the past almost thirty years I have personally found that working in the automotive field has become much more antagonistic. When I first became involved, the automotive business was privately

owned and working conditions were more relaxed. People cared more for one another. Over the last fifteen years the company has been taken over by a large U.S. corporation and has become meaner and leaner. In order to compete, productivity has increased and costs had to be cut as well as workers. That put more direct pressure on those who were left behind to run the business. Along with these demands the factory is running seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day with little or no time for preventive maintenance, thus more breakdowns on equipment and more stress on those people who are left to operate the factory. Another stress factor is time delivery. When all is running well, this is no problem but a little hiccup here or there can and does shut down the plant for short or long times.

These factors have created further tension between management and unionized workers. At times management sticks it to the workers and workers in turn to the management. Both wait for a reason to lash out at the other, leaving process engineers like me having to work in stressful conditions. Along with this natural distrust between most union workers and management, the stress levels of people increases. Also much mistrust exists between maintenance and line operators, the people that make the equipment run.

I work in these tense conditions and many times I feel I'm left holding the bag. Instead of skilled trades helping me to diagnose problems or the line operator they both try to do the least possible work while passing the buck. When this occurs it does not take long for me to reach my Red Zone. At the same time, great pressure is created from top management to get the equipment going. Along with these problems, physical bodies are often not available due to maintenance cut backs. It's a vicious circle. Sometimes cooler heads prevail, but many times they don't.

Sohail: How long had you been living in the Red Zone and feeling depressed because of working in a Red Work Zone environment?

John: I would say it probably started about ten years ago. The more I think, the more I realize that I had problems in both parts of my life, at home and also at work. There was a time when I couldn't function very well at home but I was able to function at work. Then came the time when I couldn't function at work either and that's where the shit hit the fan. I got depressed when I was facing major problems at work and not getting any help from my manager which caused my efficiency to hit bottom. When I made suggestions to the workers they did not cooperate and said it was not going to work.

They had an attitude and when that happens then I say to them, 'If you guys seem to know what you're doing then why haven't you solved it?' Nine times out of ten I'll either crack or say a few choice words. When I am in the Red Zone I often expressed myself using verbal diarrhea.

Sohail: Did you finally reach a stage where you could not work?

John: When I came to see you I had not been working for six months. I just couldn't function. I was depressed and living in my Red Zone.

Sohail: And what helped you feel better emotionally and bring you back to your Green Zone?

John: Taking time off work helped me recover and therapy made me realize what is important in my life. It not only helped me with work but also in my family life. I realized that my work environment was completely in a Red Zone and there was not much I can do to change it. It had a number of economic and political factors affecting it. Now I do my work the best way I can and don't blame myself for what I cannot do or undo. My self-esteem is better. I used to feel down because I had not become a professional engineer. But it does not bother me that much now. My change of attitude has helped me cope with many types of stress at work as well at home.

Sohail: What would be your suggestion to senior management or to the workers to bring the workplace into the Green Zone?

John: It's an antagonistic environment and I believe that has to change for people to work in a collective Green Zone. The relationship must be cooperative. I have worked with union leaders who are continually angry and believe in confrontation but I have also enjoyed working with other union guys who are cooperative and want to work things out. But this is often spoiled by people in management who have a combative attitude. In general, there is a non-caring attitude. In my mind the bottom line is trust. Both parties, management and the union workers alike, must trust and be together to serve the producing workers – and there should also be fairness and justice. A system to deal with those workers and managers who have belligerent attitudes is a must. They do not want to work themselves and do not let others work either. So many negative attitudes make the work environment very unhealthy. Managers do not cooperate with other managers, union people do not agree with each other and management leaves people like me in the middle trying to keep things going. We get shit from both sides.

Sohail: Have you met people in management and the union who want to work cooperatively?

John: Yes, but they are in the minority. Rather than getting more they are getting less support, which is unfortunate.

Sohail: And what do you think is the reason?

John: It used to be a family-orientated business. Workers got their perks.

Managers were caring. But then it was taken over by a U.S. company and everything changed. Now the bottom line is money. There is no caring for the workers. It is all about the mighty dollar. Greed has replaced humanity. And that attitude is not only throughout the automotive industry. It is in all other industries and businesses as well.

Sohail: So you feel that economic gains have become more important than people?

John: Definitely. And that is the American policy, not only in Canada, but also in the rest of the world. It is also the reason for the war in Iraq and Iran. The U.S.A. has her national and economic interests and does not care about the people of the third world. It is a sad situation. There is little concern for poor people and poor countries. We have become so very selfish. We want their oil but do not care about their lifestyle. We have to get oil even if we have to go to war. That is why there is so much anger in the

whole world against America but the common American does not understand that. I think the whole world is quickly entering the Red Zone.

Sohail: Thank you for sharing your views and experiences.

John: Thank you for helping me and my family.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH MEDIATION

Dr. K. Sohail

In the last two decades a number of socially sensitive organizations and governments in North America have become concerned with the interpersonal conflicts that are increasing in the workplace. Such conflicts are creating and increasing the stress at work, diminishing the Green Zone work environments and escalating Yellow and Red Zones in the workplace. To cope with such dilemmas, some managers have appointed mediators to help workers and managers to resolve conflicts so that they have a choice not to engage in a lengthy and painful litigation process.

Shahid Akhter is one of the mediators employed by the Government of Ontario. He has been consulted by numerous departments around the province and has brought his skills to hundreds of people in solving their conflicts. When he read my book *The Art of Living in Your Green Zone* and attended my seminar based on that book he commented that it was “A highly practical approach to promote a positive work environment.” When I asked him if he would discuss his ideas, concepts and experiences, he kindly agreed. He sees that the type of work that he and I

do is quite complementary. We believe one day we will work together on seminars assisting people to cope with stress and conflicts at work. Some of the highlights of my interview with him follow:

Sohail: What kind of educational and professional activities were you involved with before coming to Canada?

Shahid: In your book you discuss your theory of people discovering their dream in life. When I was in Pakistan people used to call me a dreamer. I was an idealist and dreamed of a fair and just society. That is why I studied law so that I could help the under-privileged fight for their rights. I used to survey public opinion makers for government. The decision makers were so removed from reality that they needed someone to bring the concerns of the common people to their attention. There were times those decision makers did not want to hear what I wanted to say. Once I applied for a job but did not get it because the manager said, "I like his qualifications but he is a dreamer."

Sohail: What was your dream when you came to Canada?

Shahid: When I came to Canada I wanted to join the bar and practice law but in those days Pakistani degrees were not recognized. I was expected to go to university for four years. I could not afford that so I decided to work for the government. My initial job was

to review municipalities and how they spent their money. It was a job in which I thought I could make a difference for the people and communities I served. To do that I did not need a lawyer's license or membership to the bar. After working there for ten years I came to my dream job, an area I really loved all my life and that was human rights advocacy, fighting against discrimination in the work environment and giving voice to people who could not speak for themselves.

Sohail: Was it hard for you to reach that level?

Shahid: Very hard. I waited for a long time to get that opportunity but it came up almost unexpectedly. I had applied for another job and everybody thought that I should get it. I was the most qualified of all the candidates. They also knew that if I did not succeed I would fight for my rights. So when I did not win they told me, "Before you blow your fuse, we have another offer for you. We want to introduce a program to create a discrimination-free workplace." At that time it was a relatively new concept. Sexual harassment was just beginning to be exposed as a serious issue in society.

Sohail: What year was that?

Shahid: That was 1992. It was the time when the famous case of Anita Hill and Judge Thomas hit the media. That case made sexual harassment a household word. We became aware that the gap between government

policies and actual practices was big, as big as the Grand Canyon. There were skeptics who thought those policies are not going to work as people had well-entrenched attitudes that would be hard to change.

Sohail: How does your program work?

Shahid: Those employees who feel harassed at work contact me or one of our team of 48 advisors.

Sohail: How do you define harassment?

Shahid: Technically it includes any behaviour that is unwelcome and offensive and is against the Human Rights Code. That Code includes 14 grounds and includes discrimination based on gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, even disability.

Sohail: What do you mean by discrimination based on disability?

Shahid: If a person is able to do the required job but he / she is not hired because they are disabled, that is considered discrimination.

Sohail: What about the gender issue?

Shahid: If in the presence of a woman, men in the workplace are telling sexual jokes or making sexual innuendos, that is an example of sexual harassment. When managers find out about harassment they are expected to deal with it immediately and appropriately.

Sohail: Do you get complaints between workers or workers and managers?

Shahid: We get both kinds and also cases in which managers misuse their power. They abuse their authority and give favors to their preferred workers or fire people on unjust grounds if they do not like them.

Sohail: Have you seen changes in the last ten years in the work environment?

Shahid: Many interpersonal relationships at work have become tense and dysfunctional, which you and I describe as changing from the Green to the Yellow and Red Zones. There is a drastic change since the September 11th, 2001 tragedy in New York. There has also been a significant shift since the introduction of the Internet. In the last few years, as well, the government has become conservative in many ways; budget cuts especially have negatively affected many programs. In the past we had approximately 75,000 employees. Now we have more like 10,000.

Many managers and administrators do not realize that working in a Red Zone environment not only affects workers' health, it also decreases their production.

Sohail: Once you receive a complaint, what happens?

Shahid: We meet with the complainants, who are usually afraid or upset. They feel unsure whether we can help them. We try to explain that we will listen to both sides and then help the victim. We do not have a bias

in favor or against the complainant. We are in favor of the victim because it is not necessarily the case that the complainant is the victim. In some cases the respondent turns out to be the victim.

Sohail: What response do you get when you contact the respondent?

Shahid: They usually hit the roof. They become very defensive with counter-accusations. We explain to them also that we are willing to listen to both sides of the story. We tell them that we are not initiating a litigation process and we are not taking the case to the grievance settlement board. We are serious about mediation and try to resolve the conflicts and disputes in a respectable way. Once they accept our reassurances they usually settle down.

I believe each case is unique and we customize our mediation and intervention depending upon the nature of the crisis. I always believed that there are as many ways to deal with conflict, as there are human beings. That is one reason why I like your Green / Yellow / Red Zone Model because it is flexible and can help different people in different circumstances.

Sohail: What is your experience in interviewing both parties?

Shahid: It is like an onion peeling back one layer at a time. In most cases the underlying issue is minor and easily resolved, in others the

issue can be quite complex. As well, the origin of the problem can be outside the workplace, for example marital or social conflict that spilled over into work environment.

There are times both parties enter the mediation room in their Red Zone. They give each other angry and hostile looks. If looks could kill, there would be a lot of dead bodies in the mediation room. In most cases each party feels they are in the right and the other party is wrong. They are the angels and the opponents the devils. They begin with inflexibility but as they talk and share their concerns and start listening to the other party's point of view, they mellow out and finally we find a settlement, an agreement that both parties can live with. I try to get them to see that the enemy is the outside; the systemic problem and both parties are affected by it. When they realize they are not each other's enemy, they can then try to accommodate each other.

I can see your Green / Yellow / Red Zone Model helping both parties who are stuck in the Red Zone to change their mind-set so they can mutually move to the Green Zone on their own because they learn how to use a constructive dialogue to solve the issue.

Sohail: How long would that process take?

- Shahid:* In most cases the mediation process is only a few hours long.
- Sohail:* It's obvious you want to help them avoid a lengthy and painful litigation process.
- Shahid:* The charm of our mediation is that they still have that option. But when they listen to the details of our offer, they most often accept it and settle their differences.
- Sohail:* What are your views about the union / management relationship?
- Shahid:* It is unfortunate that they have become such adversaries. I think they need to work together as they should have the same goal in mind, to help workers work in a healthy and safe environment - in a mutual Green Zone.

In our practice we welcome union representatives and in some cases ask them to help us resolve the conflicts. I share with them that the traditional approach of filing grievances against managers is a painful process. They still have that option if our mediation fails. Knowing this, in most cases they agree and cooperate with us.

Where the workers did not agree with our proposal, we arranged a separate meeting with their union representative. In the beginning they were resistant, but in the end the union representative was able to reassure the worker that we were offering them the best deal and even if they went

through the litigation process they might not do any better. There were times I had to consult union human rights experts.

Sohail: I assume there is a training program for your mediators?

Shahid: Yes, we like to educate them through seminars where we invite experts to speak. It would help them if someday you could come and offer a seminar on Green / Yellow / Red Zone Model. I am confident it would help in creating a Green Zone work environment.

*Sohail: I feel pleased and honored that you value the model I have created. You were one of the people who inspired me and my dear friend Bette Davis to write *The Art of Working in Your Green Zone*. Any last comments before we end this interview?*

Shahid: I want to emphasize that working in the Green Zone is not only favorable for workers but also for managers as it keeps their productivity high. People who work in the Green Zone enjoy coming to work and do not want to abuse their sick leave. Rarely do they experience burn out. If managers followed these principles they could save their employer millions of dollars.

Sohail: Thank you for sharing your ideas and experiences.

Shahid: A pleasure, Dr. Sohail.

— CHAPTER SEVENTEEN —

TRANSFORMING RED ZONE INTO GREEN ZONE WORKPLACES

A FOUR STEP MODEL FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Bette Davis RN MN

Workplace wellness programs that help to create Green Zone workplaces are as varied as the organizations they serve. Tailoring a wellness program to the needs of the organization is clearly one of the keys to the program's success. However, some program variation is guided by wisdom, others by ignorance. Business leaders' knowledge or lack thereof dictates the value that they place on such programs and therefore the resources that are available to support them. It is not uncommon to see that organizations either do not have a wellness program or largely focus on the physical health component (smoking cessation, physical fitness, blood pressure/blood sugar screening) and ignore the emotional components of employee health until there is a crisis, if at all. Because of this discrepancy, I will zero in on programs that address the emotional aspects of workplace wellness.

To achieve the endpoint of wellness programs – creating Green Zone working environments – there are several foundational steps which are vital in ensuring the success of any wellness initiative.

Step One: Attaining senior management support.

This may require that the leaders of the organization be educated about the value of this type of program. They are often most significantly won over by the dramatic benefits to morale and cost savings, since the main objection to a wellness program from this group is that they believe the organization cannot afford it. A review of relevant data clearly indicates that actually they cannot afford not to have these programs. Consider the staggering costs incurred, through low productivity and poor job morale as well as excessive absenteeism when quality of worklife issues are overlooked. Compare it to the costs of offering a wellness program that addresses the emotional needs of individuals and workgroups enabling them to lose less work time and be more willingly productive, and it becomes clear that wellness programs can easily make the difference between a successful and mediocre business.

Certainly a complete business case, comparing costs specific to the organization needs to be presented. In addition, it would be wise to include global statistics that reflect trends, such as those indicating that stress / burnout is one of the fastest-growing categories of disability. In fact, the World Health Organization predicts that these ills will be the leading cause of disability in the workplace in the next 20 years. The bottom line is that it is crucial that the executive group is knowledgeable about the financial and human benefits that flow from a wellness project if it is to be established and continue productively over time.

Another group that is valuable to include in this first step is the union executive. As you will read in the interview to follow with Debbie Forward, President of the

Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses' Union, union leaders play a number of vital roles, including encouraging the participation of union members as well as providing their own unique perspective to senior managers to justify the development of such programs.

Step Two: Building an easily managed, efficient structure throughout the organization that will support wellness initiatives.

This will be accomplished through two mechanisms:

- The development of a Wellness Committee, and
- The establishment of a Peer Support Network.

Wellness Committee

This committee is often referred to as the Wellness Team or as in one organization with which I was associated, the *Work and Well-being Team*. Whatever the name, this group is charged with establishing the program's direction and insuring that the fundamental goals, centered on the reduction of stress and enhancement of the quality of work life, are accomplished. The members of the team include senior members of the leadership team and the union, along with individuals in the organization who have an identified association with workplace wellness, and representatives from the Peer Support Network.

Peer Support Network

Peer Support is defined as the verbal and nonverbal communication between colleagues which

- Creates opportunities for expression of feelings
- Provides support, affirmation and reassurance

- Offers new directions or perspectives on problems, and
- Enhances an individual's sense of self-control. ^(Ref. 1)

The Peer Support Network is a network of employees designed to build or strengthen caring relationships in the workplace so that employees may provide support to each other in stressful work situations. In essence, this type of support system enables staff to access the caring benefits of workgroups, mentioned previously in Chapter 7 by Hilda who referred to this type of support in the workplace as a “family-like atmosphere.” The network is strengthened through work-related activities and social events outside of the workplace.

In each work unit or department, a Peer Support Leader who is a volunteer with a special interest in workplace wellness, is selected to represent that unit. They are the first employees to attend educational programs offered by the Wellness Team and are members of this team. Although their responsibilities are not extensive, they play a crucial role in ensuring the success of the program, including:

- communicating information about the wellness program to co-workers in their department / unit
- providing support to other employees in mildly stressful situations, or in more challenging situations referring them to people with more expertise

- planning with co-workers how they will network/socialize regularly as a group and collaboratively coordinating these gatherings
- providing feedback to the leadership group, staff and the Wellness Team on issues of morale and quality of worklife.

I have used Peer Support as the backbone of the wellness programs I have developed because of the proven benefits associated with support. The healing power of supportive relationships has been the subject of numerous publications and identified by at least one author, as the *most powerful intervention* against diseases, including those that are stress related. Referring to the benefits of support Dr. Dean Ornish comments, “I am not aware of any factor in medicine – not diet, not smoking, not exercise, not stress, not genetics, not drugs, not surgery – that has a greater impact on our quality of life, incidence of illness and premature deaths from all causes.”^(Ref. 2) He goes on to emphasize that, “If a new drug had the same impact, virtually every doctor in the country would be prescribing it for their patients – in fact, it would be considered malpractice not to recommend it.” Social support has also been ranked the highest on a list of factors that increase our resistance to stress. ^(Ref. 3) Additionally, it is seen as a way of preventing illness that is associated with stressful experiences.^(Ref. 4)

While these authors look at the bigger picture, some studies have examined the value of peer support and organized peer support networks, specifically in the workplace. These studies have shown that peer support noticeably buffers workplace stress and is an important coping strat-

egy in times of work-related stress, especially in high stress conditions. While not all employee groups have been studied, peer support is considered one of the most effective and most frequently used strategies to benefit employees in areas such as health care. When this type of support is organized into a formal Peer Support Network it has been shown to positively affect workplace stress by increasing job morale, group cohesiveness and problem solving abilities, while decreasing staff complaints.^(Ref. 5, 6, 7, 8.)

According to research, supportive relationships are able to stand alone as a buffer against workplace stress. However, in programs that I have developed, the advantage of Peer Support has been amplified with a range of other techniques for mediating workplace stress. These additional skills build emotional resilience and decrease negativity in workgroups, since it has been my consistent observation that negativity is a common feature in individuals and organizations under stress. Other stress management skills, especially those focused on changing negative thinking, ensure that the workgroup bonds together in positiveness instead of negativity.

Step Three: Developing an introductory workshop.

A one-day seminar is designed to accomplish several key objectives including:

- introducing employees to The Wellness Program,
- highlighting the benefits of peer support and the Peer Support Network,
- outlining the expert resources associated with

- the organization, and building a foundation of knowledge related to stress reduction techniques.

Importantly, at the end of the seminar, consultation with participants is used to tailor the components of the wellness program to their needs, in particular identifying their preferences for further skill development sessions on stress reduction techniques. This information is used to guide the work of the Wellness Team over the next one to two years. One part of that work will be to decide what components of the skill development workshops will be contracted out to external consultants and what can be handled inside the organization.

At the beginning of the workshop, I take advantage of the opportunity to underscore the commitment of senior leadership, by asking both a senior manager and a union leader to welcome the workshop participants and highlight the benefits of the workshop and the program from their perspective.

Step Four: Providing follow-up and maintenance of the program.

One essential aspect of follow-up is tabulating the feedback obtained from the Introductory Workshop regarding the skills that staff / participants would like to learn more about. Most organizations identify the top five skills and offer those in half-day workshops for all of their staff and managers. From my experience, the five most requested workplace skills include:

- Changing negativity in the workplace
- Conflict resolution
- Personal effectiveness (assertiveness training)
- Time management
- Anger management.

As previously mentioned, changing negativity in the workplace is a necessary complementary component to peer support networks in order to offset the negativity that is often a feature of groups experiencing stress or crisis. Two other skills that are frequently requested but which require special consideration and education include:

- Progressive Relaxation
- Critical Incident Stress Management

Because it is most effectively learned through repeated sessions spaced out over time, Progressive relaxation cannot be well taught in half-day workshops. Most organizations that I have been associated with have wisely opted for a two-hour session weekly for eight weeks, facilitating the development of a solid foundation in Progressive Relaxation, while at the same time incorporating many of the other top five skills.

Critical Incident Stress Management is needed in work environments that have experienced a crisis resulting in trauma. This type of intervention requires special expertise and is usually developed by the Wellness Committees as a separate program under their guidance. It is beneficial that Peer Support Leaders be trained to support personnel in critical incident debriefings; however, their main role in

this regard is to make a recommendation should this service be needed in their workgroup.

Another fundamental follow-up element is ensuring that the Wellness Team meets on a regular basis. Two regular agenda items that allow the Team to keep their finger on the pulse of the program are focused on:

- tracking the specific Program Goals initially identified by the Team and,
- hearing reports from the Peer Support Leaders.

Peer Support Leaders are the link between the larger staff group and the Wellness Team. They are able to report on the response to the program, changes in morale and how effectively workgroups are supporting each other. They are also able to identify when a specific group of employees may need a special intervention because of conflict, crisis or negativity in the group, in such an instant, a group session can be tailored to their specific needs and offered by the expert who is providing the other skill development sessions. Last but certainly not least, the program will need to be evaluated using the parameters identify by the Wellness Team at the beginning of the process.

Debbie Forward, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses Union, has had the opportunity to work closely with every health-care facility throughout her provincial jurisdiction, thereby becoming familiar with the policies and practices that shape quality of work life in many organizations. Through her years of work in this area she has become familiar with agencies that have developed wellness programs, including peer support networks.

Her objective, yet in-depth view, coupled with her education in counseling, allows her a unique, complex and knowledgeable perspective. I was eager to meet with her so that she could share her observations; the following is a part of our lengthy interview.

Bette: Debbie, you have been involved in the nurses' union for a number of years. Can you set the stage by outlining your involvement with the nursing profession?

Debbie: I have been a nurse for almost twenty-three years. I started in the emergency department and worked there for five years. Then I completed my Masters in Nursing with a focus on counseling and taught in the school of nursing for eleven years. My union involvement started in the early 1980s in the hospital system. I worked with nurses as well as management to resolve issues. We tried to change policies and improve the working conditions for all nurses. Later on I became involved with nurses' issues at a provincial level. During that time I met many nurses from other provinces of Canada and got to know nurses and their struggles all over the country. I have worked with nurses who work in the Green Zone and also with nurses who work in the Red Zone.

Bette: What do you see as the characteristics of nurses who work in the Red Zone?

Debbie: People working in the Red Zone are very rigid and close-minded. Generally they are not open to other ideas and perspectives. It is hard to have a rational discussion, as they don't listen to reason. Many lack trust. They have a hard time being team players. Even when they bond with others, they bond in negativity. That negative bond seems to give them power. Such negative people also drag those down who are trying to work in the Green Zone. Some of them turn to alcohol and drugs. People in the Red Zone do not like change as they are threatened by it. It is interesting to see that when you offer solutions in response to their complaints, they do not get involved, as they are skeptical of change. They remain part of the problem rather than becoming part of the solution.

Bette: Can you describe from your perspective, nurses who are working in their personal or collective Green Zone?

Debbie: People in the Green Zone are quite flexible. They can "think outside the box." They can see the problem from different points of view and then become part of the solution. They have a better sense of balance. They are not afraid to change and rather welcome positive change. They are also better team players and can resolve conflicts with their colleagues. They also try to support others especially the ones in the

Yellow Zone so that they come back to the Green Zone.

Bette: You have also seen Red Zone Work environments. What have you observed are the characteristics inherent in such environments?

Debbie: In the Red Zone the decision-making is from the top down. Managers impose policies on their workers. Over time, workers lose respect for their managers and administration. They don't feel valued as nobody tells them, "You are doing a good job." Many feel they are treated like robots and managers show little concern about their personal and family concerns. The Red Zone work environment is not conducive to team building and problem solving. Since I worked in the emergency department, I am aware that emergency departments can easily become Red Zone environments because of the type of work, shortage of staff and the backlog. I have also seen that when management does not involve union people in decision making process, it creates Red Zone work environment.

Bette: What do you see as the characteristics of a Green Zone work environment?

Debbie: The fundamental characteristic of a Green Zone environment is that each worker feels respected and therefore valued. People value their work and value each other. Workers feel part of the decision-making

process. In the Green Zone work environment managers are sensitive to the physical, emotional, social and spiritual concerns of the people. Green Zone environments are supportive, not confrontative. Such an environment encourages the team-building process. People are flexible and can “think outside the box” to find new solutions to old problems. In Green Zone environments people look forward to going to work and enjoy it.

Bette: What are your suggestions for transforming Red Zone work environments into the Green Zone?

Debbie: I believe that all workplaces need wellness programs to ensure the health of their workers. I am also an advocate of peer support groups. Such groups are very helpful for the workers; when the support is ongoing they do not wait for a crisis or a problem to be addressed. Workplaces need conflict resolution systems to deal with conflicts but they also need ongoing support to prevent future crises. We need to find ways for people to be kind and supportive to each other.

Workplaces need quiet rooms for workers to relax and re-energize themselves. They can listen to music, read a book or do some exercise to recover and then go back to face the challenges at work.

Some organizations have mobile massage therapy and that has been helpful. It is important for workplaces to have a crisis team so that people in distress can get the emotional support they need.

Bette: Recently we have become more aware of workplace violence as a consequence of the tremendous stresses. What are your views on this issue?

Debbie: Violence in the workplace is a serious concern. It can come from many directions. In the health care system it can come from patients, their families and friends or other health-care colleagues. We need to educate people about zero tolerance. We need to put up posters to remind people that we do not tolerate violence and we need to respect each other in order to work in harmony. In the Red Zone, violence is not dealt with and managers pussyfoot around serious issues, while in the Green Zone such issues are dealt with immediately and effectively.

Bette: Could you describe how you see the role of unions in creating Green Zone work environments?

Debbie: Unions can support their workers in collective bargaining and creating a safe and respectful Green Zone environment. When union members are in close contact with their members, they can help them negotiate their rights and deal with their

concerns. It is important that workers and managers cooperate in partnership and unions can build that bridge. Unions can highlight what are the best practices, in other words, interventions that other organizations have found to be most effective. When we have policies that are not realistic then those policies need to be changed as they move the workplaces into the Red Zone. Management should not use punitive techniques; such as the way some organizations deal with absenteeism, which only makes matters worse. We need to be sympathetic to workers and try to understand their problems as we seek to find realistic solutions when we want to create Green Zone environments. Unions can play a significant role while working with workers as well as management in a cooperative rather than a confrontative way. When management lacks the interest, I believe that workers need to feel that somebody cares for them.

It has been hard for people to work in the Green Zone as more and more people have fallen into the Red Zone at work. It is hard to stay in the Green Zone when your work environment is strictly Red Zone. We need to educate people and work together to create a Green Zone in the workplace.

Bette: Thank you, Debbie, for sharing your observations and contributing to the creation of more Green Zone workplaces through your participation in this book.

Clearly, Debbie's perception from her associations with many organizations allows her to present a detailed and complex image of individual and organizational characteristics evident in the Red Zone as well as the Green Zone workplaces. In addition, she was able to offer the most effective interventions for creating Green Zone workplaces. Following this interview I thought it would be valuable to have a view of similar concepts from inside an organization. I approached two colleagues whom I had always admired for their successes in moving their organization from the Red Zone to the Green. Gail Carroll and Marilyn Field work collaboratively in the Human Resources Department of a large health agency which cares for the elderly. The following is part of my lengthy interview with them.

*Bette: Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for our book *The Art of Working in Your Green Zone* and for sharing your valuable experiences and insights. Before we start can you tell me a little about your background and professional involvements? Let me start with Gail.*

Gail: I have a bachelor of Social Work from Memorial University that I completed in 1985 and then I went to Alberta and worked with handicapped children and

unwed mothers. Later on I worked with people struggling with addictions. I was also involved with Employee Assistance Program [EAP] when it was a new concept. My graduate studies were at University of Calgary before I came back to Newfoundland and started working with addictions. Since I had a special interest in the work environment, I studied different types of Mediation from the University of Windsor and got involved with team building and labor relations.

Bette: That is very impressive. What about you Marilyn?

Marilyn: My background is in Psychology and Business. I have lectured in the United Kingdom, York University and Queen's University in Ontario. In the last twelve years I have been involved with Human Resources Management and team building. Gail and I have worked together and offered a number of seminars and workshops regarding employee labor relations.

Bette: So both of you have mental health backgrounds. I had always admired your strategies and philosophies, as they were very sensitive to the emotional needs of workers and managers, now I know why. Can you share with me about your work together?

Marilyn: We have been working and growing together. We have learned from our accomplishments and also from our mistakes. I think it is all part of growth. We work in a large organization that has complex systems. In the beginning, many of these systems were in the Red Zone. We worked hard in an effort to bring them into the Green Zone and much of the time it has worked.

Bette: How big is the organization?

Gail: Ranging from 1700 to 2000 people.

Bette: It has been my observation that many organizations start on the right path in the Green Zone but then they lose their perspective and fall into the Red Zone. Why is that?

Gail: Different organizations grow at different levels. In the beginning, leaders are very motivated and want to fulfill their dreams but as the organizations become more stable they lose their energy, motivation and enthusiasm, and the organizations starts to stagnate and slide into the Yellow Zone and finally fall into the Red Zone.

Bette: What do you think are the characteristics of those leaders who tend to work more in the Red Zone?

Marilyn: Leaders in the Red Zone have no vision and are closed-minded to new ideas. They are not self-motivated for many reasons.

Gail: I agree with Marilyn that leaders in the Red Zone are close-minded and not supportive of their workers. Rather than being a guide, they tell them to work it out themselves. If the leader has a negative attitude it filters down through their staff who develop negative attitudes as well.

Bette: And how are they different from leaders who work in the Green Zone?

Marilyn: Leaders in the Green Zone are open and flexible and do not mind sharing information with others. They have the ability to resolve conflicts at work. They deal with conflicts immediately and effectively. When the organization is in the Yellow Zone, they bring it back to Green before it slips into the Red Zone.

Gail: Marilyn and I have discovered that the earlier the issues are addressed in the organization, the better. In an organization, negativity spreads quicker so we need to control the downhill slide. But when leaders consciously encourage a positive environment, they can maintain a Green Zone atmosphere. Sometimes we see that when new leaders bring lots of enthusiasm and positive energy they transform the organization by injecting positive energy and producing a cultural change.

Bette: It appears that skillful leadership is a key factor in keeping the organization in the Green Zone.

- Gail: Yes. Marilyn and I have discussed different ways to help leaders and keep the organization in the Green Zone. We encourage managers to learn the skills of becoming good leaders and ways to resolve conflicts. Rather than solving their problems for them, we help them to find their own solutions and then put those solutions into action.*
- Marilyn: We were trying to empower them to problem solve and accept challenges.*
- Bette: My observation is that you have been positive role-models as well.*
- Gail: I have also learned to keep a distance from people who are negative and live in the Yellow Zone. I did not want them to drag me into their Yellow Zone. I met many workers who are connected with each other in negativity and work only in the Yellow Zone.*
- Marilyn: Workers working in the Yellow Zone are also very close-minded and are generally inflexible. They do not share their tools or their ideas with others. They do not realize that others are not going to steal their livelihood.*
- Gail: Many such workers get so upset that they go on stress leave. And sometimes when they come back they are still not ready to deal with the challenges of work because they do not have the healthy and positive*

attitude so essential to work in the Green Zone.

Work environments that are in the Red Zone have many people who are unhappy and are on sick leave. There is also an element of fear, as some people in the Red Zone do not feel secure in the organization.

Bette: What are the characteristics of the Green Zone work environment?

Gail: Green Zone work environments have positive energy and enthusiasm. Workers enjoy and celebrate their successes no matter how small. They also have good conflict resolution skills.

Marilyn: Workers in the Green Zone are respectful and friendly towards each other. They enjoy their work to the extent that they go beyond the call of duty. Green Zone environments also have a holistic attitude. The managers pay attention to their workers' personal and family concerns and help them in difficult times.

In Green Zone environments workers are quite aware of the goals and objectives of the organization and are supportive to fulfill them. Communication between workers and managers is good and they can sort out their differences and resolve their conflicts.

We have encouraged managers to reward workers for their efficiency. Some do that by announcing the employee of the

month and having a special service recognition. It improves the involvement of workers and they feel that the managers genuinely care.

Workers are also encouraged to express their concerns and then those concerns are dealt with in a respectful way. In this way workers feel that they are an integral part of the organization.

Gail: The organization is put to a test in a strike situation. If the organization is generally in the Green Zone before the strike then the workers feel supported and after the strike, relationships do not fall apart. There is support to deal with the hurt feelings, pain and suffering caused by the strike. In one case we had a party after the strike in which managers and staff were able to resolve any hard feelings. It worked well.

Marilyn: One of the key features of the Green Zone work environment is that workers feel appreciated even when there are healthy disagreements. Those disagreements are an opportunity for the organization to learn and grow.

Gail: They make a healthy work culture for workers as well as the managers. In Green Zone environments all the people have an emotional investment in the organization and their work means a lot to them. In such organizations workers, unions and management work together to create Green

Zone work environments. In such environments there is work magic.

Bette: Thank you both again so much for contributing your insights.

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Part Five



WORKING IN YOUR GREEN ZONE

Dr. K. Sohail

Over the years I have met a number of people in my personal and professional life, who worked in their Green Zone. I was quite fascinated with their personalities and also their ability to stay in the Green Zone even when their total working environment entered the Yellow and Red Zones. They had the capacity to rise above the negativity and maintain their sincerity and integrity. As they persisted in their hard work others found them a source of inspiration thus allowing them to not only grow themselves but also help others to fulfill their dreams. They made valuable contributions to their communities. Since I have a lot of regard for teachers, as my father was a well respected educator all his life, I want to share the story of a teacher to highlight the essence of those people who work in their Green Zone.

The Story of Daniel Joseph

While I was visiting my dear friend Dr. Dennis Isaac and his wonderful wife Maria, she introduced me to her father, Mr. Daniel Joseph, who had worked as a teacher and a princi-

pal in Peshawar, the same city where I grew up in Pakistan. I was fortunate to be able to talk to Mr. Joseph as he had worked in the same school for fifty years before he retired. I had never met anyone before who had worked in the same institution for that long. When I asked him to share his experiences he kindly agreed. So I sent him a number of questions and he returned them with the following replies:

Sohail: What were the circumstances when you started working at your school?

Daniel: In 1946 I finished my early education at St. John's High School, Peshawar city and joined the Government Teacher's Training School. The next year I started teaching in the Primary Section of the same school. This was the time when the partition of India took place and a new country Pakistan was created. Hindus and Sikhs left their houses, business and properties and fled to India while the Muslims were pushed into the newly created Pakistan. What happened in those dark days in the Indo-Pak subcontinent is a sad story and I would not like to repeat here.

In September the schools re-opened after summer vacation but very few students and teachers could join the school. I was given class two with about twenty students, however no Hindu or Sikh students were allowed. My salary of fifty rupees per month was enough for me but in no case was it

sufficient to start a family in the near future. Along with teaching, I continued my studies to improve my professional qualification. After successfully completing the necessary course, I was promoted to the Middle section of the school. With an increased salary I got married, still continued my studies and did a bachelor of teaching course in 1957 becoming qualified to teach the higher classes. After teaching for fifteen years in the same school, I became Principal in 1962. All my predecessors were either Dutch or Irish priests of St. Joseph Society of Mill Hill, London. I worked for another thirty-five years in the same position and was retired in 1997 at the age of sixty-eight.

Sohail: Were you planning to stay that long in the same position and the same school?

Daniel: No, in the beginning, I planned no such thing. I remained so involved in my work that I had no time to think about change. I was fully satisfied with my work and had no problem whatsoever. I could see a purpose in my life. In this school I had an opportunity to help the children of very poor Muslim and Christian families to get a good education. During my stay I had helped hundreds of such students who would have not been in the school, had I not helped them financially. Even today I see many old students who are holding high positions in

Government and private services. These were a few reasons why I liked to stay in St. John's for such a long period of my life. I was twice offered a change to a well-established and prestigious school but I preferred to stay in my school.

Sohail: What Zone did you work in?

Daniel: The major part of my life was spent in the Green Zone. I did not know anything about Zones but after reading your book, The Art of Living in Your Green Zone, I can safely say that I spent most of my life in the Green Zone. I cannot think of myself being or working in the Yellow and Red Zones.

Sohail: How did the circumstances change at work over the years?

Daniel: During the long course of time the circumstances continued changing. In the beginning in 1962 there were altogether three hundred students from kindergarten to class ten. Although the teaching was at a high level, the overall condition of the school compound and other facilities was poor. The school was a big facility spread over four acres of land. The mud boundary wall was broken in so many places that outsiders could easily walk through at any time. The entire area was dusty and during rains in winter it was almost impossible to walk through the mud. There was always a shortage of drinking water, especially in summer season. The toilets were

inadequate in every way. My first preference was to improve the overall condition of the school and its surrounding area. I built and repaired the existing boundary wall wherever it was necessary. The open area was converted into lawns, sidewalks and pavement with bricks and cemented slabs.

As the number of students continued to increase, new classrooms were built. Two new staff rooms, a library and a permanent stage for plays and literary meetings were added. I introduced the flush system for toilets and built overhead water tanks. An enclosed children's area with swings, merry-go-round, slides and a new cement basketball court added to the beauty of the school. The uneven and bumpy football playground was leveled and made grassy. I paid much attention to the sports activities of the school and we took an active part in the District High School Sports Tournaments. We often won the zone championship trophies for football and cricket. Our gymnastic squad was so good that we were frequently invited to put up a show at the Annual Prize Distribution Ceremony of the District. Some of our students were selected at National Athletics for 100 and 400 Meter races and one student was selected to play for the National Cricket Team in Canada and other countries.

The staff was fully trained and hard working and produced good results. Our school was among the top schools of Peshawar District. Today I know quite a number of our boys working in and outside the country as doctors, engineers, principals, professors, magistrates, lawyers, research officers, politicians, priests, ministers and bishops.

As the number of students grew, I started a new school for girls in the same compound. Four classrooms, an office, a staff room were built and then girl students from classes one to four were shifted with a few teachers to this new school. Fortunately, it had a Mercy Sister as Principal. This school has grown to become a High School with about four hundred girl students. When I retired in 1997, the number of students in the boys' school section had risen to 900 with double sections from kindergarten to class ten.

Sohail: How did you cope with these changes?

Daniel: I was fortunate to have a good set of teachers, old and experienced, young and energetic and hardworking. I always had a few Marist Brothers on the staff. Marist Brothers are dedicated teachers who join a Religious Congregation and take a vow to serve the world in the field of education. At present they are working in about seventy countries of the world including Pakistan. At

a later stage Mercy Sisters from Australia also joined the staff and were in charge of the Primary Section of the school. Marist Brothers and Mercy Sisters were financially quite helpful and had provided facilities such as a new basketball court, children's park, canteen and new furniture. They also helped in organizing co-curricular activities such as planning games, study tours and house competitions. The whole staff was united and free of politics. I had the full support of the Diocesan Board of Education.

Sohail: What is your worst and best memory of fifty years of work?

Daniel: To maintain discipline and a peaceful atmosphere in school, I sometimes had to make harsh decisions and face the consequences. But this incident was the worst. One day a bright student picked a quarrel with a teacher due to strict marking in class tests. The boy was not satisfied with his marks and was worried. The quarrel prolonged for some time and resulted in a scuffle. During a test, the boy took out a knife and attacked the teacher. Some of his classmates intervened immediately with no harm being done to the teacher. On the report of the teacher, I had to take action and the boy was expelled from the school. I personally took the boy to the Principal of a Government High School. The Principal was satisfied with his ability and admitted him in

his school. But the boy was not happy in that school. He lost interest in his studies and often remained absent from school as he wanted to return to my school. His father tried every avenue to get his son back to my school but did not succeed. He continuously visited and bothered me much at home. One day the boy left a note in my office saying that he would come to my office on a certain day and settle the matter once for all. I informed the manager and remained vigilant. Thank God the boy did not come that day and he never bothered me again.

My best memory is that I have been working with poor students and parents of low-income groups who I always tried to help financially. I know quite a number of students who are well established now only because they were helped at a critical time, when they needed it. Once a boy, Mohammad Hussain, walked into my office and offered me ten thousand Rupees in cash and said, "This is for the poor students of this school." He told me the story that his parents had suffered big losses in business and their financial condition had become so bad that it was impossible for him to continue his studies in this school. Then one day he came to my office and requested a concession in the cost of his fee. It was his last year in school. Now about fifteen years later he was financially sound and could

spare this money to help the poor students of this school. I was so impressed by this incident that I could not help mentioning it in my farewell address at the time of my retirement.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GREEN ZONE PEOPLE

When we review the stories and interviews of Hilda, Wayne, Daniel Joseph, Zahid Lodhi, Shahid Akhter, Gail Carroll, Marilyn Field and many more that we met in our professional and personal lives, who work and live in their Green Zone, we were impressed by their attitude, personality and lifestyle. We believe they have such wisdom and experience that they are role models for many others who struggle in their Yellow and Red Zones. When we considered the personalities and lifestyles of Green Zone People, the following characteristics come to mind:

Discovering One's Special Gift

People working in their Green Zone often discover their special gift and that gift becomes a spring from which their enthusiasm for life flows offering them happiness and a sense of purpose. That gift gradually transforms into a passion and a dream.

Acquiring Special Skills

After discovering their special gift, Green Zone people develop that gift through proper education, training and

guidance. Most of our contributors highlighted the importance of strengthening their gift through education. Shahid Akhter, after discovering that he wanted to help people fight for their human rights, did his education and training in law to be able to help people resolve their conflicts by becoming a mediator.

Embracing a Positive Attitude towards Work and Life

Green Zone People are positive people. They are optimistic and see the glass half full, rather than half empty. Their positive attitude helps them attain positive results in their work environment. Many in the Green Zone said that they had given a lot to their workplaces but had also received a lot in return from their clients, customers and co-workers.

Wearing an Emotional Raincoat

Green Zone people are quite aware of their various environments and if those environments move into the Yellow or Red, they are capable of protecting themselves by wearing an emotional raincoat. If concerted efforts are unsuccessful in resolving problems, they have a tendency to avoid certain situations that create stress at work and at home so that others attitudes do not affect their lives. Bruce talked about the value of using an emotional raincoat when he was working hard to stay in his Green Zone in his relationship with his wife.

Learning Skills to Cope with Stress

Whether they are using progressive relaxation, regular exercise, changing negative thinking or any of the other techniques mentioned earlier, Green Zone people cope with stress at work. They appreciate the significance of

taking breaks and find ways to reduce their feelings of anxiety and agitation when they experience them. They have discovered their natural pace and rhythm.

Building Support Networks

Gradually, Green Zone people develop a social support network, a network of colleagues at work, a network of friends, relatives and neighbors that offer them support and consultation when needed. Although support networks are beneficial in all aspects of life, as Debbie Forward pointed out, support networks play a significant role in recovering from the Yellow Zone and creating Green Zone workplaces.

Resolving Conflicts

The interpersonal skills of Green Zone people are well-developed. They are able to communicate their emotional and professional needs and are also able to resolve conflicts. They share these abilities with others and address issues sooner rather than later. If they enter the Yellow Zone at work, they are able to rectify the situation before it enters the Red Zone.

Seeking Professional Help

Green Zone people review their lives on a regular basis and if they find they are in the Yellow or Red Zone and unable to climb back to Green Zone, they are not reluctant to consult their colleagues, managers, union leaders, mediators or counselors so that the problems are solved and issues addressed. Becoming aware of one's limitations and being able to receive necessary help is significant in working and living in the Green Zone.

Starting a New Lifestyle

For those Green Zone People who are unhappy in their workplaces and see no hope of improvement, it is natural for them to review their lifestyle and find some realistic solutions to the problem. When the work environment is in the Red Zone or they have lost their job unexpectedly, either they focus on finding another position, or return to school for further training and education to take a different career path. Those who love the Green Zone rarely give up. They accept crises as opportunities to grow. The story of Zahid Lodhi highlighted how he kept on struggling on the journey of improving his life and getting closer to his dream. Giving up is not part of their life script.

Finding a Balance in Work and Family Lives

Green Zone people are aware that their work, family and social lives can be in conflict. In many cases they are able to negotiate with their bosses as well as their spouses and find a solution that both parties can accept. Negotiating with colleagues, friends and family members is significant in maintaining a Green Zone lifestyle.

Discovering One's Dream Late in Life

Some Green Zone people discovered their passion and dream late in life. Catherine spent her youth raising a family and then realized that she wanted to become an aesthetician. She needed extra support to go back to school and fulfill her dream. Wayne also realized in his forties that he wanted to be a poet and a musician but for that he had to make sacrifices. Green Zone People are willing to go the extra mile to follow their passion. In some cases their friends and family members are supportive. In

other cases they have to strike out alone on the road less traveled but when they become successful they find new friends that we call “The Family of the Heart”, who are supportive and a source of inspiration.

Serving Humanity

While fulfilling their dream, Green Zone people are also aware of the needs of the community. Their profession or art also has a social component. It is not uncommon for people in their community to acknowledge these services. They have learned the art of growing alone and also the art of growing together. Communities support them to fulfill their dreams and then they help others to follow their passions. For Daniel Joseph to build a school and promote education in a country with a literacy rate of only twenty percent was a great service to the community. It is significant that his services included girls as well as children from all cultural and religious backgrounds. Communities feel proud of teachers like him as they go beyond the call of duty to serve children and adults.

Learning and Growing Throughout Their Lives

Green Zone people recognize that life is a marathon and not a hundred meter sprint, so they develop the attitude and style of marathon runners. They discover what they like and love to do in their lives and then keep on doing it. If the circumstances change and they start to become bored, they add new adventure to their lives. They love their freedom and are able to improvise things to their liking. If they find themselves in the Red Zone and can't resolve it, then they leave and start a new job, often a new profession and career. They keep learning and growing

their entire lives. That is why they are not preoccupied by retirement. They realize that people want to retire so that they can do what they really want to do. And since those in their Green Zones already do what they love, for them retirement is not something to look forward to. They feel fortunate that they have discovered their secret of health and happiness not only at work but also in other aspects of their lives.

When I asked Zahid Lodhi his views about retirement, he said, "I tell my accountant that I am contributing to a retirement plan but I have no intention of retiring because I am already retired. I am relaxed and love what I do. I would love to keep on working until the day I do not feel energetic enough to come to work, even if it is at the age of ninety. I love learning and growing. I learn something every day. It keeps me happy and is a driving force in creating a better future by making the right choices today."

Part Six



LOOKING BACK

Bette Davis RN MN

When I look back at the last three decades of my professional life, I remember the experiences that helped develop my philosophy of workplace wellness. Those were the times when I saw my colleagues and myself struggle with personal and systemic crises at work. Those crises helped me to see the intimate bond between employees, managers, administrators and organizations.

In 1978, I was a nurse working in general and orthopedic surgery for six years and had moved to work in a psychiatric hospital in a quest to understand my developing intrigue with how individuals relate in groups. Within a year of that move there was a major strike in the hospital that was lengthy and very volatile. I watched as co-workers who were like family to each other, developed animosity that would not be resolved for years, and in some cases, never. The anger and hurt was so profound.

Late in 1979, I was delighted to have the opportunity to work with a talented group of professionals, one of whom was Dr. Sohail, in a program that offered intensive individual and group therapy. I not only learned about the dynamics of how groups worked but also became part of a

team that took their work and the way they worked together very seriously. Program leaders held weekly sessions with team members to discuss and strengthen our working relationships. This was my first and most intense exposure to a healthy workgroup. It left indelible impressions and deep feelings of accomplishment that I wanted to create again for others and myself.

Then in the early 1990s, because of my background in mental health and group work, I was invited to consult with businesses to find ways to deal with some of the distress that was noticeably gripping their organizations. At that time I remember quite clearly the tidal wave of change that was sweeping through almost all organizations as they were technologically upgraded and personnel and space downsized. I not only observed it in the businesses with which I consulted, but I experienced it firsthand as the organization in which I was a senior manager was dramatically reshaped. It was not uncommon at that time for large organizations to hire a new Chief Executive Officer specifically to excise what was considered to be excess fat. The person who was brought in to shrink our organization was referred to as “The Axe Man.” I remember sitting in the cafeteria and watching as seasoned colleagues, who had handled serious psychiatric emergencies flawlessly, crumble under the pressure of learning that 500 middle managers, ourselves and our colleagues, were targeted to be laid off. I remember the grief that swept through the organization after the Axe Man’s first speech. His most notable comment, “This is not your family, get used to that, you have one of those at home.” This and other similar comments rang through the organization for months, even years after. And so like

Hilda's organization we grieved the loss of our family-like atmosphere. When the majority of the reorganization was complete, I had seen hundreds of my colleagues lose their jobs and I had absorbed the work responsibilities of two other managers, not an unusual experience for most of those employed in health care at that time.

This wave moved many organizations that were in the Green Zone, through the Yellow and deeply into the Red Zone. Since that time some workplaces have recuperated and returned to the Green Zone, while others could not. The following are the most common scenarios I notice in workplaces:

- All Red Zones: individuals, workgroups and organizations are in the Red Zone. Individuals feel undervalued, lack productivity and miss work more often than is necessary. Workgroups are dysfunctional and therefore unable to problem solve or work effectively, while the organization is unable to achieve its goals.
- Green Zones within a Red Zone: the organization is not working effectively; however, workgroups and individuals within it are, in other words they are Green islands in a Red sea.
- Red Zones within a Green Zone: the organization is generally able to accomplish its goals but there are individuals and workgroups that are unhealthy and unproductive - Red islands in a Green sea.

- All Green Zones: the business at the individual, group and organizational levels is functioning smoothly, capable of problem solving and successfully achieving the goals of the organization. Individuals feel that they are a valued part of the organization and not just a replaceable component.

Green Zones do not happen by accident – the actions and philosophy that bring people and systems into the Green are deliberate and well thought-out choices. Those in the Green Zone pay attention to the subtle changes and take action, rather than doing crisis intervention, they do crisis prevention. They are wise enough to listen to the whispers. Louise Hay, a noted author, used this concept when talking about listening to the messages of our bodies, but I think it applies as well to listening to the subtle messages of our relationships, our workplaces, even our lives. She said that when our bodies, or in this case, our workplaces, begin to be unhealthy they first whisper, communicating their distress subtly. If that message is ignored, then they speak louder and if that message is ignored they speak even louder, all the while the workgroup is getting more and more unhealthy, sinking deeper and deeper into the Red Zone. The insight to discover is that the earlier distress is heard and action taken the less damage is done. The Yellow Zone has fewer casualties than the Red.

Organizational leaders and individuals seem to be at a point where they have heard the pleas and in some cases the agonizing cries of distress, but have yet to take action. Regrettably, experts in the area of wellness and health promotion have noted that, although stress has been iden-

tified as the number one concern of managers, it has been ranked only seventh in terms of resources dedicated to addressing this issue.

As a professional who works with organizations to enhance their quality of worklife, I am very concerned about what I have been seeing over the last ten years. I am alarmed about the slowness of response in addressing urgent issues and I am especially concerned about the future health of the workplace. Disability claims for stress leave are rapidly mounting. Business leaders and employees, who I encountered during the writing of this book, also expressed their distress about the current state of the average workplace and shared with me their struggles to find examples of Green Zone workplaces. Clearly, organizations need to be open to embracing collaborative, wellness-oriented philosophies such as the Green Zone Model and encouraging employees and managers to learn the skills that will facilitate Green Zone work environments to flourish.

When my dear friend and respected colleague, Dr. Sohail, shared with me his Green Zone concept from his book *The Art of Living in Your Green Zone* I immediately realized the power of applying that concept to the workplace. We hope that by sharing with you the philosophy and the skills to build your Green Zone, you will be inspired to transform your Red Zone workplace into the Green.

We realize that it is a challenging project and yet the more people in your organization that share in this intention, the easier the task will be. If you are initially only able to visit your Green Zone, we hope eventually you will be able to live and work there and that this will enrich not only your worklife but your personal, social and family

lives. When you work in the Green Zone, work is not only enjoyable, it is also an opportunity for you to grow and serve your family and community to the best of your ability. May your journey be *forever Green!*

Warmly,
Bette

WORKING IN YOUR GREEN ZONE QUESTIONNAIRE

We have devised the following questionnaire to assist you in determining whether you are working in your Green, Yellow or Red Zone. Completing it will be the first step in allowing you to be more aware of your emotional zones at work. Your answers will highlight for you where you can begin to address your concerns at work.

To complete it, first circle the answers that apply to you, and then count the number of answers in the GREEN column.

#	QUESTIONS	GREEN	YELLOW	RED
1.	Do you enjoy the type of work you do?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
2.	Do you feel stimulated / challenged at work?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
3.	Does your job allow you to express your best qualities?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
4.	Do you enjoy walking / driving to work?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
5.	Do you like the physical environment you work in?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
6.	Do you like working with your co-workers?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
7.	Do you like working with your manager / administration?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
8.	Do you feel respected at work?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO

9. Do you feel appreciated at work?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
10. Is your workload manageable?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
11. Do you take work home?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
12. Do you feel that you are working harder and getting less done?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
13. Do you feel tired at the end of the workday / week?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
14. Do you take breaks during the day / week to re-energize yourself?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
15. Does it take most of your time off to recuperate from work demands?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
16. Do you take vacation time each year?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
17. Do you feel you have lost some of your concern / caring for your customers?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
18. Do you have physical symptoms (headache, backache, chest pain) related to stress at work?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
19. Are you irritable with your co-workers, family or friends because of work tension?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
20. Does your work and family lives conflict with each other?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
21. Can you express your concerns at work?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO

22. Can you resolve conflicts at work?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
23. Are your interactions with your co-workers respectful?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
24. Can you take sick leave, annual leave, etc. without feeling guilty?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
25. If needed would you be able to get extended leave, like disability?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
26. Do you have the independence and authority needed to do your work?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
27. Are you uncertain because of threatened layoffs or changes in your workplace?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
28. If you had a choice would you take another job?	NO	SOMEWHAT	YES
29. Would you be willing to get professional help to cope with stress at work?	YES	SOMEWHAT	NO
30. What Zone do you mostly live in outside work?	GREEN	YELLOW	RED

RESULTS

If you are working in your Green Zone (Score 24 - 30), most likely you are enjoying your work and have developed healthy relationships in the workplace.

If you are working in your Yellow Zone (Score 18 - 24), it is recommended that you use the techniques that we have outlined in this book to get yourself into your Green Zone. If after a few months you have not been successful then you should seek professional help.

If you are working in your Red Zone (Score 1 - 18), you need to seriously consider seeking professional help.

DISCOVERING YOUR GREEN DAY

Name		Day	Date
ZONE	HOURS SPENT	WHAT WAS HAPPENING	
GREEN			
YELLOW			
RED			

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DISCOVERING YOUR GREEN WEEK

DATE	HOURS IN EACH ZONE			
DAYS	GREEN	YELLOW	RED	COMMENTS
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bette Davis RN BN MN

The President of Bette Davis Consulting and Counselling Services Inc., Bette Davis has worked in excess of 20 years in the area of mental health/psychiatric nursing as an individual and group therapist, manager and clinical teacher.

She specializes in Stress Management, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, Time Management and Personal Effectiveness with staff and managers in the public and private sectors.

Her special interest is in the relationship between balancing home and work life and workplace wellness. She has written on issues related to personal and professional development, has presented numerous workshops and is a founding member of a number of professional and community organizations.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. K. Sohail FRCP(C) MBBS

Dr. Sohail is a psychotherapist providing guidance to many who use his original concepts to bring themselves into better life of balance and effectiveness. He has written books on diverse themes including poetry, short stories, true crime and self-help, and has contributed articles to numerous magazines and newspapers. His lectures and seminars at provincial, national and international conferences are called “noteworthy” by his peers.

The Creative Psychotherapy Clinic in Whitby, Ontario, led by Dr.Sohail, has become a successful, ever-expanding practice because of the innovative techniques he has introduced through his lengthy career as a healer.

Embracing the humanist philosophy that guides his life, Dr. Sohail is admired for his leading-edge therapy by his patients, health administrators and colleagues across North America.

Besides being a prolific writer on topics he knows so well, he produces TV and film documentaries through his company, Darvesh Films (Canada) Ltd. on issues of a social and psychological nature. He acknowledges being on a personal journey that has no ending in his thirst to know more about the art of healing and helping others to grow happier.

Publications from Dr. Sohail's Library

BOOKS

(also available on CDs)

Interviews

Library Encounters

Marital Therapy

*Growing Alone –
Growing together*

Poetry

Pages of My Heart

Psychotherapy

*Encounters with Depression
Schizophrenia ...
Accepting a Challenge*

Psychotherapy,

Immigrants

*From One Culture
to Another*

Psychotherapy, Group

Strangers Care

Short Stories

Mother Earth is Sad

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Intimate Encounters

Mixed Marriages,
Children of

Mixed Messages

Psychotherapy

Encounters with Depression

A MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Bette Davis, a well-known lecturer and consultant on mental health issues, has joined with Dr. K. Sohail to bring to those who are suffering from work-related illnesses, burnout, mental and emotional fatigue, distress and depression, a new opportunity to right the wrongs that are beating them into the ground.

Between these two authors, using their varied experiences, studies and humane qualities as healers, they show how their easy-to-comprehend writing and interview techniques, opens and simplifies how one can look at one's disappointments and ill-health to bring themselves back to being a productive, happy person at work and elsewhere.

White Knight Publications' purpose is to create and publish socially valuable books that bring information, solace and assistance to its readers, providing them with greater satisfaction. We trust our contribution to offset the painful drift of society toward its uncaring "netherlands," where nobody is concerned, is of greater value than that sought elsewhere.

This publication will help those, who are seeking a new direction, to find their motivation between these covers.

Bill Belfontaine
Publisher
White Knight Publications

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Books by Dr. K. Sohail and
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- *Love, Sex and Marriage*
- *The Art of Living in Your Green Zone*
- *The Art of Loving in Your Green Zone*
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TRUE CRIME POLICE

- *"10-45" Spells Death*
– Kathy McCormack Carter
- *Life on Homicide*
– Former Police Chief
Bill McCormack
- *The Myth of The Chosen One*
– Dr. K. Sohail

Recommended reading from other publishers

HISTORY

An Amicable Friendship – Jan Th. J. Krijff

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New topics are published every Spring and Fall