



## 13 ADULTS IN THE WORKPLACE

**M**ANY bright adults with special learning needs who find creative ways to compensate during school and along the way later also develop a “charm factor” that makes them well-liked by teachers and peers. This also helps them to wiggle out of difficult situations and to cover their tracks when things go wrong.

This factor can help some people shine during a job interview, only to disappoint the new employer or colleagues shortly after being hired. The individual is then perceived not as “charming” but as possibly deceptive, shifty, unreliable, and maybe even dishonest. Other adults have serious social skills problems and seldom get past the interview. Still others who did not receive adequate support as children and youth, may not have enough formal education to seek jobs at their true level of ability.



A few who receive excellent support and/or are also personally driven, may become over-achievers who then crash and burn at some point during their careers when unresolved personal issues and accumulated feelings of overwhelm may combine to cause the unstable edifice to crumble.

Wherever you may be in on this continuum, there are specific strategies to help you to re-group and to find fulfilling work where you can also manage stress and achieve personal balance.

## The Job Search

Most job assistance centres and online sites have much advice about how to prepare a résumé and how to revise it for the various types of jobs for which you may apply. These centres will also have job search steps to follow, but there are several more to add here.

It is true that relevant job experience and personal contacts can be helpful.

**Volunteering** is an excellent way to acquire both of these, both preceding and during your job search:

- Choose a place where you can practise needed skills and further develop skills you already have.
- Choose a place that has scope for expanding your present knowledge level.
- Ask questions and ask to visit/work in other sections of the company or agency where you volunteer.
- Once you have a good track record and are respected, ask to speak with a more senior manager about your future job goals and ask for advice – and maybe a future reference.



For actual jobs where you apply, offer to come in on a volunteer trial basis. Also offer to fill in as supply staff if someone is sick or absent, allowing them to see your ability and dedication in action.

Keep a careful binder list of every place you apply with detailed contact information of the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of whoever actually does the interviewing and hiring.

**It is difficult and discouraging to keep following-up, but that is how many people actually land a job.**

Every month, either write, call, or actually drop into the places where you have applied. Carry extra copies of your résumé, smile, “sparkle”, and say that you hope that no one there becomes ill or otherwise unable to work, but should that ever

happen, you want them to remember you. The day will surely come where one of those places needs someone quickly. They do not want to re-do a job search and you will get that call. A weekly follow-up call is likely *too often* – you may risk being an irritation rather than a prospect.

If you want to move to a higher level position at another company different from where you are already employed, those steps are covered later in the chapter.

## The Job Interview

You should dress *just a notch above* the job you are applying for. A dress suit is inappropriate for a construction job, but clean, fairly new clothes always make a good impression, as does good grooming. Plan the transportation route ahead and arrive about 10 to 15 minutes early to use the washroom and get the “lay of the land”. Never be late, of course, but being too early is not good either, so find a coffee place to wait until the right time.

Take a copy of your résumé (with some expanded notes, perhaps) so that if you are asked about any item, you can share some further information. Take a hard backed note-pad where you can write any needed notes and have your personal notes in front of you. You will feel more relaxed and make better eye contact when you know any required details are right there for your reference, if needed. Constant scrolling on an electronic note-pad can be a distraction and irritation for your interviewer, however.



Your task is to show your potential employer(s) why you are just the very best person they could possibly find for this job. Do background research about the company or agency so that you can show your interest in their work and show them why it is you they need.

Smiling and asking a few intelligent questions about the company or the job will further demonstrate your interest and personal qualities.

If you can have actual letters of reference (photocopies, of course) to give to your interviewer(s), most cannot resist a quick peek right on the spot.

**Give your reference sources a brief outline of the points you'd like mentioned in the letter, and then ask them to possibly add any glowing adjectives they feel might apply.**

If you have ever worked for a family member willing to help in this way, s/he can write as your employer for that project. Place the letter with the most wonderful things to say about you on top.

Prepare ahead as well for the inevitable question about some fault you have. The trick is to turn a fault into an asset instead:

“I have been told I can be too picky about details. It is true that I can be a bit of a perfectionist – it’s important to me to do the job right, but I have learned how to relax when I need to and let something slide that doesn’t matter. You’ll see that I can take my cue from others about when to be picky and when not to be.”

Or... “I can sometimes get hyper-focused on a task and not be aware that it’s lunch time or that someone is becoming upset with me. I have learned to keep one eye on my surroundings and take more frequent breaks so I am staying tuned into the bigger picture. I’m very open to feedback on this from others.”



To disclose or not to disclose: Sadly, the prejudice against any label, disorder, or disability still exists to a large degree in our society and will surely place you at a hiring disadvantage. Unless you are unable to conduct the interview without some form of disclosure, it is usually best to wait until the job starts, if you disclose at all.

At the end of the interview, after expressing your thanks and hopes that they will choose you for the job, ask if you can arrange a very brief feedback call with your interviewer in any case. That you want to learn from this experience and make changes for future interviews should this one not work out. It can’t hurt, and will give you important advice for another round. Once you are back home after an interview, record as many of the interview questions as you can recall. Then brainstorm good responses to each question, possibly with a family member or friend in preparation for future interviews.

## Job Survival

Once you’ve been hired, you need to know how to keep the job, how not to get fired. This section applies to post-secondary school students on a new course practicum assignment as well.

**You need to set up a personal mentor or contact person (outside of work) for the first week or two with whom you can briefly discuss your daily**

**progress and obtain some TLC, advice, and feedback.**

Again, the issue of disclosure becomes a question. If you need some specific technology or highly visible accommodation, you have no option. But otherwise, it is a dangerous risk. Legally, of course companies cannot discriminate, but they would never admit if they do: the “fit” isn’t right, the department “needs” have suddenly changed, or the department is being “restructured” and your position becomes redundant. For a college practicum, you can more safely disclose a little, but the prejudice remains.

However, if you do not address your special needs issues and get your required accommodations, you will not likely last long. So you first need to ask for an orientation day, few days, or even a few hours to begin.

**Day One:** Here is the type of script you should prepare ahead to say to your supervisor before you begin on the first day:

I am very happy to be here but I’m pretty nervous. I have a special way of processing new information that I need to share with you. If you can help me and allow me to tackle the learning curve in my special way, it may take a tiny bit longer, but once I have it, I’ll be able to operate at the same speed as everyone else (or maybe even better - big smile).

Take a notepad with you and ask for a little extra time to make *fast* notes of anything you need – rewrite these later with more added details. For anything where there are already written steps, ask permission to photocopy these at lunch time or after work. Ask for time to practise new tasks in small sub-steps, reminding your supervisor that this extra initial time will not last long.

If possible, ask for a co-worker “buddy” to assist you and to be a source for questions where the supervisor is not available or not normally involved. If you are really feeling the need for an entire extra day or two to “job shadow”, you could possibly offer this possibility for no pay. Clearly this is an option to consider *only if* you feel you are at serious risk of not being able to perform right away.

At the end of this first day, thank the supervisor for the extra time and patience and ask for any feedback s/he may have for you.

**That evening, rewrite your notes and review any relevant job materials as you would for a school course or exam. Talk to your personal mentor and then go to bed early.**

**Days Two and Three:** Arrive a little early again, all ready with your notes and note-pad. Besides your assigned “buddy”, be watching for others who seem both knowledgeable and kind – people you could continue to lean on a little for

beginning support. Smile and thank everyone for their patience and assistance, as appropriate. At lunch and breaks, discreetly write down everyone's names and bits of information you can pick up to help remember who they are and how they fit in your work scene.

Continue to note any ongoing feedback or suggestions you are given during the day. The next structured feedback you should request from your supervisor is for the end of the first week – Day Five. Continue to review job notes in the evening, but also take time for enjoyment and rest.

Day Five: You book ahead for a longer time to talk with your supervisor, hopefully in a private location. Thank him or her again for such an excellent orientation (maybe that *you* actually organized, no matter...) and mention a couple of aspects of the job that you especially enjoy.



Re-state your intention to become a valued and competent employee and that you have put together a tentative job description from your first week's experience. If a job description has already been provided, use that - or your own - as a check list to ask for specific feedback on every aspect of the job.

Start a binder for this work where your supervisor can see that you have transferred all your orientation notes and on a separate page, the feedback from this meeting.

At this point, if things are proceeding well, you can gently disclose a *tiny amount* of your past challenges and thus why you are being so careful to ensure this job is a success. But not a specific diagnosis.

Weeks Two and Three: Continue with your learning curve work, but also expand your focus further to the social “culture” at your workplace.

**Survival depends not only on your performance ability, but on the “fit”. This “fit” refers to your connection with co-workers as well as to your competence.**

- Note carefully arrival and departure times, as well as break and lunch routines. You do not want to appear to be working harder than others, or certainly less than others.
- Observe the social pecking order – who has high and low status, and how decisions are made. Err on the side of reserve and initial caution so as not to break any “unwritten rules”.

- During any meetings, note changes in the group culture and the social process. Prepare extremely well ahead for meetings and bring your notes so that you are on top of things. Proceed carefully, however, in the process of displaying your competency. You want respect, but without inadvertently moving too fast and threatening the established order, unless you specifically *decide* to do that for a strategic reason.
- Slowly begin to cultivate a tentative friendship with someone of middle to high status with whom you feel safe to ask careful questions and glean more information. Keep this tentative however, so that if later you feel it is not a safe connection or you find another more compatible friend, you can easily move back without upsetting the balance.
- Continue your process of careful listening (and discreetly noting in your binder later) as many personal details as you can remember about what others share. You become a well-liked co-worker by following up on people's stories and problems. Watch a TV program or sports event on occasion that they discuss in order to be able to contribute an opinion. Disclose a little, but not too much too soon.
- Show an interest, share a joke, and most importantly remember to thank and compliment others for assistance and for excellent work that you have noticed. Giving credit to others indicates a generous and non-competitive spirit that is most often appreciated.
- Your final social task is to offer help to others and to pick up the slack during times of stress, but only once you are well enough established that your own work will not suffer as a result.

## Supervision and "Safety"

At either the 3 week or one month point, ask for another meeting with your supervisor to review your job description again and to receive more specific feedback. Begin with the same positive approach as outlined for the Day 5 meeting and then listen very carefully to the feedback you receive – also for any “between the lines” messages. You are trying to *discreetly discern* whether your job is going well enough that you can begin to enjoy a feeling of workplace safety and job security.



For individuals with NLD or Asperger's, this can be a very difficult task and regular review times with your personal mentor may be required to “interpret” this social processing. You can also discuss with your mentor the social process of staff or customer/client meetings as described above.

If the news is good, if you are hearing that all is going very well, you can disclose a *tiny bit* more: that it would help you so very much to have a monthly meeting like this to assist your ongoing learning curve and to set some personal goals for improved performance and personal growth. You *carefully* say that you feel you have much to learn from your supervisor (without appearing to grovel in any way) and ask if a half hour monthly supervision session would be possible.

**Your *undisclosed agenda* here is that you will keep minutes of these meetings so that if anything happens to go wrong at any point in the future, you have a detailed paper trail of your performance feedback and your connection with your supervisor.**

You hope this would not ever be needed for a senior management or union intervention, but it is documented, just in case.

The best scenario however, is that this level of connection and determination to achieve and to progress will be seen by your supervisor as clear evidence of your abilities and potential for advancement.

## Performance Accommodations

All the strategies outlined in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 10, 11 and 12 can be easily adapted to the workplace for any problems you face in reading, writing, math, note-taking, organization, or social interactions etc. If you have previously used any of these accommodations or believe specific pieces would help in your present job, try to imagine a way to discreetly begin using these and including them as part of your personal goals.

**Do not link these to a specific “diagnosis” at this point, however, unless you have no other option. You want a minimum of focus on your “differences” by your co-workers or supervisor. Refer to page 16.**

When your position is completely secure and you have established absolute trust with a colleague or supervisor, you can decide on some possible diagnostic disclosure – usually after an entire *year* or more. It is unfortunate that workplace awareness and accessibility is this far behind the school system, but your caution may ensure your job “safety” and security. Readers may be surprised and disappointed that I am not listing parallel precedents for the success of applying the strategies outlined in previous chapters to the workplace. That is because it still jeopardizes job safety for employees to highlight these issues and accommodations. Most people quietly and carefully implement them on a personal level, asking only for visible exceptions or assistive technology equipment that are essential for job performance.

As awareness and progress in the educational system continues, this will inevitably transfer further into the workplace. Below, we discuss how you can hasten this process if you are successful in achieving a management position at some point.



## Time Management at Work

Personal Time management is the topic of Chapter 12 and will be another crucial factor in determining your success at work. The self-care, including exercise, outlined there will provide you with the stamina and balance to approach every new work day with a fresh perspective.



Your work day actually begins when you leave for home the day before.

**Your schedule must allow for an approximate 30 to 60 minute wind-down period at the end of the day where you take on no new calls or tasks, depending upon your type of work.**

You tie up any remaining loose ends and make a rough work list for the following day. This allows you to literally leave whatever is incomplete *at work* and to make the transition to your personal life and responsibilities as soon as you step outside.

Tidy your work area so you come in to a clean and uncluttered space every morning. (See the section on *Cleaning the Clutter* in Chapter 12, if necessary.)

Your home schedule needs to be adjusted so that you can arrive at work a few minutes early every morning and have time to smile and briefly chat with people at the “coffee machine”.

**You allow nothing to be booked in each day until you have your quiet 5 to 15 minute planning time to begin.**

Many people with special learning needs must literally add an extra half hour to their working day to make time for these morning and end-of-day routines. Doing so may save your job and your personal health.

### These are some added tips for managing your work day:

1. Each morning, set up your work list with estimated times. Use a watch or electronic timer to stop you every half hour (or longer, as needed) to keep you on track.
2. Use a coloured marker to prioritize key items.
3. Break larger or more complex tasks into sub-steps that you check off more frequently as completed – gives the feeling of being “on a roll”.
4. Sub-steps also encourage you to make frequent stops: to stand up, stretch, drink plenty of water, and take small nutrition breaks.

5. Continue to consult your work list at every pause, revising as necessary.
6. Try to deal with short calls, emails and messages as they come in, or set up specific times to deal with a bunch together. For longer items, book in an actual slot on your work list to handle these.
7. Except for an emergency, do not skip lunch – it is a crucial time to pause, look around, socialize, and possibly step outside for a breath of fresh air, or to call your partner.

## Work Stress and Crises

**One cause of stress for individuals who process new information “differently”, or more slowly (as in CAPD) is that they struggle with the pressure to respond quickly.**

Being a receptionist, a desk clerk or a criminal court lawyer are not ideal jobs for these individuals. If you feel this stress in your workplace, your best strategy is to **buy extra time** before even trying to respond.

- Try to rephrase the information to repeat back to the speaker and ask for any part you missed:
  - “So you are saying that the warehouse is shipping 500 containers of widgets by next Thursday or Friday and they want us to distribute these to the plants in London and Sarnia by June 30th? Who did you say is the contact person for that confirmation?”
- Operate with your notepad, to write down whatever details you need.
- Use various stock phrases to postpone your need to respond until you are ready:
  - “I just need a minute here to put this together...”
  - “I have to just finish this (whatever) and I’ll get right back to you.”
  - “I need to check on (whatever added information) and I’ll get back to you tomorrow.”



You don’t disclose your diagnostic issues - you just set up the accommodation you need. People will not usually even notice, and if they do, just repeat that you’ll get back to them as soon as possible.

**For people with Asperger's or those who have any tendency to respond to new information in a negative manner, this stalling tactic can also be a valuable way to pause and think of a more positive response.**

If a situation arises where you become extremely upset or angry, buying time is your escape route. Breathe, call your mentor, write down your various options and **do not re-engage** until you are calm and prepared.

Most individuals who do not follow these techniques experience serious work stress, even *without* any special learning needs. Some work environments are so overwhelming or inherently “toxic” that it is possible only to *reduce the fall-out*, even with the best efforts. If this is your scenario, then after you have attempted to implement as many survival strategies as possible, you have to decide how long you are willing to continue in this environment.

**Before making that decision, you can first use your supervision time to try and revise your job description:**

- Keep all your daily work lists with the estimated times to demonstrate how it seems impossible to manage the present workload.
- Make up a possible revised job description to present where certain tasks are delegated to others or simply eliminated. You can suggest how you think this delegation might happen or suggest the hiring of a temporary assistant person or creating a co-op placement for a college student.
- If there is solid resistance, simply state that for your health, you are unwilling and unable to continue without some change and that you will simply implement this revised plan as best you can and report back as the situation evolves.

The worst that can happen is that you would be fired, but this almost never occurs. A chaotic and high-stress workplace would be in even worse trouble if a productive employee (like you) were to suddenly drop out, so you will likely have the needed time to start a discreet back-up job search.

If your revised plan is grudgingly accepted, you have more time to consider your options. If not, your discreet job search can become open and up-front and some companies will actually give you a reference when they know you are not really at fault. For those companies who won't, you creatively arrange for another reference source.

**In any new job interview, you simply say this work environment became highly political and that you needed to leave and find a job where the atmosphere is somewhat calmer and better organized. This is the truth, in fact.**

## Steps for Job Advancement

If all goes well in your job, you need to stay settled at the level where you are hired for about six months to one year before you would consider asking for any advancement, often much longer. You need to be seen as willing to “pay your dues” and to “bloom where you are planted”.



But the strategies for moving ahead actually begin shortly after you are hired and continue to evolve as you slowly make your presence known.

**Performing at a high level is crucial for advancement of course, and you use every on-site opportunity and resource possible to improve your knowledge and skills, as discussed above in the section on volunteering.**

### **Becoming recognized for your ability is the next step:**

- You must gently but consistently let others know what you are doing on a daily basis. By also acknowledging the work of others, you can often “slide in” your contributions as well.
- Be constantly on the watch for ways to do extra or to improve on a job function, but without appearing blatantly competitive. Later, note these items in a separate section of your work binder.
- Very brief notes, emails or drop-by’s to your supervisor keeps him or her apprised of your daily activities. Occasional “specially designed questions” related to your extra activities give you a reason for informal connections with your supervisor and to demonstrate your initiatives.
- In your formal supervision sessions, weave any extra activities, possible insights, and collected notes from your binder into your performance review and new goals for the next month. When you feel the time is right, start to type up these goals after your meeting to share with your supervisor.
- As your job interests and activities continue to expand, look for ways to connect with creative or senior people in other departments as well. The “specially designed question” technique above is a sure-fire way to ask for a short connection with these individuals.
- Then do some further research or follow-up on your own to “report back” to these contacts you have made a few weeks later.

- When the time feels right, ask your supervisor about possible in-house professional development workshops or opportunities. Research an outside workshop, and ask if you can attend, maybe at your own expense for now. Later, you can find out what the company might pay for.
- If you feel you need to take night courses for further training or even return to school to prepare for a promotion, you will need to explore ways to do that, balancing your time and finances.



During this entire process, the need for a personal mentor(s) or advisor(s) cannot be over-emphasized, both within and outside your workplace.

## Making Connections

**Navigating workplace politics is one of the highest level and most complex tasks you will ever undertake.**

Special learning needs make it even more difficult to catch all the innuendoes, subtle messages, and cut-throat maneuverings. You need to cultivate workplace friendships as discussed, and yet keep these very much at arm's length if you are seriously planning for advancement. You can be held back by conflicting loyalties, so your closest friends need to *be outside* of your work environment.

- One work place mentor can be your immediate supervisor if that individual is impressed by your abilities - and personally not threatened in any way by you.
- If that is not the case, then you need to cultivate another more senior person (or more than one person) in a related work area who shows genuine interest in your work and your ideas.
- Your personal mentor on the outside that we have already mentioned needs to be a person with more experience (usually significantly older than you) where there is a strong level of trust and comfort. Sharing your challenges, fears, and insecurities in a safe setting is so important.
- While you may be able to do some sharing with your life partner or spouse as well, different boundaries need to be maintained at home where you must focus more on relationship priorities.
- Personal counselling or coaching may also be an option to help you , but should not replace the role of a personal mentor.



For an ongoing mentor connection, there needs to be a reciprocal aspect as you proceed. You take this person(s) out to a game, a concert, or for a meal. You buy an occasional gift, possibly invite them to your place, and perhaps offer to help when they move or house-sit if they might travel. Being careful to respect whatever sort of connection is within their comfort level.

**This relationship should never involve a sexual component – clarity and objectivity are lost, and a power imbalance completely muddies the water. Do not go there.**

Further connections can be made with workshop or course instructors, or course participants. In your areas of particular interest, there is now a world of resources and connections available online. You can write to virtually anyone, anywhere, with a question or an idea and some will actually respond. Exercise some caution in sharing certain ideas where you may wish to protect your ownership, but the point here is to engage in dialogue and connection with others who may be able to somehow assist in your advancement goals.

## Getting Promoted

**By following all these steps, you may indeed become noticed by management at your workplace and actually offered a promotion or a raise in pay. Most often, however, you need to choose an ideal time to *ask* for this raise or promotion.**

If you have been following the supervision meeting model here, you already have an established time and place to do this. In any case, you put together a small “proposal”, listing your work history and accomplishments – and gratitude for your experience with this company. You then make your written request and negotiate a reasonable response time.

**Many people shy away from this direct method because they fear a possible “No”.**

But the path to getting what you want and need in Life is littered with stones, thorns, and many obstacles. Many stories of famous people include sad experiences

of dreamed-for record labels, athletic teams or national elections where they are not chosen, where they must deal with rejection. It is the ability to navigate these roadblocks and to carve out another route that predicts your ultimate success.

Individuals with special learning needs have a long history of doing just that all through school and your personal challenges will actually equip you with extra tools for this Life Journey.

**If your first attempts at advancement are successful, you are on your way. But if not, you have two choices:**

1. Calmly and cordially thank your supervisor for the consideration and ask what exact steps and timeline would be required for your request to be successful. If that response seems do-able, continue with your plan.
2. If you believe this “No” or delay is *not* a temporary one and that no advancement will be possible later, do not let on that you are overly concerned - but begin to prepare your exit strategy.



In your work binder, begin (or expand) a new section in which you record research about other companies where you might wish to transfer. Call or find out the names and contact information for managers at the new level (next step promotion) where you would like to apply.

- Revise your resumé, perhaps with professional help. You cannot actually list the *name* of your present company so that an unauthorized call does not alert any management staff that you are looking to transfer elsewhere. State clearly in your resumé that this is a *confidential* exploration.
- Confidentially share with a *trusted* work mentor that you are looking, however, and ask to set up a reference letter ahead, as described above. No one else at work must know of your plans.

From the safety of having a job, it feels less risky to send out “cold call” letters to these companies and to explore other options. Even if they are not presently advertising, or perhaps precisely *because* of this, your letter will stand out. With occasional but steady follow-up with your contacts, if an opening comes up, you may be called without any other job posting competition.

Otherwise, discreetly follow the standard job search techniques for possible openings at the more advanced level you are seeking. A head-hunter agency might be considered for higher levels.

While further formal education is a clear and usual tool for advancement, many individuals with special learning needs have used this hop-scotch route to professional advancement with amazing results, including the present writer.

## Higher Level Management

High achievers with special learning needs can hit a brick wall when they are promoted to senior management or become successful business owners with a large staff. Personal survival techniques may not easily be adapted to managing others and being able to delegate responsibility. But if you do not delegate and manage others well, you may be perceived as arrogant, unreasonable, and un-democratic. Shouldering a mountain of unnecessary responsibilities ultimately takes a personal toll on health as well.

At this level, most people do not have the time or desire to take a course in business management.



But with your presumed salary, you can afford to hire a business consultant to personally coach you in “best practices” specific to your particular field of work. A short stint with several consultants over several time periods will widen your perspective and evolving skill-set.

### **Three of the most efficient, yet often neglected strategies for succeeding in senior management, are:**

- hiring an excellent executive assistant
- setting up a “Supervision” system, and
- running effective staff meetings.

To begin, you need to hire and train a top-level and trusted executive assistant who understands how the organization works, can keep you organized, and has the social skills to mix well with everyone and keep you informed of the social and inter-personal dynamics of your work culture that you may personally miss or possibly misinterpret.



The Supervision model described above can be put in place all the way down – or across – your company or institution. While you need to do frequent walk-about and make brief connections with staff at all levels, in regular supervision with middle or senior managers you can keep a pulse on the trends and required details of your operation.

**Most high achievers hate meetings.**

You feel you can do it faster and better yourself. But at this level, there is simply too much to do for one person, while maintaining any balance or outside enjoyment in life. A weekly meeting with Senior Staff is an invaluable way to organize the workings of your organization, to delegate responsibility, and for all of you to gain from the wisdom, insight, creativity, and support of your team.



If you personally create an atmosphere of such collaboration and mutual support, you effectively channel the competitive energy of your senior staff into mutual problem solving, rather than destructive back-biting and constant friction.

If you have recently acquired a senior level position where one of your staff members personifies these negative qualities, begin with a heavy-duty one-on-one supervision session to address this issue. And if the negativity does not dissolve immediately, fire that individual. This allows you to make a dramatic statement, firmly establish your authority, and hand-pick someone who will be very loyal to you.

Your executive assistant can *organize* these ongoing staff meetings and solicit agenda items from the meeting participants.

- You always open and close the meeting with personal thanks to your team for their contributions and fairly evenly highlight the accomplishments of various individuals and departments as a motivational strategy.
- Allow just a small amount of meeting time for concerns and complaints and always redirect these into an action plan with a report to be presented at the next meeting. This keeps a positive and productive tone while remaining open to constructive complaints.
- Demonstrate your openness for new ideas, professional development workshops and activities, for possible presenters, and positive recognition of workers at all levels within the company.

**As in a family, your job is to balance your time and attention so that all members feel fairly evenly respected and acknowledged by you. Playing favourites or developing close personal friendships with these colleagues should not happen if you wish to maintain this culture of fairness and cohesiveness.**

Your model is what these managers are to extend to the employees who report to them.

If you do achieve this career level, you can set an example of accessibility by establishing a hiring policy to include competent employees with various special needs. You can set precedents by openly discussing the workplace needs of all your staff and by openly providing the required accommodations.

As well, you will hopefully reach out to be a mentor for a young person with special learning needs who could in turn benefit from your experience and personal support.

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Notes: