



Mobley's Musings– Decluttering Your Life

We hear a lot from “tidying up” consultants like Marie Kondo about the benefits of decluttering our homes and offices. Getting rid of unnecessary stuff and stowing away the necessary stuff allows us to focus on what matters and not be distracted by chaos.

What about decluttering your mind? Some people have a hard time letting go of old slights and tend to bring them up repeatedly. Joyce talks about how her brother and sister weren't there for her when her parents were going through a divorce. Her brother was in the military and her sister was in college. They were busy with their endeavors and didn't realize what their parents and little sister, who was still at home, were going through. Every time they get together they tell Joyce they regret not helping her, but other than saying they're sorry, what can they do? They are unable to change the past. By constantly bringing up something they can do nothing about Joyce is harming her current relationship with her siblings.

If you are holding negative feelings and thoughts about yourself, letting go of them will open up space for positive thoughts that will keep negative notions from sneaking back in. When he was young, Rich had been told he wasn't athletic and that appraisal kept him from participating in sports as he got older. With a company golf outing looming, Rich knew he'd be put on a team and needed to prepare. To his surprise, he was remarkably good at golf. It's become a new passion for him. When he reflected on other negative assessments, he realized they weren't serving him and went about ridding himself of them too. He feels much more capable now, and all it took was letting go of old notions that others attached to him.

Your relationships might also stand some decluttering. Maybe you no longer share the same interests and values with someone and time together isn't meaningful. Or maybe you've come to realize that a friend is selfish and always puts their own interests first. Letting go of an unfulfilling relationship can make space to bring new people into your life.

If your job is the source of life clutter — bickering coworkers, urgent tasks that turn out to be trivial, endless administrivia — you may have outgrown the position or you may just want to try something different. In most cases, letting go of slights, negative thoughts, toxic people, and unfulfilling work makes room for better, happier relationships and more engaging work.

And, if you find you miss something you gave away, you can probably get it back. It all depends on how you let it go. If you let the person or job go in a kind and gentle way, the door is more likely to be open than if you tossed them aside in an uncaring way. Even if you know you'll never want them back, ending with care is a good practice.

[Sandy](#)



Sandy Mobley

Ask Sandy

Do I Belong Here?

Clients say when they join an organization in a technical role, they focus on the work they were hired to do: gaining competence, improving their skills, and building connections with coworkers and customers. If they excel, they may be promoted to supervise others doing the work. For some, managing others is an exciting new challenge. But some are more interested in doing the work, choosing to opt-out of management in favor of a technical track.

Those who move into management find that technical aptitude is not nearly as important as the ability to fit in with the management team. And especially as they move up the ladder, they may begin to question whether they belong. Do they share the same values as others on the team? Do they respect their colleagues? Do they enjoy spending time with them at work and after hours?

This can be a defining moment. Having invested many years working their way up only to discover they can't abide by the organization's senior leaders can be disheartening. It's almost like meeting your partner's family for the first time and shuddering at the prospect of spending holidays with them.

If you are in this situation at work, keep in mind that some differences can be overcome. Perhaps other leaders are more introverted or serious than you. If you respect them and feel you have similar values, it isn't hard to accommodate their temperament. But what if you don't respect them or their values? Perhaps they make business decisions without caring about the impact on the workforce or the customers. Maybe they are arrogant and not inclusive. You may never feel comfortable joining that club. And being unwilling to play along can have dire consequences for your career.

As uncomfortable as it may be to realize you don't fit in, awareness is the first step to change. But don't expect others will change. Your skills and experiences are undoubtedly transferable to an organization whose leadership team holds values and principles that more closely align with yours. When you interviewed for a technical role, you were probably more interested in matching your skills to the job; however, when considering a senior management position, you need to assess cultural fit as well as job fit.

In my [Juicy Work](#) model, I define the career sweet spot as the intersection of your best skills, work that you are passionate about, and an environment where you will thrive. Spend time defining that ideal environment. What values are essential to you? What culture brings out your best? Where will you be valued for the things that matter to you? When skills, passion, and the right environment come together, work is almost effortless and you feel fully alive and engaged. Knowing that your values align with your colleagues' allows you to take pride in your work and in your organization.

If you have questions you'd like Sandy to address in future newsletters, email them to sandy@learningadvantageinc.com



Speaking Up: The Power of Self-Advocacy

Some people believe power is bad. “Power corrupts,” according to the adage, leading some to fear it. I believe, however, that power provides agency so we can get things done and make a difference in the world. When we behave as if we are powerless— that is, without agency — we become victims.

Thad left the government for the private sector. He felt his organization moved too slowly and lacked the resources to achieve its goals. He was so eager to get out, he accepted a lateral move without being clear on his needs. Now a year into his new job he realizes he sold himself short. His experience and skills are greater than his peers and managers, but he is unable to have any impact because of his relatively low-level position and short tenure.

Carley bought a four-unit apartment building and invited three friends to rent from her at a very attractive rate. Her friends snapped up the three apartments that were the most up-to-date and furthest from the street noise. Carley never thought to put her needs first — after all, since she's the one shouldering the responsibility of ownership she deserves one of the nicer units. Carley resents her friends, but who is to blame? She is.

Lucy often participates in a group lunch — typically pizza or Chinese food — with her three officemates, who are all husky guys. Even though she eats roughly one-eighth of the food and the guys all order beer while she drinks water, they always split the bill evenly, one-quarter each. Lucy doesn't speak up for fear of appearing cheap. Her officemates don't notice the imbalance, or perhaps they choose to ignore it since she's never mentioned it.

Are there dynamics in your life that are out of balance? Do you ask for what you want, or do you think you should accept what you're given? If you don't notice an imbalance, perhaps it's too small to matter. If, however, you sense you're being taken advantage of and it's degrading the quality of your relationships, who has the power to do something about it? You do.

Start by determining what you want and ask for it. If you don't ask, the answer is always no. Don't go through an elaborate assessment of what is “fair” or what you think you deserve. Remember: fair is a weather term. Also consider the limits of what you are willing to accept and determine your walk-away point. Then stick to it or you'll find yourself back in the victim role.

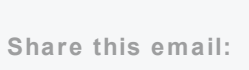
When a friend makes a request of you, determine what you want and need. Take time to think about the request and don't feel pushed into a corner. Recognize that if the person cares about you they will accept your no. And if they don't accept your no, perhaps they aren't a true friend after all.

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