

BEWITCHED, BOTHERED, AND BELEAGUERED: STORIES OF A GRATEFUL ACADEMY VETERAN

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From the author's perspective as a higher education administrator for the past 25 years, he recalls many situations in which the demands of his institution made it difficult or impossible to be an effective leader. With humor and occasional chagrin, the author shares some of these stories. In the end, he learned to play a balancing act between the organization and the individual; the need to husband scarce resources with the need to lead and innovate; and the desire to bring out the best in people with our limited ability to do so.

The theme that runs through this issue of *Reflections* is that of balance and perspective. How can we care for people if we are always watching the bottom line? How can we care for people properly when our country's value system is changing? As administrators, how can we find satisfaction and purpose when scarce resources dictate that we do the best we can as opposed to the best we know how to do?¹ How can we draw the best from others, whose level of skills and attitudes sometimes run contrary to our perception of the greater good? How can we enjoy our own lives and achievement despite our inability to do enough to help others? This Special Issue explores these themes in depth.

In her reflections on two decades as a dean of social work, Paula Allen Meares discusses not only the broad issues of prioritization and decision-making fallout, but also her perspective as a female African American administrator. Joanne J. Thompson offers another administrator's view, this time tackling the issue of admissions standards, academic freedom, and the changing nature of higher education. Lloyd L. Lyter explores the dilemma of choosing an administrative position over one's professional passion; freedom sometimes arrives for those who give up being the boss. Shelley Rice Wyckoff

explores the nitty-gritty balancing act of hiring and working with faculty while keeping an eye on number one, the student. Using guiding principles, Janet Hoy, Mary McCaffery-Hull, and Patrick Milloy share their experience in creating their best possible management team with an emphasis on flexibility and adaptability. Mary Ann Raymer recounts her experiences as a school principal and describes the principal's role as a balancing act between the needs of students, parents, and community. Using lively descriptions of three administrators she has known, Gigi Nordquist examines the qualities of good and bad administrators. Ruthann Rountree shares what she has learned about the self-serving aspects of human service organizations. In a provocative review of her years as a junior faculty member, Dianne Rush Woods describes the hazards of balancing the competing demands of administration, scholarship, and teaching. Judith Papenhausen discusses how creative thinkers and the establishment can collide if their goals are not carefully molded and massaged into alignment. Amy Krentzman and her colleagues describe how their use of appreciative learning in a service-learning program can reap rewards on multiple levels, including that of the beleaguered administrator. Gary Bess shows

what can be in store for the administrator turned independent consultant who hoped the grass would be greener in his own backyard. Finally, in a review of the recent film *Good Night and Good Luck*, Agathi Glezakos comments on the portrayal of media administrators caught in the conflict between journalistic integrity and business survival.

In the pages that follow, I talk about my own experiences as an administrator (and those of others). Every example illustrates the need for balance and perspective in surviving as a beleaguered administrator.

Who Killed the Coach?

At some point in my thirty-year career, primarily as a professor and university administrator, one of the departments I oversaw was Kinesiology and Physical Education (KPE). There was, at the time of my arrival, a tenured KPE assistant professor who was a football coach. When football was dropped from the athletics program, the coach lost his "place," but not, due to tenure, his place. The KPE department had him teach peripheral activity courses. Coach was a very nice and bright man who had unfortunately not remained fit, and had developed cardiovascular disease. His disease had developed to a stage that he had shortness of breath and needed a shopping cart/walker for physical support and to transport his belongings around campus. His goal was to hang on for the length of time needed to get a percentage raise so that he could afford to retire.

The department chair came to me with a dilemma. What do you do with a long-standing, tenured professor whose ability to serve the university is compromised not only by a more limited skill set and failing health, but also by a fitness condition that is the antithesis of that prescribed by the department's mission statement? The chair and I wanted to help. I had my fiscal person review how the coach had been paid; he

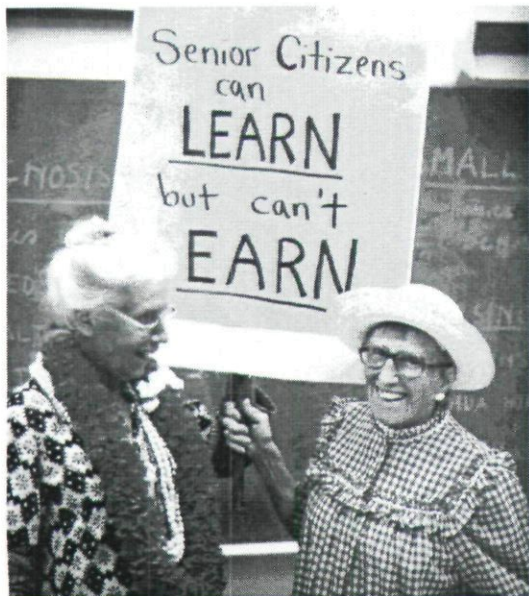
indeed had been shortchanged by not getting certain raises along the way. We fixed it. With the coach's consent, we put him on a 12-month work schedule, requiring him to work during the summer. These two adjustments would allow the coach to retire at the end of the summer instead of at the end of three years. We were trying to be humane. We wanted to serve the university better. We tried to find the right balance. The coach died that summer.

I Was Told to Fire Someone Because She Was Too Old

In the summer of 1978, Maggie Kuhn, Founder of the Gray Panthers, co-taught a course, with Paul Nathansen of the National Senior Citizen Law Center in Washington, D.C., at the Research I university gerontological summer institute at which I was the director. The course was entitled *Advocacy in Aging*, and it was cross-listed for social work or law school credit. I hired Maggie in September and sent the paperwork through the university to have her appointed as a Visiting Professor of Law and Social Work. While this was occurring, the state legislature passed a law that no one over the age of 70 could teach at this state university. By the time the bureaucracy found my paperwork it was May, and I was summoned to the vice chancellor's office for legal affairs and was told that I needed to fire Ms. Kuhn and hire someone younger than 70 to teach the course. I told the lawyer that if he wanted to fire Maggie Kuhn and be on the cover of *Time*, *Newsweek*, or be ridiculed on the *Tonight Show*, he could, but that I was not going to do it for him. (Ah, the joy of being a faculty member and saying what was on my mind!)

About a month later, I was given a compromise. Once Professor Kuhn arrived, I was to ask her to sign another document that would make her a foundation employee, not a university employee. Thus she could teach there, but would have to give up her

academic title and rank. The administration insisted on this policy since they were trying to avoid setting a precedent of hiring faculty over 70 and they did not want any exceptions.



Maggie Kuhn and Helen Gustafson, retired kindergarten teacher, getting ready to demonstrate, 1977

Soon after Maggie arrived, I explained to her the university's position. I told her she would make the same amount of money, but that she would need to relinquish her status because of her age. She calmly and politely refused to sign the new contract, and the university refused to honor the old one. However, since she was there, she taught the course with the focus being advocating for senior faculty at that university. She had a large group of students, both social work and law, including a member of the state legislature. We had demonstrations on campus with older adults carrying signs saying, "Senior Citizens Can Learn But Can't Earn." We made the Sunday edition of the newspaper with a featured issue on the class and issues concerning ageism and the elderly.

Maggie and I were called in to meet with the provost. He explained, in the nicest way possible, why she needed to sign the new paperwork and why he couldn't approve of her being paid as a faculty member. She, as a sweet Presbyterian who worked her whole career in the civil rights area of the church and was forced to retire because of age discrimination there, explained to the provost why she could never settle for ageist behavior a second time in her life.

The course ended. I packed up my belongings, having requested a leave prior to this event. I had endeavored to serve the university at the highest level. As a gerontologist, I was appalled at the idea of age discrimination. As an administrator I was compelled to deliver my superiors' dictates. (Now as an interim provost, I wonder what I would have done in the provost's place.) About four months later, the university finally paid Maggie as a professor.

I Was Afraid I Would Start Screaming at Everyone

I once worked for someone that I fondly called Attila the Hun. Working for this boss helped me to learn more administrative policy than I had ever learned before, but at a huge price. This administrator controlled his dominion through micromanagement, intimidation, and disregard for the personal lives of his inferiors.

Some random examples: He said that no one could plug in a floor heater on the campus without first calling him for permission. During one period of budget crisis, he insisted on signing every single purchase order for the entire university. He had no compunctions about bringing people in on the Friday after Thanksgiving to work on projects he felt needed to be finished. He read every management evaluation in the university and had them changed to his way of thinking before they were shared with the employees. He

yelled, he screamed, and he insisted upon approving all hiring.

You could not look better than he looked. At one time I was invited to the White House to attend a ceremony for one of my faculty who was receiving the Medal of Freedom. I was cleared by the CIA and ready to go. I was denied travel because I would miss the dean's council.

Always calling at 5 p.m. on Fridays, he wanted to make sure you were at your desk. When a key administrator would leave, my boss would become the interim for about a year so that he could pare back the area. He would call people at night and on weekends, so people started to screen their calls by listening nearby to their answering machines or waiting to play back their voice mail.

Confounding it all was his tendency to yell the loudest immediately prior to giving raises. Just when I thought I might be thrown out on my ear, I'd get more money. After a few of these berating sessions, I felt I was not necessarily rewarded for doing a good job, though that may have been in the mix, but rather because he felt he had the absolute right to do whatever he wanted to do.

I started to become less patient with my coworkers and subordinates, and felt sick about it. That was when I knew I had to leave. "I'm afraid that if I stay I'll become a different person and I'll be yelling at everyone," I remember telling a friend. When I announced my resignation, my boss was angry, but subdued. He told me the job I was going to would lead nowhere. I was given a spectacular send-off, and the weight of the world lifted off my shoulders.

Responsibility without Trust: Beware of the Micromanager

Having suffered at the hands of more than one micromanager in my career, I've also been privy to similar experiences by colleagues such as the one that follows.

It was Christmas Eve when I called the director of research at the university where I was an administrator. I needed him to sign off on a proposal and assumed, as all right thinking people would, that as Director of Research, he had the authority to do so. When I was informed that he did not have the authority, I got desperate: the proposal had to be signed. If it wasn't delivered that afternoon, it would not be considered by the particular government agency making the award. Potential students would be turned away, and the entire academic program would be in jeopardy, thereby compromising the university.

By the way, the award was a done deal. The funds were for students from underserved communities. Moreover, by funding these students, the university was positioning itself to procure a much wanted off-campus location. Up to this point, it hadn't had the capacity to do so. Receiving the award afforded a win-win-win situation.

The research director was very sympathetic and got on the phone and called the director of the campus auxiliary, who did have signing authority. No answer. He called the chairman of the board of the auxiliary, who had signing authority. No answer. He called the dean of graduate studies and research to whom he reported; he wasn't there. He called the provost. No answer. It was Christmas Eve, not a creature was stirring - no one was even home.

When I, in my car and on the way downtown to the government offices where three people had gathered to countersign the proposal, called the research director again to request a signature, he had to say no. At that particular university, the person who ran the Office of Research, who had served the institution for almost 15 years, who had proven to be the most productive person that office ever had, who had more contact with and knew more about local and federal

government agencies than did anyone else in the institution, did not have authority to sign.

I was beside myself. Almost at the appointed site, I again called the same list of people. The same list of the most important people, I should say.

Note: Had I had access to cell phone numbers, maybe this incident would have been just an annoying blip. However, the type of strangling administrative policy that caused this Christmas Eve snafu continues to plague proven and capable managers who are given great responsibility without the commensurate trust.

My colleague served the institution faithfully and productively. He tried earnestly to help out in a crunch situation. He felt forced to sit by powerlessly as events unfolded that should quite clearly have been in his purview to efficiently and painlessly execute. Based upon his commitment to the students for whom these funds were intended, he did finally relent and sign the document. Not long after, the provost called both of us to his office. I was exonerated, but my colleague was given a reprimand. A year later he left to go elsewhere. The university received the award, and it continues 10 years later with \$2 million per year supporting faculty, staff, and students.

When I Had to Call the Bomb Squad

Most of us would like to take for granted that, barring natural or terrorist disasters, we work in a safe and healthy environment. With the media constantly warning us of dirty air, moldy walls, mercury-contaminated fish, and the like, it's a wonder we don't all wear protective masks every day.

New on the job in an administrative position, I sadly learned that the professor/director of the criminology lab had passed away. I appointed an interim director and asked him to inventory the laboratory so that we could assess the holdings. He was shocked to find live ammunition and grenades, among other items. I asked a sheriff's

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6-1	GRENADE INERT				M-K2 BRAND	
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department crime lab administrator with whom I worked on a regular basis to take a quick look at the items and to make a suggestion. She said, "Call the Bomb Squad."

Here is the receipt showing what they found.

The chances were very good that the munitions had been there for years and were unlikely to suddenly blow up. I knew that I was obligated to tell my boss that there was a pressing safety issue right away, which I did. I gave my boss the option of waiting to hear the news on Monday instead of immediately to avoid disrupting final exams. He chose to hear immediately; the building was evacuated, the bomb squad brought in, and the munitions were confiscated.

First and foremost, do your best to develop and implement procedures to make the workplace safe and healthy. Inventory all chemicals in labs. Make sure all gas cylinders and tall, heavy furniture and equipment are chained and/or bolted to walls. Develop relationships with the police and with your institution's building and safety department. You just never know what you'll inherit.

Not Enough Resources, Not Enough Staff, and Top-level Disconnect

Part of being beleaguered is feeling frightened of the consequences of speaking up to superiors. Another part is your or your boss's being too long removed from direct client service. Sometimes the system in which you work is in such disrepair it actually threatens lives; you just have to take a stand and be brave. Consider this version of a 25-year veteran nurse supervisor's at a major university teaching hospital email to her boss and the response.

From: Johnson, Frank
Sent: Wednesday, August 10, 2005 3:40 AM
To: Fields, Jane
Subject: Concerns

I arrived home from work at 7:15 p.m. I left the hospital knowing that each of the nurses on two different hospital units had an eight-patient assignment. At 8:45 PM, I received a call from Rose Clark, R.N. She informed me she was unable to care for eight patients and that she was going to quit as soon as a relief nurse arrived. She explained that the patient in 57-2, according to her understanding of the doctor, would die if she did not receive her pain meds. I did my best to calm Rose. I arrived back at work at 9:15 p.m. When I returned to the room to give the patient IV's and p.o. pills, the patient's mother responded that all the nurses have to do is administer meds and that she did

everything else. The mother was crying and did not know why the nurse (Rose) did not want to take care of her daughter. I apologized and explained that the beginning of the shift was overwhelming and that was why I was there to help. I looked into her orders and learned that the M.D. probably told Rose that the patient would die if she did not receive her calcium, not her pain meds. I called the doctor, and we took care of the patient's physical needs.

Before I left, I sat down with Rose to discuss how we could have handled things better. Rose, a new nurse, simply did not have the experience to get the information she needed (calling the doctor back), and on top of that she was handling too many patients. She was crying because the mom and daughter thought she didn't want to help them. She tried to apologize, but they did not seem to accept her apology. Through all this I am aware that Rose is the mother of a handicapped teenager and that she is clearly identifying with the mother's fear and pain.

Jane, I am writing this to you because I am not sure if you are aware of the assignment levels, the nurses' perceptions, and staffing challenges. I feel like we protect you from this information.

Two years ago, I shared with you that I felt the management atmosphere was based on fear of being in trouble or doing the wrong thing. I thought things were better until I attended a debriefing meeting of the pilot project. I shared my concerns that I didn't feel the pilot project was working and that certain changes might be better. The response to me was "that is not an option." My immediate thought was, 'why have a debriefing, why have a pilot? Just make the change and I will live with it.'

Today in the unit director meeting you asked about staffing. I would have shared

my thoughts and concerns, but I have to be careful that I am not being perceived as negative, not supporting change. Others will get told about my behavior.

The other day I came to work at 7 p.m., and I was four nurses short. I had to pull the admission team from another unit and have the next day LPN come in to work. I cared for seven patients, covered the LPN with seven patients and one admission, and one other nurse had eight patients. There was no unit secretary so the phone rang all night unanswered. I never put on a yellow gown once that night; I couldn't. I did do thorough handwashing and wore a mask. I never stopped, I never ate, I drank one soda, and I was always "nurse unavailable." I left at 9 a.m. remembering when I got home that I hadn't charted on one patient, and didn't label IV tubing. I thought about that night for days. I am out of practice. I am grateful and thankful that the nurses do not walk off the unit, and I will never again ask why IV tubing is not labeled as long as the patient-nurse ratio is 1:8.

I tried to give the staffing office a grid that showed all of the holes in medicine, but I was told it was "not needed." I am writing to you because you asked for input, and I am open to any ideas and suggestions.

From: Fields, Jane
Sent: Wednesday, August 10, 2005 8:35 AM
To: Johnson, Frank
Subject: Re: Concerns

Frank, I really appreciate your taking the time to share this with me. I have worked incredibly hard to build an environment where people will share the reality because, you are right, I am removed and I also believe I hear bits and pieces. I know everyone is expecting me to have the leadership to know when there just are not enough resources to take more

patients; I am prepared to be the voice to our executive staff. I feel like our relationship has grown both out of mutual respect for the values we share and for the differences.

As far as the meeting, my issue is not to challenge what we are doing. The perception was, right or wrong, that the staff was belittled publicly. I am sure you can see that I do expect that we are able to challenge the status quo in an assertive, not aggressive way. In hindsight it would have been better for me to pick up the phone and call you to say, "Frank, I appreciate your input, but your delivery today was perceived as hostile." I am always willing to learn.

Living the situation as you do, do you see the solution as limits to patient care? If you were me, what would be the 1 or 2 things you would do in addition?

Thanks, Frank. I appreciate your candor and very much value your perspective.

The nursing supervisor straddled the line (some might say chasm) between field and office in an attempt to do the best possible for his patients and staff. He did not want to be perceived as a complainer, but on that day when work became a nightmare and he could barely hold onto his caregiving role, he clearly expressed both the facts and his feelings. His boss admitted her error and then announced two new programs: 1) to provide nurses with a "time-out" communication capability when resources cannot keep up with demand, and 2) an online interactive website that enables nurses to immediately tell administrators when issues arise that prevent them from delivering quality care.

Despite these changes, the nursing supervisor decided that his own needs would be best met by giving up his management position and returning to direct care as a nurse practitioner.

“According to the latest projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics published in the February 2004 *Monthly Labor Review*, more than one million new and replacement nurses will be needed by 2012. According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the number of first-time, U.S. educated nursing school graduates who sat for the NCLEX-RN®, the national licensure examination for registered nurses, decreased by 10% from 1995-2004. A total of 9,353 fewer students in this category of test takers sat for the exam in 2004 as compared with 1995.” (American Association of Colleges of Nursing website, October 2005)

I Spent Two Years on a Locked Psychiatric Ward

Many years ago I completed a two-year post-doctoral fellowship at a School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry Research I university teaching hospital. The unit on which I worked was a locked ward for acute patients, but also operated under a community-based model that had a satellite center. Patients living on their own would come in for ongoing supportive therapy and medication regulation.

Not long into my fellowship, we learned that the attending's (physician in charge of the unit) husband was dying of cardiovascular disease. Struggling with the attending's despair and knowing the plight of her nine children, the head nurse, chief resident, and I banded together to help the attending cope with her tragedy. While we were emotionally overwhelmed by what was transpiring in the attending's family, we nonetheless rose to the occasion to form a well-oiled machine to keep the unit functioning at a high level. The chief resident wrote up the orders and wrote prescriptions. The head nurse ran the unit in terms of staffing, patient care, and operations. I did a lot of the supervision of the medical students and ran the community clinics.

We covered for the attending for about 6 – 9 months. She was supposed to be on the ward and running it, but as time went on and her husband's illness progressed, her absenteeism increased. In the meantime, our “team” fell into a comfortable routine in our desire to help the patients, train students, and support our colleague.

Beware of codependency. We thought we were helping her. We became stronger without knowing that she grew weaker. She went further and further into alcoholism – apparently she drank with her husband as he was dying. She died shortly after her husband.

A Streetcar Named Jim: Adapting and Living With Learning Disabilities

In elementary school, I would have benefited from the services of a good school social worker. From 1st through 8th grade, my school placed students in learning groups, labeled as streetcars (slow), busses (medium), and airplanes (high and fast). I was always a streetcar or a third group member. I didn't read well until fifth grade, and I haven't been able to pronounce certain English words or a foreign language because I have some kind of hearing/brain processing dysfunction. In an ophthalmologic study that I participated in when I was 40, it was discovered that I also had some inability with depth perception so that I couldn't fully process some visual information. Everyone thought I should be able to do something well athletically – I was a fast runner – but I couldn't hit a baseball. I once shared these concerns with the chair of my child and family studies department, an expert in this area, and he shared with me a book called *In The Mind's Eye*². The book examines “the role of visual-spatial strengths and verbal weaknesses in the lives of nine gifted individuals...”³ He said, “Even if you were tested today many, of your learning problems would not show up as recognizable disabilities since you have learned to adapt and deal with them.”

By the time I was ready for college, my SAT scores put me at a disadvantage for college acceptance. When I was a junior in high school, my parents were told by my English teacher, "don't even think of college for this one." Unwilling to accept labels and with the tirelessness of an Energizer Bunny⁴, I learned to adapt, get along with others, and seek out resources, help, and solutions that would enable me to succeed. Today this would be referred to as accommodation.

I will always be indebted to the Sisters of Charity of Greensburg, PA who taught me for 13 years and did not give up on working with a streetcar. A few years into my administrative career, I learned to adapt by hiring a Ph.D. in English who worked for me for fifteen years. She transcribed my dictated work into the multitude of documents needed to carry out my responsibilities, and we accomplished double the work with our combined skills.

He Who Controls the Wood Floor Space, Controls the World

It seems like I have served on every type of committee in my 30+ years in the Academy, but chairing the Wood Floor Space Committee was my favorite. At one institution in which I had the privilege to work, each manager was responsible for a building on campus. This manager was the only individual who could interface with maintenance, janitorial services, facilities operations, emergency evacuation, police, and so forth.

My office was located in the art department, even though I wasn't the dean of art, and I was responsible for the building's physical operation. With time I grew quite fond of the building and its inhabitants. I made sure that the faculty offices, art labs, and windows were clean, the sinks unclogged, gas leaks investigated and fixed, and graffiti removed. The building housed two museums, one traditional and one avant garde. The collections changed weekly and shows varied

immensely from deformed Barbie presentations to spooky darkness with a message. I got to know the individual faculty, students, and press regarding the shows and budgetary responsibilities.

In addition to the art faculty and students, the building housed a special program for 13-16 year old college students and classes for a performing arts high school. The place was a zoo on any given day; great fun for an administrator who got to know and enjoy the people inhabiting the building without being responsible for their faculty or staff evaluations.

Because of this newfound experience working with artistic types, I was asked to chair a committee of users of wood floor space. I never knew that wood floor space was a scarce commodity at a university, or that it was actively fought over by the KPE department, athletic director, dance department, performing arts high school, and the 13-16 year old college students.

Imagine chairing a committee of creative, competitive, free-thinking, hormonally-fluctuating, and youthfully (in body and/or mind) exuberant members. Then try to imagine taking the conflicting interests, time needs, and colorful personalities into account as one attempts to broker a fair distribution of the precious space. Let's just say that my social work training and time spent at the psychiatric hospital helped me immensely.

I Was Once Classified as Mentally Ill by the Psychiatric Diagnostic Statistical Manual

In twenty-five years, through multiple interviews for administrative positions at both Research I and comprehensive institutions, I have not once been asked about my research. The positions I have sought and/or held are all academic ones that emphasize the importance of research, faculty development, and high quality student-generated writing that

demonstrates clear understanding of their disciplines.

I'm a gerontologist who once served as a consultant to the United Nations in the area of aging. I am a tenured professor of social welfare who has authored or co-authored 37 publications and participated in more than 100 professional and scholarly presentations, trainings, and program development projects, and been awarded more than \$35 million in grants and contracts. And, oh yes, much of my research is in the area of gays and aging.

While I was working on my dissertation at a prestigious private university, I was referred to as "the fag" by members of the doctoral faculty. When I applied to work at a Research I university school of social work, a former student of mine was on the personnel committee. He said I was rejected because my "research was too narrow."

As an openly gay administrator, I have sometimes felt that either I am accepted in spite of my sexuality or flat out rejected because of it. So when I served on a search committee and had the privilege of interviewing a homosexual applicant, I not only asked questions about research because it was appropriate and pertinent, but also because I hoped my approach would be adopted by others. The applicant was noticeably appreciative of my inquiries about scholarly work.

Thank you Judd Marmor,⁵ et al, for declaring me normal.

Survival and Success Tips

When we are hired into an entry-level position, those of us with ambition for more control and power, look upward to the next rung on the ladder. If only we were in charge, we think, we could make things better. Then we become managers, our results are inevitably mixed, and we become discouraged. The key is to keep moving forward while putting work in its proper

perspective as a part, albeit an important one, but not the only defining part of your life. With a resilient mindset, you can sometimes turn ugly situations into creative opportunities. You can not only survive, but also you can succeed both professionally and personally.

- Be cautious about showing confidence in a way that might be perceived as arrogance. Otherwise you may be done in by the interview process alone.
- When taking on a new job, try these two information gathering ideas: 1) interview all of your subordinates and find out their ideas about making the unit more effective and efficient; 2) interview all equals and find out their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of your new unit. Their perceptions may be dramatically different than those told to you during the interview process.
- Only reorganize your unit after you know its strengths and weaknesses and after you've identified the key players. The more times you reorganize your unit, the more likely you will be seen as the problem rather than the solution.
- Accept that efficiently (not to be confused with heartlessly) managing money is good, not evil.
- Don't micromanage.
- Communicate clearly and regularly.
- Be collegial, inclusive, and collaborative.
- Help create a safe and healthy physical environment.
- Allow yourself to see others' points of views without becoming indecisive.
- Don't take yourself too seriously.
- Beware of codependency.
- Have an understanding spouse, significant other, close friend, or relative to lean on.
- Get a pet. Plant a garden. Smell some flowers.
- Attend university lectures, sports events, and cultural events. Don't use the excuse that you are too busy.

- Respect boundaries. You cannot or should not always be a friend to your coworkers/students.
- Protect your subordinates from the wrongdoings of others.
- Talk with mentors and peers.
- Know the difference between thoughts and feelings and magical thinking.
- Get out – don't stay and work for a tyrant or a system that doesn't make credible efforts to right itself. If you, like the women in the movie *9-5*, fantasize about killing your boss, it's time to find a new and improved workplace.
- Check out your anger. If you are hard to live with at home or are taking on the behaviors of the organization, you need to make a change. Wait a day to send an angry email; an email lives forever.
- Treat people the way you want them to treat you.
- Accept that it is a rare administrator that is beloved by all, but it is within reach to be both admired and respected by many.
- Laugh, use humor about yourself, and create light-hearted moments at work.
- Be altruistic.

Altruism As Stress Reliever

Jimmy Carter, while President, was a classic beleaguered administrator. He micromanaged himself - with the help of a hostage crisis, staggering inflation, and the oil crisis- right out of a job. That, one could argue, turned out to be a great thing. He put Habitat for Humanity, an exceptional social services organization, on the map, and personally builds homes for the needy. He created the Carter Center to dig fresh water wells, help cure river blindness, and fight other diseases in the poorest parts of Africa⁶. He did not choose to be the obscure elder statesman playing golf day after day; he has become a role model for all former presidents who have the influence and access to resources to effect change for those in need.

Helping others is good for one's mental health and, by extension, good for one's physical health. According to Irvin Yalom in *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy, Fourth Edition* (1995)⁷, one of the primary categories of curative factors in group therapy is altruism.

Well, we can't all be President of the United States, but we can feel better about ourselves if we participate in direct giving throughout our careers. We can participate in committees and boards, work to change laws that discriminate against or punish the underrepresented, and give time, money, and creative thinking to needy causes and individuals.

As George Vaillant, M.D., author of *Aging Well* and *Wisdom of the Ego*⁸, asserted in his classic series of articles. Based on the Harvard Mental Health project, (in his schema for positive mental health) the upper level coping mechanisms of humor, sublimation, and altruism were essential, health-, life-quality, and longevity-, promoting antidotes to alcoholism and substance use, and part of the routine repertoire of the healthiest, most successful Harvard graduates over several decades.⁹

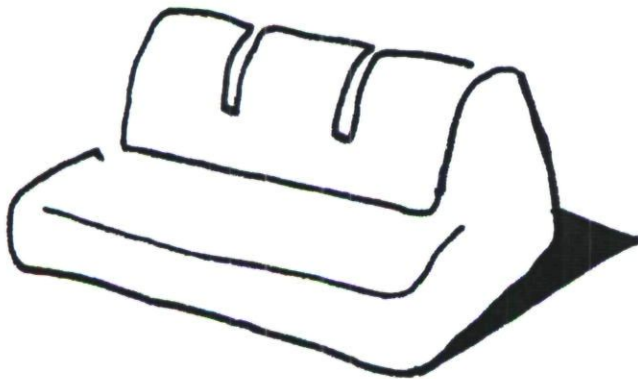
Understanding the Job Description

Whether or not we do a "good" job in the eyes of others, it nonetheless takes an awful lot of time and effort to use our training and people skills to advance our personal agendas along with those of our profession. As we go through our individual learning experiences, we don't know what we don't know until we get there. I am guilty of having complained about my superiors from time to time, only to have a memory light bulb go on when I, as an administrator, had to take actions that had provoked ire, disappointment, or frustration in others. Being in charge means walking on a tightrope and praying the net holds. You know you are going to fall off the rope from time to time, but you hope your overall

performance cushions both you and those you guide.

Some of us accept that being an administrator includes being beleaguered. Others of us do not acknowledge being beleaguered; a condition that includes feelings of exasperation and helplessness. Being a good administrator in either case requires that we channel that "oh, woe is me" feeling into constructive energy and positive results. The choices we make come from our unique sense of balance, our individual perch on the high wire - a position that is tweaked and prodded into place by our values, experiences, personalities, and goals.

Perhaps the best we can do in trying to lead others is to not lose our healthy selves. Laugh, love, give, exercise, pet a dog, and eat your veggies. After all, running the show is only partly under your control.



(Endnotes)

¹ Gil, David G. *Unraveling Social Policy*, 5th Edition. Rochester, VY: Schenkman Books, 1992.

² American Association of Colleges of Nursing, <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/media/shortageresource.htm#about>, retrieved Oct. 10, 2005.

³ West, Thomas G. *In The Mind's Eye*. New York: Prometheus Books, 1997.

⁴ Copyright of Energizer Holdings, Inc. <http://www.energizer.com/bunny/>

⁵ Marmor, Judd. (1910-2003). Psychiatrist credited with having the DSM remove homosexuality as a mental illness.

⁶ The Carter Center. <http://www.cartercenter.org/default.asp?bFlash=True>

⁷ Yalom, Irvin D. *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*, Fourth Edition. New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1995.

⁸ Vaillant, George E. "Natural History of Male Psychological Health: Some Antecedents of Healthy Adult Adjustment". *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Volume 31, July 1974, and Vaillant, George E. "Natural History of Male Psychological Health: Empirical Dimensions of Mental Health". *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Volume 32, April 1975.

⁹ Vaillant, George E. "Natural History of Male Psychological Health: Affects of Mental Health on Physical Health". *New England Journal of Medicine*, Volume 301, December 6, 1979.

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