

84. How to be Effective at Work When the Job is Imperfect

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Welcome to coaching for Latina leaders, the only podcast dedicated to the advancement of Latinas at every level of life with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Latina with over 20 years of leadership experience, Harvard grad physician and mother of two.

Hello, sweet friends, I want to remind you that in mid January, this podcast is going to have an awesome new name, the Empowered brain. So you can come to the same place for your weekly dose of learning and inspiration, and you'll still get me but with a fresh feel a new name, and the content is going to be so much better. Alright, my darlings, enjoy this week's podcast.

What's up my people welcome back. Today we are talking about how to be effective at work. When you are super frustrated and annoyed with the work circumstances or the people you have to work with. I'm sure none of you can relate to that. Because it never happens, right? Just kidding. I know it's so common. And here's the thing, I was coaching somebody the other day, and here's this like badass woman. She's a physician leader, and just got tapped to be medical director. And she's been out of practice for about five years. And she's a young mom. And she was asking for coaching because she wanted to be a medical director. And now she is. And she's super committed to her community, to her clinic, and to her patients.

But she hates the leadership she has to work with she hates administration. And so her question to me was like, How can I be effective when I when these people don't understand when all these people want to do is cut cost when they never want to focus on patient outcomes? And yeah, that's tough. How can you be effective when you're having all of those thoughts, right? Like that's for all of us. Whether you are a leader, or whether you are just a someone that's working in your field, and you have all of these negative thoughts? How can you be effective? Let me tell you, it's going to be very, very challenging, it's going to be very hard to show up and be the best you possible when you're having these negative thoughts.

So what can we do about it? So I'm going to share what we did with her. And I'm going to walk you through a four-step process to show you what you can do for yourself. Okay, so the first thing I did was I asked her, so tell me, do you want to be a leader? Do you want to be a medical director? And she said, Yes. So I had her confirm her choice. She wanted to be a medical director. So when I asked when she said yes, I said, Why tell me why you want to do the job. And she told me she cared about her clinic, she cared about the outcome, she really cared about her patients, so she wanted to do it. So I said, Okay, you're choosing to do this job. You want to do the job for reasons that you like, knowing this, what can we do to help you be the most effective view?

Okay, so I'm going to walk you through a four step process. And this I did her, and it's something that's super helpful that I do with myself when I find myself in circumstances that I don't find to be the most pleasurable circumstances. Yes, I still get into those circumstances myself. Okay. So step one, step one is you have to radically accept the situation for what it is. Okay? Actually, let's take step one, step one is, you have to actively choose what you're doing. So step one now is actively choosing what you're doing.

So again, I had are actively choose, do you want this job? is what I would ask you. If you're in a job that you don't like? Do you want to keep working at this place? Do you want to be a leader is what I asked her step one choose. And if your answer is, yes, why? Why do you want to keep doing it? And if you like the answers, if you like your reasons for wanting to do it, then great, let's go on to step two. But if you don't like your reasons for wanting to do it, and maybe the reason is that I like the paycheck, because I like making the money, because my job is flexible. Because you know, I like the freedom to do all these other things. Because I like that I get to work in this industry. Those are fine reasons. If those are your reasons, and you like those reasons, great. Keep doing what you're doing. Let's go on to step two.

But if you're doing it for other reasons, because I think I have to because nobody else will do it because I'm the only person available to do the job. And let me tell you, those are not great reasons. And none of those are your problem. If it's because there's no other leader if it's because you think you're the only A person available, none of those are your problem. So don't make them your problem, you can choose to do something different. You don't have to continue to do something you're doing. If you don't like the reasons, you have a choice. And again, if you're working in a facility that's under-resourced, and you're doing it because you love the community you serve in great, you're mission-driven, you want to stay there because you love the community you serve. Let's go on to step two. Okay, so again, step one is actively asking yourself actively choose what you want to do. So ask yourself, do you want to keep doing this? And why? Okay, so let's say you like your reasons, let's go on to step two. Step two, is you have to radically accept the situation for what it is. Now, we talked about radical acceptance or acceptance in Episode 80. So go back and listen to that episode, where I walked you through the attitudes of mindfulness, and one of them is accepted. And again, acceptance is not a passive process.

It's not like you're just lying over and letting everybody walk all over you. Not at all, not by any means. Acceptance is a very active process, you have to actively see what's going on. And you have to actively accept the people or the situation or the circumstances for what they are. Yes, it might not be ideal, but it's what it is. And every time you're pushing against it with external expectations, every time you're pushing against the situation for what it is, what are you causing more stress for yourself, you're not changing anything, you're just causing more stress for yourself. And that is getting in the way of your effectiveness.

So again, step one, actively choose what you're doing step two, is radically accept the situation for what it is, it might not be ideal. This is what I tell myself, this isn't the ideal situation, but it's what I have to work with. And again, I know that I'm choosing to do it, so I'm going to stay doing it. And I accept the situation for what it is. This isn't the ideal layout of an emergency department where I want to work, but it's what it is. These aren't the nicest people I've ever worked with. But I'm choosing to work here

because they love the clients that I serve, I love the patients that I serve. So again, step one, choose Step two, accept the situation for what it is.

And if you want help with acceptance, go back to Episode 80, where we talk about radical acceptance. Okay, step three, this is a big one. Okay, step three, you have to clean up your thoughts about the work environment, or the people that you're working with, clean up your thoughts that are causing you to have that frustration, that annoyance, all of that stress, you have to clean up your thoughts. So how do you clean up your thoughts, I recommend that you do what's called a thought download, get all of your thoughts out of your brain and onto paper, I literally journal or I'll just say out loud, all of the things that are triggering me that I find frustrating, or that I find annoying about the circumstance or the people, if it's a person that I'm finding that's triggering me. So get that all out of your brain and get that onto paper.

And once it's on paper, I want you to go back and circle all of the things that are actual thoughts. And if you're someone that likes to use colored pencils, you can circle in one color, all the things that are thoughts, and in another color, all of the things that are actual circumstance. Again, a circumstance is a fact something that can be proven in a court of law, something that no one can argue with. The weather outside is cold, versus the weather outside is 60 degrees. The weather outside is cold is a thought you think it's called the weather outside is 60 degrees. That's a circumstance you have the thermometer, nobody can argue with that in a court of law. So go back, circle all of your thoughts, and then circle all of your circumstances. And the reason why you do that is that I want you to see the difference between your thoughts and what actually affects what's actually happening. For me, example, there was an ER where I used to work where the layout was kind of a big pain in the butt. It was hard for me to get from where I sat to do my work and chart and do all of that toward a lot of the patients or to some of the nurses. And it was a huge pain, and I hated it. And when I got that onto paper, I realized that the fact is, the layout is what it is. The fact is there's a layout. My thought is it's super frustrating and annoying.

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So once I accepted my situation about that, and I saw the difference between my thoughts and circumstances. I realized Oh, interesting. I didn't think this thought Leave me I wouldn't be so frustrated. Read it. If I radically accepted the situation for what it is, maybe I wouldn't be so frustrated all the time. So again, go back circle your thoughts, from the circumstances from the facts. And I want you to notice all of your thoughts, notice all of the thoughts. And notice how those thoughts make you feel. Do they make you feel frustrated, annoyed, pissed off angry? Well, how are those thoughts making you feel? And the reason why I want you to do that is I want you to get really clear that it's not the circumstance that's causing those feelings. It is your thoughts. Yes, of course, some circumstances make it easier for us to have thoughts that are pleasant and helpful, but not all. But if you've done step one, and you actively chose to be there, then this is part of Step three, you've got to see those thoughts that are causing you to have that stress.

Okay, now, step four. So now that you've seen the thoughts that are causing you to have all those feelings, go on to step four. And what I want you to do in step four, is to actively choose again, if this is something you want to do, you're seeing all of those thoughts on paper. If this is something you want to do, after you see those thoughts, and how those thoughts make you feel, are you still going to choose?

If your answer is yes, then we're going to go on to step number five. But if your answer is no, then you have a choice here. You don't have to keep doing what you're doing. You have a choice. You never have to stay doing what you're doing. And the only reason we sometimes believe we have to is because we're afraid. We're afraid that we might not get another job. We're afraid that this might happen. We're afraid we've never done it before. But what if you weren't afraid? What if it was possible to have a job that you loved? What would you do differently? How would you start looking? What choices would you start making now? Okay, so let's say that you see all those thoughts. They're not great.

They're making you feel feelings that you don't love, but you're still choosing to stay in the job. Okay, so step four, you're still choosing. Now we go on to Step five, if you're still choosing, then what I want you to do is change your thoughts so that you can be more effective. You see those thoughts there? You know, they exist. And if you want to continue to do what you're doing, those thoughts are just gonna get in the way of your effectiveness. You, it's gonna be really hard for you to be awesome at your job if you keep being frustrated or annoyed or angry or upset. Because think about that. Those are all paralyzing emotions, emotions that hold us back. Those are emotions that keep us from doing and living the life we want.

Those are not intentional emotions. Those are things that we think from our amygdala or fear center, not from our prefrontal cortex or higher-order brain. Okay, so let's say, we see the thoughts, we're going to choose to stay in the role. Now step five, how do we become effective in the role, we change our thoughts. So the current thoughts you have, again, are keeping you from being effective, those are causing you to turn on your stress response. When your stress response is turned on, you have cortisol zooming through your body, it's turning off the parts of your brain that you actually need to be effective. It's making your prefrontal cortex less effective, it's making it harder for you to be awesome at what you do.

So what you want to do instead is choose something different. And here are some thoughts that I sometimes use when I'm in these situations, so feel free to borrow them or come up with your own. Number one, this isn't ideal, but it's what I have to work with. And number two, they're doing the best they can. That's a big one for me when I'm working with colleague who I sometimes find a little frustrated or annoying, I just remind myself they're doing the best they can. I mean, we're all sort of doing the best we can right sometimes we own world grace so my thought is there.

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thing because this came up with my client, when we were going through this, she's like, Wait, if I accept everything, if I just let this go, I'm taming down my passion. And this is what I have to say to that, that this again is by no means a passive process, you are not teaming down your passion or your effectiveness at all, you are just showing up in a way that's going to make you more effective. And I'm sorry if I sound preachy here, but let me tell you, I was a social justice activist for many years before I became a physician. And I've been a physician leader for I've been a leader for at least 20 years, a physician leader for the last 10. I've worked in so many circumstances or situations where I didn't love the people that I worked with, I had to deal with a lot of sexist colleagues, I had to deal with sexist administration, I had to deal with under resource to departments where that I was leading, I had to deal

with some colleagues that weren't the most effective. When I was a social justice activist, the same thing.

And I knew that for me to show up and keep doing what I was doing, because I was 100% committed to my community, and to the patients we were serving, just kind of have to just accept the things for what they were and still be effective, was a less passionate hell to the no, I was not less passionate, I was still super passionate. But I knew that if I was angry, or pissed off or upset, I was just causing harm to myself, not to anybody else. And hello, that's not at all what I wanted to do. I don't want to leave every day, leave my job everyday frustrated and upset and stressed out, come home burned out every day. No, thank you, I was gonna do what I did do it super well be in service to my community and my patients. And I was going to do it in a way that didn't cause me harm that, that wasn't causing me to experience symptoms of acute and chronic stress. And I definitely wasn't always like this. When I was a social justice activist. For many years, I was so self righteous, I was so self righteous, I thought that my way was the best way. I thought that giving human rights was the best absolute best thing to do.

And of course, it is Hello, who would argue against that? Who would argue against that, but the way I was showing up wasn't super effective. All I was doing was, you know, firing up my bass, the people that already agreed with what I wanted to do, and 100% Turning off everybody else. So how in the world was I going to be an effective social justice activist when I was so self righteous, super pissed off all the time and angry all the time. And I'm sure you guys know people like that. And what those people do, again, is they create divisions. And you know, there's, there's a place in the world for everybody. If that's who you are, there's a place in the world for that. What I want to ask you is, how does that make you feel? How do you feel when you're when you're like that? Is that who you want to continue to be.

And here's the thing, the last thing I'll leave you with, is what I realized is when I was able to accept the circumstances for what they were, and still choose to be a social justice activist and still choose to be a leader, I was showing up, still super passionate. And I was showing up full of joy. And I was showing up so much more committed and determined to the causes that I was working for, whether that was creating incredible outcomes for my patients, or whether that was going out and organizing when I was a grassroots organizer. And so what I want to leave you with is this, that you can do that too, you can continue to be passionate and effective. And still do what you're doing in a way that doesn't create that stress and harm to your body. That doesn't create the bad outcomes of acute and chronic stress. You can keep doing that. Okay, my friends, follow that five step process if it's helpful for you and go out and change the world be that difference that you want to see. All right, esta la proxima of yours

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Hey, if you love what you're learning, then you've got to check out my free Ultimate Guide to stop people pleasing, where I teach you a simple five step process to stop saying yes. When you really want to say No, you'll be so glad that you did. There's a link to the guide in the show notes. I'll see you next time.