

## 9: Making Character-Based Choices at Work

Your work setting offers constant choices and decisions. When the telephone rings, you may be talking with a demanding, upset, or appreciative customer. In those moments, how you choose to speak and act will reflect your character strengths and weaknesses. **Your choices also affect the reputation of your company or organization and, most importantly, whether the person will do business with you again.** Just as your tone of voice and how you choose to speak and act affects the level of happiness in your home, your choices will affect the level of happiness at your place of work.

Interacting with others challenges you to be your best and gives you growth opportunities as a person. In other words, if we are aware, our relationships with others help us with striving for and achieving excellence. Some situations seem almost designed to encourage our character choices and growth. "... [W]henever we find ourselves being frustrated by something that someone else does or says, the situation is occurring for a specific reason. We attracted it into our world for our growth." (Stacey Hall and Jan Brogniez, *Attracting Perfect Customers, The Power of Strategic Synchronicity*, p. 162)

When you choose to speak in a friendly and respectful manner to customers and coworkers or to listen patiently and with courtesy to a complaining customer, you are practicing character strengths. The same holds true with taking responsibility for resolving workplace difficulties, or responding truthfully and lovingly to someone's need or question. Your words and actions are then part of influencing those around you in a positive direction. **By employing more than one character strength, you can increase your effectiveness in any given situation.**



### Happiness Tool: Pairing Courtesy and Respect

You can experience the effect of pairing courtesy with respect when you follow the instructions below and note the responses of others:

- Go through a day at work without saying “please”, “thank you”, or “you’re welcome” to anyone

- Another day, practice courtesy by saying “please”, “thank you”, and “you’re welcome” at all appropriate moments in your interactions with coworkers and managers
- On yet another day, combine courtesy and respect by saying these phrases and adding words of appreciation for what the other people have done, for their practice of character qualities, or for the excellence of their work; smile to convey your positive attitude
- Assess both your own responses and those of others to the different words and actions

Once you are clear about what words and actions bring about a positive response and benefit, you can continue with practicing them. Be aware, however, that if those you work with are not used to you practicing courtesy and respect, it will take consistency on your part before they recognize that you are sincere.

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As you attempt improving your relationships at work, some of your efforts will go well and some won't. You may be tempted with blaming a coworker for something that happens rather than taking responsibility for your part of the situation. **Remember that you are responsible for your own character choices, words, and actions only and that your behavior does not depend upon the behavior of others.**

### HA-HA(PPY)! Moment



**“Please moan into the phone. A nurse will evaluate your moan to determine if you are too sick to work today or just faking it.”**

## Ah-HA(PPY)! Insights

1. What character choices of mine increase both my coworkers' happiness and my own?

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2. When have I paired courtesy and respect together and achieved a positive outcome?

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3. When have I applied character strengths to make an ethical decision?

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4. Who at work has been a good character example for me?

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5. Do I consider myself a good example to others at work? In what ways?

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6. When is it wiser to focus on simply being an example instead of saying something directly to others?

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7. What can I say and do to influence my coworkers' ability to build character strengths? What do I need to be wise and cautious about in this influence process?

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