

Dealing with Disappointment

Whether it's that you didn't get the job promotion you wanted or that someone didn't come through for you, realize that every single one of us faces challenges at various times. How you deal with these disappointments is what will determine whether you're a confident person in control of your life or simply a victim. It will also affect the sort of leader you want to be.

Disappointment is a way of life in business. You cannot dodge it, you cannot prevent it, but you can choose to deal with it in a productive and successful manner.

Expectations

Disappointment and expectations go together. The greater your expectations, the greater will be your disappointment if things do not pan out the way you plan or expect. So, the first line of action is to watch out for unrealistic expectations. It is all right to hope and to dream, but to expect miracles will only add to your disappointment.

Monitor your Emotions

One way to deal with disappointment is to check how you are feeling.

Are you getting angry? Or, are you blaming yourself? Do you immediately put yourself down with negative thoughts like "I don't really deserve a promotion".

These kinds of reactions will only make the situation worse for yourself. Once you get stuck feeling sorry for yourself it's harder to find the way forward.

It can help to take a step back from the original issue and ask yourself, "What do I really want?"

For example, if you didn't get the promotion you applied for, ask yourself why you wanted it in the first place:

- Were you looking for a new challenge?
- Was it the increase in pay?
- Was it to get a "change of scenery?"

Once you have taken a step back you have a chance to think about your answers:

- The initial disappointment may actually turn out to be a gift which saves you from much greater grief when you realize it wouldn't have been a good thing. Or you end up getting something much better.
- If you really want new challenges, then you can start looking for another job. The promotion you sought might not have provided the challenges you really
- wanted anyway. You still have lots of other options. Start identifying those options. Use the disappointment to start thinking out of the box.

- Perhaps you didn't get the job because you didn't have all the necessary qualifications. There's your cue for action! Seek out courses or ask for more training. This can give you a new purpose, a new sense of direction and may embolden you to think of options that had not occurred to you before. Focus on moving forward with your life instead of feeling stuck and down. Remember what Confucius said: "Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness".
- Or did you apply for the job simply because it was available? It's easy to get caught up in reacting to events when they appear. It's important to be able to judge opportunities as to whether they will lead you in the direction you really want to go or if they're interesting but ultimately a distraction.
- Before blaming everyone else, analyze what went wrong. Remember that insanity is often described as repeating the same action and expecting a different outcome. The causes of failure are as important as the reasons for success.
- With your team, your employees and your business associates, it is OK to admit you are disappointed, but it is not good to dwell on it or allow negative emotions to impact your thinking. Listen to your emotions, understand where they are coming from and then manage them.
- There is nothing like self-pity to undermine your leadership. Emotions are contagious and you will pass on the negativity will contaminate the others faster than any virus.

To be a successful leader you need to be a realist; you have to know that you don't have all the answers and that not everything will turn out well all the time. This means that you have to temper foresight with caution and the understanding that events and individuals beyond your control can bring about disappointment.

A good way to minimize the power of disappointment over your behavior is to make sure that your expectations are realistic and that they are combined with a back up strategy, adequate resources, plan of action, and knowing where to get help when it is needed.

Dealing with disappointment and managing the ensuing emotions, will help you grow and remind you of your priorities. You can use it to become more emotionally intelligent. Sometimes, it can even stop you from going down the wrong path because you take the time to remind yourself of where your priorities really lie.

After you have become aware of what you are feeling and why you have these feelings, recovery is basically a decision. You can choose to forgive yourself and/or others and to focus on more positive emotions. The decision won't necessarily remove negative feelings, but if you persist, it will eventually bring healing and release.

Disappointment affects everyone from babies up to old people and it is important to deal with it in a constructive manner. When struggling with a particularly big disappointment, remember to be compassionate with yourself. This is essential for healing. Dealing with disappointment is a process, and you will face many disappointments in life. Successful people are those who learn to deal with it. The "bottom line" is that it's entirely your choice as to what you choose to focus on.