

ARE YOU A **Do You Suffer From Job Envy?**

person who suffers from job envy? Do you covet somebody else's career and professional status, perhaps thinking they're things that would have come your way—had you only the luck, the looks, the breaks, or the smarts they've had?

Now, of course, you probably wouldn't acknowledge such feelings even if you had them, right? Most people wouldn't. Yet, from time to time, I run across people who will openly acknowledge not just mild envy of others, but actually smoldering resentment or even open hostility about what others have achieved or what others just dream of doing.

I'm always a little taken aback when I hear people express such feelings. Often, the comments are shared in an almost unconscious kind of way, as if the person is inviting me to judge her in whatever harsh light I might choose. I always resist, not wanting to judge others' motives or challenges.

Still, as a career advisor, I find that a long pattern of such comments sometimes reveals why, in fact, people's career paths haven't gone the way they might have liked. It also frequently indicates clear-cut actions a person *could* take to change his situation (make it more to his liking), but he probably won't.

There are a couple of reasons people stay stuck. One, it's too much fun to complain. Some people exert a lot of emotional and psychic energy complaining about things they don't have, haven't achieved, and probably won't ever achieve. Trying to help such people make choices to turn their jobs or career situations around is a little like trying to stop a buzz saw with your bare hands; you're only going to bloody yourself in the process and create a big mess. Believe me, I found that out early in my career as a job counselor.

Two, their point in complaining isn't to get help but to reinforce in their own heads how much of a victim they are. I'm sure you've met people who regularly drop their

emotional baggage at your feet or doorstep and expect you to pick it up and claim it as your own. Whenever I meet somebody like that in a job counseling situation, I almost immediately suggest that personal therapy with a licensed psychotherapist should be part of the job counseling.

Now then, let's bring the discussion of "job envy," as I call it, back to you, your job and career, and your feelings about what you've achieved or feel you're worth.

It's OK to envy others a bit at times. Occasional mild envy is natural and part of normal, everyday workplace competition. We all look for stan-

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dards by which to judge our own work, and sometimes our immediate peers and co-workers are the most appropriate people against whom to judge our own performance.

Be careful, however, about becoming so jealous or envious of others that it diminishes, in your mind, the attributes or qualities you possess that others perhaps do not have. I find that many people who feel disempowered around issues of job and career tend to denigrate themselves as often as they put other people on pedestals.

Don't let envy toward others make you feel powerless or inadequate. Envy is a powerful emotion that, if not channeled properly, can make your life miserable—even a living hell. Don't allow it to incapacitate you or make you feel you're not worthy

or entitled to things. Too many people make the mistake of affirming self-limitation.

Recognize that accomplishment has more to do with attitude than talent. Being an accomplished person has more to do with attitude and temperament than raw talent. Calvin Coolidge was right when he observed that success has more to do with perseverance and determination. If you can bring those qualities to bear, you can turn your envy into the energy necessary to achieve anything you want to.

Harness the power of envy to help you achieve your goals. Do you feel somebody else has outpaced you at work? Then, ask yourself: "What can I do to catch up?" Did somebody else at work get a plum assignment because of a new skill she acquired? What's stopping you from acquiring that same skill? Is somebody you know at work moving forward to write that book you've always talked about writing but never pursued? Well then, it's time for you to put together a book proposal, go out and find an agent, and be on your way to fame and fortune!

Remember: Envy is perhaps the least useful of emotions, unless you use it as a springboard to help you achieve what you want for yourself. Fail to act on the feelings that envy brings to the surface and it's likely to make you feel powerless in the short-term and resentful in the long-term. Neither is a recipe for personal happiness—or professional success.

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