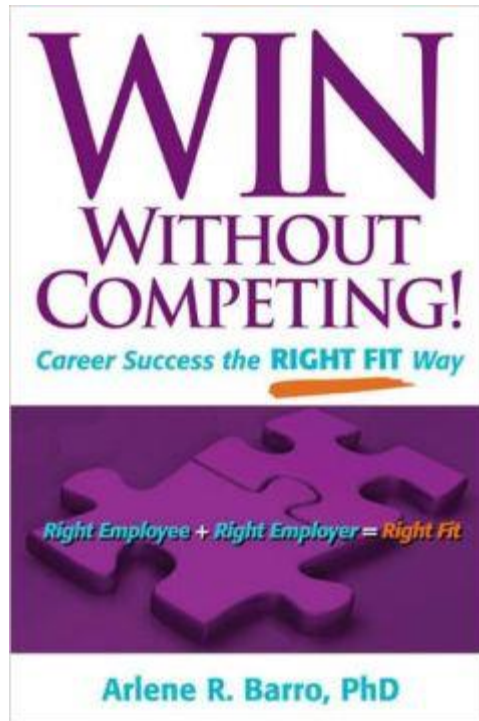


Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene – Fear of Assertiveness Causes Stress



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By Dr. Arlene Barro

Prolonged fear of assertiveness makes you powerless, dismantling your inner urgency response. Other people will create external urgency to ignite your response, encouraging dependency. Stress accelerates, as outside pressure intensifies. What should you do?

Find and Face Fear

Fear is often rooted in childhood. A parent's harsh remark could, for example, destroy a sensitive child who suddenly stops speaking up, becomes less visible, to avoid hearing more comments. Another child might hide their creative pursuits. Even though responses vary among children, to similar parental comments, fear has been planted which contributes to feelings of insecurity.

Bullying is another instigator of fear for children, teenagers, and adults. In theory, the schools should be taking an active role in spearheading anti-bullying programs for primary and secondary schools. Yes, they have these programs, but the research indicates that, generally speaking, they are not effective.

Stuart Wolpert reports in *Successful anti-bullying program, identified by UCLA*, www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news, Feb.3, 2016, the Finland Study. They launched their KiVa program for 7,000 students in 77 elementary schools. They found that sixth-graders improved their self-esteem and reduced their depression, after participating in KiVa. The overall success of the program led to the launch of KiVa throughout Finland.

The United States is evaluating KiVa to determine whether we should implement it here. A significant part of the program focuses on teaching children to be kind to each other. Social media should review KiVa and champion healthy interactions online rather than condone bullying, which also leads to suicide.

Stand Up to Bullies

Former Special Counsel Robert Mueller, a prominent attorney, was bullied into testifying on July 24, 2019 at the House Judiciary Committee Hearing, chaired by Jerry Nadler.

Why? Mueller was the administrator of an investigation on obstruction and collusion. We know that he did not write the report which bears his name. He rarely attended the proceedings. He made it clear, before he appeared to testify, that he was an unwilling witness whose report should be his final words. Nevertheless, Mueller appeared to testify, even though Attorney General Barr, his best friend, said he did not need to do that.

Mueller was right. He knew that he should not testify. His words and behavior showed signs of dementia. When he was asked to identify the president who appointed him attorney general in Massachusetts, he said George H.W. Bush instead of Ronald Reagan. This is only one example. You be the judge.

Here are the symptoms of dementia, according to www.Alz.org, the leading site for alzheimer's and dementia: Issues with memory, communication and language, focusing and paying attention, and visual perception. Mueller exhibited all these symptoms. Does he have dementia? We do not know the extent of mental impairment for the four functions and other critical information needed to make a diagnosis. If we find out that he does, then we can question why he was ever appointed the special counsel. What impact will it have on the reliability and validity of the investigation, report, and testimony if Mueller has dementia?

Mueller was humiliated. His face revealed anxiety, fear and fragility. It is very sad that he ended a stellar career with a testimony which calls into question his competence. Do not do what Mueller did. When you know that you should not do something, do not do it. Mueller gave his power to Nadler. He could not stand up to him. Remember Mueller when you are fearful of asserting yourself.

Say Success Self-Talk

I am fortunate. My father spoke to me positively, when I was growing up. He set the stage for my success. I hear his voice in my self-talk.

All day long we talk to ourselves. That is self-talk, known as our inner voice, which starts in preschool. Unfortunately, many young children are engaging in negative self-talk which they probably learned from their parents. This could be a red flag signaling a troubled child. If you recognize that your parents' advice or other adult guidance has a negative influence on your behavior, you need to recognize that. To be successful, think positively about yourself and others, avoiding making erroneous assumptions. This will help you become more assertive, not fearing a negative response when you speak up.

What about those who do not hear any guidance? Some of my clients are in this situation. They deleted parental advice unconsciously. Perhaps they were angry. The omission of positive adult guidance, makes it more difficult to make decisions and often fosters insecurity, resulting in stress. What did I do? I created a new inner voice. They naturally start incorporating my voice, as we continue our ongoing conversations, which builds self-confidence, decreases indecision, and encourages speaking up.

For those clients who have children, especially young children, they consciously start transmitting my advice to them so that they can hear positive self-talk and act on it. Because I consult nationwide by phone, I also talk with the children briefly, on the same call. They are eager to learn. Watch how positive self-talk can open the door to success.

To become more assertive and less stressed, be sure to read these columns: *Erroneous Assumptions Cause Stress*, April 15, 2016, *Indecision Causes Stress*, May 13, 2016, *Fear Causes Stress*, July 22, 2016, *Not Speaking Up Causes Stress*, August 19, 2016, *Parenting Causes Stress*, October 19, 2016, and *Anxiety Producing Self-Talk Causes Stress*, March 7, 2019.

Master these strategic steps to stardom and apply them to every aspect of your life. Thrive!

Questions about this column? Email drbarro@barroglobal.com.

Dr. Arlene Barro, the creator of the Right Fit Method, is a UCLA-trained behavioral educational psychologist and professional speaker. She is the author of "WIN Without Competing!," a business, career, and personal strategist focusing on success and stress. Founder/CEO of barro global search, inc. at 10940 Wilshire Boulevard, Westwood. Episodes of her radio show are available at www.winwithoutcompeting.com.