

# Staff Development Services

building strong businesses one employee at a time.

**Tolerance -- The eleventh in our series discussing the 13 job related character tendencies.**

If you missed, or would like to review, the first ten articles of this series please click on the newsletter of your choice. These newsletters cover Emotional Energy (18), Stress (19), Self-Esteem (20), Optimism (21), Work (22), Detail (23), Change (24), Courage (25), Direction (26) and Assertiveness (27).

**Tolerance:** a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one's own. Can you imagine a world in which everyone possessed this character trait? If every person had a 'fair, objective, and permissive attitude towards opinions and practices that differ from one's own', would there ever be a war or any kind of conflict? Tolerance is something that everyone needs to aspire to, but could it be possible to be too tolerant?

Well, you have probably heard the phrase, "tolerant to a fault" and, indeed, being too tolerant is not a healthy behavior. In the Simmons Personal Survey, we often see a hiring candidate who has an extremely high level of tolerance and, more often than not, this person is also going to have an unreasonable amount of stress in his/her life. So, how could having so much of such a good trait create stress for someone?

The overly tolerant person has a need to get along with everyone, but how realistic is that? Can a person 'grow' or be a productive part of society if they always go along with everyone else's ideas? In order to get along, the overly tolerant person is willing to control their anger in order to 'keep the peace'. While this person may be very pleasant to work with, they can actually be difficult to manage because of their reluctance to openly discuss an issue that is bothering them. It is very difficult for overly tolerant people to be in control of their lives and it is very easy for others to take advantage of them.

Being unable to openly to express anger and, therefore, being unable to resolve issues is not a good thing. Over time, internalizing anger will increase the amount of stress a person is feeling to the point that it manifests itself in the form of a health issue. Or, one day, the 'dam could burst' and a pleasant, easygoing person 'lets go' with either a verbal or physical flood of anger. This kind of behavior is often referred to as "going postal". Others may not even realize that the person is angry but there will usually be some seminal event that triggers the anger to the point that the person can no longer control their emotions. By not being able to discuss things that upset them, it becomes harder for coworkers or family members to understand them or to help them resolve issues that are upsetting them.

On the other end of the spectrum is the intolerant person. The intolerant person lacks patience or understanding and, quite often, they are also very assertive people so others will usually know 'where they stand'. However, some may learn to 'cut a wide path' around this kind of person, knowing that they have a 'short fuse'. But, occasionally you see the intolerant person who is not very assertive so others may witness his/her anger through their actions rather than by their words, which makes them a little harder 'to read'.

In a perfect world, everyone would have a fairly moderate level of tolerance which would enable a person to be appropriately understanding of others' actions without letting them take advantage of him/her. But, with that being said, having some tolerance is very important in meeting the demands of some jobs whereas being somewhat intolerant is more appropriate for other roles. A person's level of tolerance is one of the key things to consider when trying to **match the right person to the right job**.

Any kind of customer service role requires a certain level of tolerance. Being a patient listener and capable of making someone feel that he/she is valued is very beneficial when dealing with the public. A good customer service person can be 'worth their weight in gold' to a company. But, what about the person who is expected to be in charge of running a profitable department or organization? Can they afford to tolerate poorly performing employees who consistently fail to 'hold up their end of the bargain'? Can they keep their frustrations to themselves rather than addressing the issues that is pulling a company down? If they did, then they would not be doing their job.

It is easy to upset those with little tolerance and to disappoint those with too much but, when dealing with people, one should always remember the following saying by German philosopher, Andrew Nietzsche "You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist."

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Health and Happiness!

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