

Enough is Enough!

“When do you know when enough is enough? I don’t want to make the wrong decision or appear insensitive, but I also don’t want things to continue like they are.”

“I’ve had it with her chronic complaining! She’s got to show up at work with a better attitude or find another job. Enough is enough. I’m tired of putting up with it.”

“Enough is enough! Our business is being hurt by unnecessary policies, procedures and administrative red tape. We’ve got to find a better way to get things done.”

BY KAY CANNON | Last week, in one day, I found myself coaching three different people who were wrestling with the concept of “enough is enough.” At the end of the day, I relaxed into my comfy couch, picked up the newspaper and began to read an article. The third sentence said, “There comes a time when enough is enough.” Yikes! There it was ... AGAIN! The message was clear. Enough is enough!

What are you putting up with at work, at home or about yourself? What issue is slowly pushing you to the point where you are no longer willing to ignore it or dance around it? Be truthful. Odds are that there

is at least one thing – and most likely a lot more – that is slowly getting under your skin. It might be a whiny employee, the mountain of papers piled on your desk or the extra 10 pounds you gained last winter. Whatever it is, it is quietly wrapping its tentacles around you and slowly strangling the life out of you ... and doing it with your permission and help!

When we finally decide – out of desperation, frustration, irritation or exasperation – that we’ve had enough, our usual response is to take dramatic and decisive action. Sometimes even drastic action. We issue ultimatums. We rant and rave. We go on crash diets. We delete hundreds of unread e-mails. We want action. We want results. We want things to be different,

and we want it yesterday. We want relief from the slow strangling!

Like the tiny pebble in our shoe rubbing a blister on a long walk, it’s usually a small irritation that finally pushes us over the edge. In fact, it’s usually so small, commonplace and insignificant that other people don’t even notice it. It’s that behavior, comment or attitude that you have overlooked, ignored and tolerated a hundred times. It’s that performance issue you’ve patiently given the benefit of the doubt.

When we reach the point of enough is enough, our sudden outburst of impatience, anger or drastic action surprises the people around us. We stop dead in our tracks, rip off our shoe and throw it (and the offending pebble) across the field. Our reaction seems

to come from out of the blue or, at the very least, seems to be blown out of proportion to the circumstances. Looking at our reaction, our co-workers may question our decision-making skills or our credibility as a leader. And rightly so. When our actions and decisions come from a place of pent-up emotion, we don't act or speak from a place of our best wisdom.

What can you do to avoid getting to the point of enough is enough? Follow these five steps.

1. Pay attention to your reactions.

You can't change what you don't see. Look at the situations, behaviors or comments that irritate you. If it's a small irritation today, it's only going to become a bigger irritation over time. Take the pebble out of your shoe as soon as you feel it. Don't wait until you are limping with a big blister. Make a list of everything that you are tolerating and create a plan to eliminate each one. You'll be surprised at how much more energy you will have.

2. Get clear on your rules for giving someone "the benefit of the doubt."

We've been taught to believe that patience is a virtue. Patience, within reason, is a healthy thing. Patience, taken to an extreme is destructive. When we overlook, justify or dismiss someone else's behavior that is troubling to us, we are choosing to ignore important signals from our own head and heart. We are doubting ourselves. Doubt creates fear. Fear and doubt erode our peace of mind. It's a lot easier to talk with someone about a troubling issue when it's just a small question in your head and heart. What conversations do you need to have?

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3. Know and honor your personal boundaries.

Like loving fences, we all have personal boundaries that protect, nurture and sustain our well-being. These boundaries are designed to help us be our best. When someone or something violates one of our boundaries, we become defensive and unable to be our best. To protect our well-being, we must either stop the violation or take ourselves out of the dangerous situation. What are your personal boundaries? What issues do you feel passionately about? What do you expect from those around you? Honesty? Respect? What kind of working environment do you need and want?

4. Own your responsibility, but nothing more.

Have you ever found yourself thinking or saying, "If I just try a little harder, I can make this situation work"? This kind of thinking can be very dangerous. The only thing we actually control is ourselves.

Regardless of how hard we try and how wonderful our intentions, we do not control the emotions or behaviors of other people. We may influence other people, but we can't make them do or say anything. Once you've done what you can do to influence the situation, the only thing left is for you to adapt to the situation or leave it. Many times we stay in bad situations too long because we're afraid of looking like a failure or a quitter. Be responsible for your own thinking, feeling and acting. And know when you've done all that you can do and it's time to walk away.

5. Be crystal clear on your expectations and the expectations of others.

There is nothing more dangerous and destructive than unclear and unstated expectations. Don't make other people guess at what you need and want from them to be happy as a person, a co-worker or a boss. Get clear on it for yourself and then let other people know. And don't manage or lead other people by guessing what they need from you to be their best. Ask them. When we mistakenly believe the folks around us know what we expect from them, we are setting ourselves – and them – up for nasty surprises. And we all know that a nasty surprise can quickly morph into a quagmire of confusion, irritation and frustration.

You don't have to put up with the things that are slowly and quietly strangling you. Enough is enough! ■

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