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Chairperson's Corner

The Journey to Self-Improvement

By Olga Jacobs

Hello! I'm Olga, the new chair of the Management and Personal Development Section Council. I am super excited to be writing this column. But, now the hard part... what do I write about? What words of wisdom can I share? How can I inspire?

Too lofty. I am just a regular Joe (Josephine?) Actuary. I haven't written any books on management or personal development. I don't manage a team of 200 actuaries. I don't have thrilling success stories to share. Why listen to me? I don't purport to be an expert. Truth be told, I'm searching for someone else's words of wisdom to inspire and change me! Are there learnings and lessons to be shared from my tumbings down the road? Gather alongside and we'll venture together on a quest for personal and professional development. Ready? Here we go....

Let's begin with a personal story. I recently suffered some disappointment at work when I didn't get a promotion that I really coveted. I found myself going through a range of emotions and it reminded me of the five stages of grief. I was in shock. I was angry. I was ready to make a trade. I was sad. And then I said, "Stop wallowing and move on." I accepted it.

So now the ball is in my court. What am I going to do? I need to continue my journey of professional growth. I had hoped the new role would provide such an opportunity. Since it didn't, I needed to find new opportunities on my own.

First step, a physical change. I got back into my groove with an exercise regime to lose some weight. Days filled with back-to-back meetings, often double-booked, from 8 am to 5 pm without the time to eat lunch or grab a glass of water and nights filled with email did little to help me acquire a new role. However, it did provide some extra pounds as I exchanged work time for healthy eating and exercise. Strike a chord with any of you?

OK, that takes care of the physical me....now the psychology....what was missing in me? Unfortunately, I never got the feedback on my lack of qualifications for the promotion, so I need to find out the areas I need to strengthen on my own.

Therefore, with this specific example of a personal growth challenge for me, I am going to use this column to share my development journey with you. Learn from and avoid my mistakes. Learn about tools that I use to discover my strengths and weaknesses. Learn about how to motivate yourself to change. Learn about how to find opportunities for professional and personal growth.

As I share my story, I'd love to hear from you. Am I on the right track? Any advice? Do you have a professional growth journey that you want to share?

Feel free to reach me at olga_jacobs@uhc.com. And wish me luck! ●

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