



SUCCESS IS A SIDE EFFECT: Leadership, Relationships, and Selective Amnesia

By Monica “Dr. mOe” Anderson, D.D.S.

Introduction

Are you enough?

Are you kind enough? Assertive enough? Pretty enough? Accomplished enough? Many women struggle with these questions every day. Ultimately, we are wondering if we have a meaningful existence, whether there is a point to the endless challenges in our personal and professional lives. We are encouraged to do “whatever it takes” to become a success. But what exactly does that mean? What is success?

Perhaps you’re recalling the accomplishments of elite female leaders in corporate America such as Shonda Rhimes, executive producer, Sheryl Sandberg, CEO of Facebook, or Sara Blakely, founder and CEO of Spanx as examples of genuine change agents. If so, I challenge that restrictive “short list” and encourage you to reexamine your definition of success. Women currently hold about 4 percent of the Fortune 500 CEO positions. If only women in comparable positions define success, then 96 percent of us are unsuccessful, or we simply possess incalculable influence that doesn’t make headlines 96 percent of the time.

We matter.

Powerful female leaders are everywhere: running small businesses, fundraising for nonprofit organizations, inventing, competing, and raising families. The same strategies used for success, such as networking and managing human resources, are necessary to turn effort into

positive outcomes regardless of one's title. Likewise, the same emotions, like disappointment and anxiety, accompany a bad assessment from your manager or your mother-in-law. Consider the fact that it costs up to a quarter of a million dollars to raise a child in the United States! If you have four children, that is potentially a million-dollar investment. It takes a fiscally responsible leader to manage financial resources and keep a budget balanced anywhere.

This book is for all the unheralded leaders who must survive, and even thrive, in a world where Cinderella's feet hurt and Sleeping Beauty gets fired for frequent tardiness. What I know for sure is that the women whom the world admires for their inner beauty, confidence, and competence were not born that way; *they were forged*. And in the process, they changed the lives of everyone around them.

We all have the potential, the duty, and the power to lead in our chosen fields. And, ultimately, the choices we make at each intersection of our personal journey, not the title on a business card, determine whether or not we are successful.

Are you enough?

Yes, you are more than enough.

MONICA F. ANDERSON

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Lesson Two: Be Fierce

Wise and fearless leaders take counsel from everyone. The cook and the immediate past president both have valuable life experiences that can strengthen the foundation of your success. However, they may also have an axe to grind, so wise leaders follow the number one rule of survival—Keep Some Secrets! Being cautious and seeking life-balance are not mutually exclusive, so it's important to delegate or discreetly “Dial 911” to a loyal, trustworthy friend *before* you become overwhelmed. And, even fearless leaders may selectively exhibit vulnerability. Displaying soft character traits, such as humility and compassion, deter the animosity of the insecure.

Attitude Checkup

Women who display any emotion are usually portrayed as whiny or bitchy. It doesn't matter if they have a legitimate right to be whiny bitches; no one hears the content, just the tone. Successful leaders often adopt a poker face, a poker voice, and a poker body. What does that mean? It means that when they speak, they control the tone of their voice, the pace of their words, and the content of their remarks so that it is difficult to gauge what they are thinking. This gives them a distinct advantage in the high-stakes politics of the workplace because others cannot easily manipulate their reactions. It makes them appear more powerful and superior to ordinary people. Admittedly, acquiring these skills takes patience and practice, but it is well worth the effort.

These are survival skills every savvy politician has mastered. Watch the debates and interviews during any election year. The candidates remain calm in the face of protestors, hecklers, vicious personal attacks, and defeat. These people are human. You know that they are hurt and angered, yet they rarely, if ever, display these emotions.

In the bestseller *The Forty-Eight Laws of Power*, Robert Greene asserts, "An emotional response to a situation is the single greatest barrier to power, a mistake that will cost you a lot more than any temporary satisfaction you might gain by expressing your feelings. Emotions cloud reason, and if you cannot see the situation clearly, you cannot prepare and respond to it with any degree of control."

All of us know at least one drama queen or drama king. These people love to yell and

make a scene when they're offended. While all of that screaming might make them feel better in the short term, in the long term it does nothing for their careers or their relationships. Seriously, how often can you give someone a piece of your mind before you run out of brain?

Screaming says more about you than the person you are attacking.

However, showing no emotion is not the same as feeling no emotion. Don't close your heart unless it's temporarily under reconstruction. Selfishness, cynicism, and sarcasm are also negative displays of emotion. Additionally, they are symptoms of a more serious disorder anthropologist Ashley Montague termed "psychosclerosis" or hardening of the attitude. Physicians prescribe medication for arteriosclerosis, also known as hardening of the arteries. Left untreated, arteriosclerosis may lead to physical death. It's equally important for you to rid yourself of psychosclerosis because it inhibits your ability to think strategically, which may result in your professional death. You must use your emotional intelligence: that gut feeling that tells you when to appear maternal and when to appear majestic. The important thing is to act with more purpose than passion.

Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, is a perfect example of grace under pressure. She was accused of everything from not being black enough (whatever that means) to having an illicit love affair with the 43rd President of the United States of America. These are harsh allegations against a very accomplished, intelligent woman. It is conceivable that these rumors hurt her feelings. Our natural reaction when we're hurt is to lash out at our critics. As the saying

goes, “hurt people, hurt people.” Yet, Secretary Rice never publicly lost her temper refuting these claims. In fact, she barely addressed them. She kept her focus on her goal of doing the best job she could as a member of the president’s cabinet. When the rumors die their natural death, you will be remembered for what you accomplished, not what others said about you.

The workplace relationship is like any other relationship you may have, whether as a parent, girlfriend, or wife. You must constantly assess the situation you’re facing and decide the appropriate action for that moment. It may be a pat on the back. It may be a kick in the butt. It must always be in the best interest of everyone you value, including...no, especially, YOU.

Keep Some Secrets

The greatest assets you own are your ideas. You must protect your priceless intellectual property at all times. Seek counsel, take good advice, but ***keep some secrets*** (especially at work.) Like church, work is not a building; it’s the role you play among the people accompanying you. The surroundings don’t matter. If you’re with a colleague, a potential colleague, or a former colleague, you are working. It’s unimportant whether you’re in a boardroom, at happy hour, at the company picnic, or at the conference hotel’s indoor pool; never let your guard down. Don’t drink too much or say anything you don’t want broadcast on the world news, Tweeted, or posted. Even better, imagine you’re on Ustream live video 24/7, and all the world is watching. Govern yourself accordingly. Telling the truth does not mean telling everything you know.

Be assured, someone wants your position or simply doesn’t want you to have it. I don’t know why. Some people are crazy. They lie awake nights imagining ways to sabotage you... just

because. As working women, we are constantly competing, and America loves winners. Win-win (as in I benefit and you benefit, so everyone is happy) sounds sweet, and it's great for customer service, but not for keeping your job, keeping your partner, or growing your business.

True, you cannot operate in a vacuum. You must interact with others in order to plan, collaborate on projects, and try to take over the world, or, at least, the bowling league brackets. Just be very selective about when and where you share your best ideas and resources. Don't brainstorm about your invention with everyone at bingo or save your revolutionary process on a shared computer, even in an "invisible" file. Don't leave important documents on or in your unlocked desk. Don't share your personal finance issues. Don't talk about your relationships or your marriage in a way that exposes the challenges you face or the good fortune your family experiences. Don't give your password to anyone at the office, including your BFF. Human resource professionals frown on that practice, and there are few feelings worse than having a friend slowly turn on you like a Ferris wheel at the state fair.

The greatest assets you own are your ideas.

Share what you must to ensure everyone's success because that is team play at its finest, and we all benefit from consistent contribution to process improvements. But never divulge more to your peers than you receive until they have proven they can be trusted. It's important to notice if they never share important ideas/information with you without prompting. Do they always seem to wait until after you've gotten the information from another source to fill in the blanks with their superior knowledge of the situation? Why didn't they share before? Hmmm? Is that a pattern?

Of course, this principle doesn't apply to your boss or partner. Never, ever surprise your boss, except when you are under budget and ahead of schedule. In fact, once or twice a month, send a brief update to your boss on the positive progress of you and your team members. Do the same thing at home, too. Keep the most important people in your life well-informed about what you are doing and why.

Use your instinct, experience, and office gossip to determine who is the least trustworthy among your acquaintances. Don't supply gossip; just listen to it. Pay close attention to the person who attributes every negative comment to someone else. This person is baiting you to say something he or she can repeat as well. Watch everyone's behavior. People who steal time by clocking in late or leaving early every day will steal your ideas. Minutes are money. They are stealing from the employer and they might steal from you as well.

This strategy is also applicable to dealing with technicians, salespeople, and others with whom you negotiate, especially males. Have you ever noticed how good men are at answering only the part(s) of your question they feel like addressing? For example, in the middle of writing this book, I realized that someone with whom I contracted to do a job had not followed up as promised. This is the verbatim text exchange with that party:

12:04 p.m. (Dr. mOe) "I've inquired about when you can meet in person with my business partner and me twice. You have not responded; it seems difficult to reach you. Do you have another job? "

1:46 p.m. (Response) "Where are you trying to reach me? This number or e-mail is best."

Notice he did not say that he didn't get my previous communications. He did not

apologize for not responding to them. He did not apologize for taking almost two hours to respond to my text, allegedly “the best” way to reach him. Most women would have gone to great lengths to explain to me why they didn’t respond sooner. The man simply ignored the question, possibly because he was busy on his other job or (more likely) he didn’t feel the need to divulge that information.

Do not assume that people didn’t hear you, didn’t read all of your e-mail bullets, or didn’t understand you. Maybe they are just keeping secrets of their own. Instead of becoming frustrated and repeating yourself over and over, recognize this type of communication as an intentional action to keep you off balance. My response to him—the following day—was a simple “Okay. Thanks.” He called a few minutes later, and he has been much more responsive to me since he correctly translated that terse response as “You are about to lose a client.” Sometimes less really is more.

This sounds harsh, but reality is harsh. The minute you forget this critical principle, you invite a power struggle. Even the legendary Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra VII, known equally for her guile and beauty, was betrayed by her baby brother and forced into exile. Her alliance with Julius Caesar (and others) restored her status. Now, this is a historic lesson in strategic partnerships. The lesson: love thy neighbor but watch your purse.

Call 911

If you want that R-E-S-P-E-C-T that Aretha Franklin croons about, learn to D-E-L-E-G-A-T-E. The only thing worse than someone who thinks she knows everything is someone who

thinks she can do everything. Humans have different skills, titles, and temperaments for a reason. Your team may be as small as a supportive partner or a loving parent or it may be as large as Martha Stewart's enterprise, but it's rare that anyone does anything spectacular without any help.

Great endeavors require a focused leader. It is hard to focus on the big picture and attend to every detail. Allow others to help you. Let your assistants assist. Make your accountant accountable. Give the people supporting you an opportunity to think and work at *your* pace, but with their *own* rhythm. Students get "progress reports" to take home every six weeks or so. Teachers don't call parents after every quiz or daily grade with an update. Imagine how distracting that would become.

Yet, some people are constantly badgering the people on their team about their progress on a project and then complaining about their lack of progress. Or they have nine million fruitless meetings to talk about what hasn't been done. Try allowing the people who work around or under you to give you scheduled updates versus constantly having to report every action or clear every decision with you. That is too time consuming for both of you, and it indicates an obsession with exerting control...or a poor hiring decision.

Different people require different levels of supervision. New employees naturally need more instruction than someone who has been with your company for many years. However, everyone must reach the point, eventually, where you don't need to direct their actions like an air traffic controller, or they should be grounded for good. If your home or business falls apart every time you are away, that means you are a poor leader, not a good one. Good leaders, like good parents, prepare others to operate independently. I'm not suggesting things aren't better when you're around, but I am saying it shouldn't be a hot mess when you get back.

You can do it all, but you can't do it all well. Learn to delegate.

In dentistry, staff members require "direct" or "indirect" supervision. Dental hygienists, who have two years or more of advanced education after high school, can legally provide treatment on a patient without the dentist being present in the operatory. This is an example of indirect supervision. Because hygienists actually produce income for a dental practice while the dentist is busy in another operatory, they are very valuable to a practice. Some hygienists make almost as much as a recently licensed dentist! Your goal, as you expand your personal empire, must be to employ people who produce income for your enterprise whether you are present or not. Micromanaging takes your energy away from growth and places it on maintenance.

Don't **do** the small stuff if you can find a competent person to do it. A wise woman with a growing business or family realizes that she is not the only one who can answer the phone and pay bills. She searches for a capable assistant until she finds just the right person, or she will be forever limited to the number of hours she can go without sleep.

Delegating at home is as important as delegating at the office. If we want our sons and daughters, our younger brothers and sisters, or our acquaintances to have balanced lives that include work, rest, and play, then we need to role-model that balance. If your actions say you can do everything at anytime without any help, don't complain when everyone is happy to let you be Batwoman and save the world. Why doesn't Batwoman have a sidekick anyway, like Batman, Robinson Crusoe, and the Lone Ranger? And why is she wearing a swimsuit and boots? What kind of crime-fighting attire is that? Superman wore flats and Batman had a butler. Batwoman is

fictional. That's why. Keep it real.

You can do it all but you cannot do it all well. Someone or something will suffer.

We know kids don't arrive in the delivery room lazy and spoiled. Selfish, yes, but not lazy. The common conception is that we manufacture lazy children. Too often, women (and men) benignly spoil their sons and daughters. Have you made a conscious effort to train your child/grandchild/mentee to be responsible and compassionate? Does he or she know how to cook, clean, and wash? Can your daughter shop for groceries on a budget, balance a checkbook, and get her tires rotated every five thousand miles? Are you teaching your children life skills that will sustain them, with or without a partner?

If not, why not? Doing everything for them or paying someone to do everything for them is not a gift. It's a handicap. The result is lazy men whose wives resent the mothers-in-law they blame for their husbands' behavior and lazy women who can't handle adversity. Don't set youths up for failure in future relationships because they believe one person is supposed to do all the work, like their "mom" did for them. In the words of Phyllis Diller, "Housework won't kill you, but why take the chance?"

Delegate fairly and regularly. Everyone benefits.

Cry a Little

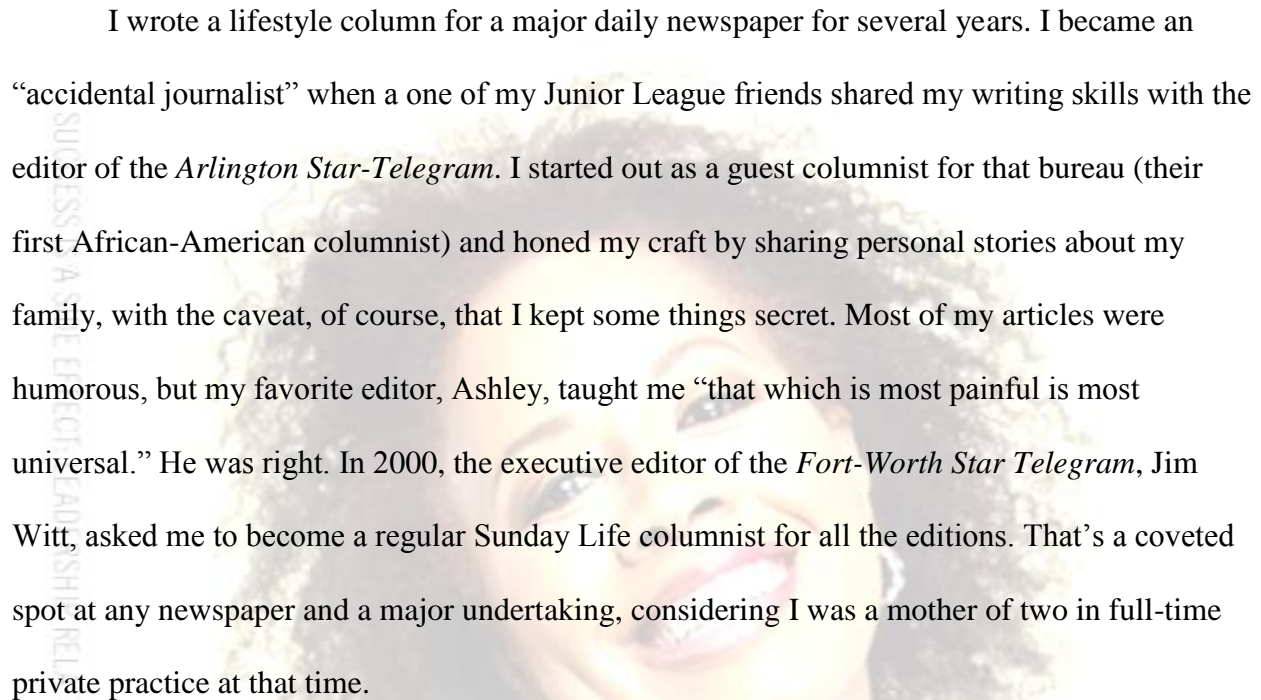
Remember the commercial admonishing, "Never let 'em see you sweat"? Actually, it's okay to let them see you sweat—a little. Selectively showing a lack of strength is not the same as

revealing your weaknesses. Occasionally admitting you are not as perfect as you might seem is endearing to people. It makes you seem human. It often turns (some of) your critics into supporters, especially if you allow them to give you advice for improvement.

When we hear successful people like Nicole Kidman, an Academy Award and Golden Globe winning actress, admit she becomes extremely nervous during public appearances, or hear *American Idol* winner Fantasia say she struggled to put food on the table as a single mother, don't we feel a little less envious about their success? Don't we think, "Great, girlfriend. You did it. You're due some joy." What about Halle Berry's and Julia Roberts's enduring, very expensive, and very public divorces before they found true love? Even divas have relationship troubles. Then, they found new guys and started families. Yay! Right? We were happy for them because we can all relate to man troubles. We don't all have flawless skin and perfect teeth, but relationship issues are universal.

Tell your colleagues that you're bad at math, you have a horrible sense of direction, you're not analytical, your kid made a D in preschool. Ask them for assistance, directions, or parenting advice. Actively listen to their response and receive it enthusiastically. Ask your coworkers probing questions and follow up with a report on your success later. Thank them. I repeat. **Thank them** enthusiastically. Gratitude is becoming as scarce as phone booths. Try something like, "Jean, thanks for telling me about that learning program. My son and I spend thirty minutes on it each night and he's already raised his grade to a C. You're a lifesaver!"

Roosters don't crow all day and neither should you. Nobody wants to hear that. It is annoying. So is smiling constantly. Nobody is that happy. If you are, pretend to have a few problems like the rest of us now and then.



I wrote a lifestyle column for a major daily newspaper for several years. I became an “accidental journalist” when a one of my Junior League friends shared my writing skills with the editor of the *Arlington Star-Telegram*. I started out as a guest columnist for that bureau (their first African-American columnist) and honed my craft by sharing personal stories about my family, with the caveat, of course, that I kept some things secret. Most of my articles were humorous, but my favorite editor, Ashley, taught me “that which is most painful is most universal.” He was right. In 2000, the executive editor of the *Fort-Worth Star Telegram*, Jim Witt, asked me to become a regular Sunday Life columnist for all the editions. That’s a coveted spot at any newspaper and a major undertaking, considering I was a mother of two in full-time private practice at that time.

I’ve always loved writing, but what had the greatest impact on my paid career as both a writer and a speaker was my choice to join the Junior League, a nonprofit service organization, and write for their community magazine for no pay! The columns I wrote about my maternal grandmother dying and my divorce, a few years later, got twenty times more voice mails and letters from readers than my usual subjects about raising a family and the challenges of being a working mom. I’ll never forget all I learned from those experiences and those choices. Today, I continue to cry a little and share topics that are universal.

Importantly, when trying to decide what to share and what not to share about your life, whether on Facebook, on LinkedIn, or over coffee, ask yourself two questions:

1. Is this something most people can relate to?
2. Could this negatively affect my reputation now or in the future?

If the answers are yes and no, go ahead and share. If the answers are yes and yes, proceed with caution. For example, someone going through a bitter divorce is joining the ranks of 50 percent of first-time married couples. Most people can relate to it. However, someone going through a long, difficult divorce is often consumed by the process to the point of losing her inner filter. Discussing intimate details of personal finances or allegations of infidelity with anyone who will listen may damage your reputation just as much as your soon-to-be ex's. The rival who wants your position will happily bring up your difficult situation every time you miss work for a court appearance or turn in less than stellar work.

Perhaps you're a graduate student who goes on drinking binges. Most people have been exposed to someone who drinks heavily. But what if you've applied for a fellowship and the competition is stiff? Unlike the real housewives of wherever, you need to rehab privately.

I'm not trying to confuse you. Keep some things to yourself. Just don't keep everything to yourself. Don't be that weird chick who always eats lunch alone in her car and never talks about her vacation. Volunteer the fact that you got sunburned while on vacation. Talk about the cute cabana boy who made you a virgin Sex on the Beach cocktail, but do not chat about how you got sloppy drunk and made out with him on the beach.

You gotta give 'em something. Otherwise, folks will speculate about what's wrong with you. Yes, there is something wrong with you, and if you think there isn't, life or your relatives will eventually persuade you to reconsider.

Dahlin', if you feed the piranhas, they are less likely to attack you.



Lesson Two Summary

- Public displays of anger diminish your power.
- No matter where you are, if colleagues are present—you're working. Govern yourself accordingly.
- Listen to office gossip but don't repeat it.
- Guard against "psychosclerosis" or hardening of the attitude.
- Learn to delegate at work and at home.
- Don't share every detail of your personal life. It can and will be used against you.
- Selectively reveal your "softer" side.

Success Is A Side Effect is available in Ebook and paperback. Order your copy today!

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