



# TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR OWN MORALE

From A.C.E. Learning and Performance Solutions

Unless you are a very rare sort of person, you may find yourself frequently suffering from the workplace “blues.” You may have tried a multitude of stress reduction techniques, or read self-help books, or even resorted to using and abusing various substances to get some relief. The relief, however, is brief; or there is none at all.

Today’s high-intensity workplace demands “more, better, faster, now.”

Coupled with constant, rapid change, the result can be high levels of stress, low morale and less than optimal performance.

Not only does performance quality decline, the quality of interpersonal communication may deteriorate as well, leading to conflicts and unproductive interactions with both internal and external customers. When we are under stress and our morale is low, we make more mistakes and we tend to be less patient or kind with each other. We find ourselves being compliant rather than committed performers. Like a romantic relationship that has grown stale, the passion and excitement is gone.

The reality is that workplace and life stress will never disappear completely; and while it may happen in fairy tales, no hero is coming to rescue us from the “Blues Dragon.” You know the one I mean -the big guy in our head who takes up way too much space. You can easily recognize him by his sullen expression and droopy head. There is a dark cloud always hanging over him, making him a most unwelcome guest. When he is around, we feel enveloped and trapped in that dark cloud. In order to escape, we are compelled to look within ourselves and find ways to take charge of our own morale.

I have spent many years as a seeker, both intellectually and spiritually, searching for ways to deal with the dreaded Blues Dragon. As a result of my journey, I developed two methods. One method involves deeper work for long term results; the other is a shorter process when a quick fix is needed. This article focuses on the latter.

## **The quick fix has five parts:**

### ***The first step is to resist the urge to make it go away.***

It is only natural to defend ourselves from pain and suffering. We want to fix the problem and make it go away. However, there are times when it serves us better to just allow the situation to be what it is. Instead of insisting that things be different than they are, accept that it may be there for a while. As one of my spiritual teachers, Byron Katie always says: “When I argue with reality, I lose.....but only 100% of the time.”

That doesn’t mean we never try to fix problems. If we have the power to change a situation, of course we should take the necessary actions to do so. Sometimes we first need to allow the situation to just be.

A few years ago, I was traveling on business. Sitting in my airline seat, I became aware of the exhaustion I felt from wrestling with low morale once again and I turned to see the Blues Dragon sitting next to me. I wanted him to go away, but he wouldn’t budge an inch.

I decided to resist the urge to make him go away. Rather than resentment about his presence, I accepted that he was there to stay for a while. The decision gave me a peaceful feeling inside, and I began to focus my energy on step two.



### ***Step two is to look for “smiling eyes.”***

When I teach presentation skills or facilitation skills, I have the participants look for a pair of smiling eyes in the group. The positive feedback from those smiling eyes helps build confidence and ease anxiety. It also works well when trying to lift your spirits.

When I looked up I noticed that one of the flight attendants had smiling, sparkling eyes, so I made it a point to engage her in conversation.

The majority of us know someone who has smiling eyes. Seek out that person. Look deeply into those eyes and focus on the positive energy it generates. While you are in their presence, take the third step.

### ***The third step is to acknowledge your gratitude.***

Find something to thank them for. While chatting with the flight attendant, I complimented her on her cheery, positive demeanor, and I thanked her for making the flight such a delightful experience. Seeing her positive response gave me great pleasure and lifted my mood dramatically. I saw that the Blues Dragon was getting significantly smaller. It was time for step four.

### ***In step four, we indulge in an act of passionate self-care.***

Service professionals often forget to create random acts of kindness for themselves. Most of us have found techniques to ease the stress in our lives; however, we often neglect to actually take the time to use them.

One method I use is morale-building cards. The cards have quotes, affirmations, or sayings on them. They cause me to investigate my thinking and lift my spirits. I always carry some with me. I reached into my travel bag and pulled out one of the cards. It said: “Live in this world as an artist, not a prisoner.” \* I asked myself how an artist would approach the project that I had recently been working on. Suddenly, the creative ideas began flowing through me like water through a pipe. I found myself writing furiously, barely keeping up with my extremely generative mind.

As I finished writing in my notebook, the aircraft began its descent. I looked around for the Blues Dragon but he had vanished, leaving only an empty packet of peanuts behind. I felt alive, energized and in love with life once again.

### ***I had now accomplished the final step in the process: falling in love again.***

People in love don't care how long they stand in line, or how bad the traffic might be. No one can rain on their parade. External conditions do not affect their inner world.

Being in love is a state of mind. We can fall in love again by remembering what makes us feel truly alive and brings us joy. When was the last time you felt truly alive? What was happening then? How can you transfer that to your work, your relationships and your daily life?

We may not have control over external conditions; however, we do have control over our state of mind. In order to keep the romance alive, it is important to search for ways to keep falling in love with our work and our lives over and over again. Then, the space normally taken up by the Blues Dragon will be filled with passion and joy instead.

\* (I do not know the author of this quote. If you know, please advise me so that I may credit the source).