

3 Belief Systems That Hurt High Achievers

Malignant mindsets of current and aspiring leaders
are likely to be counterproductive.

BY DR. MARISSA PEI

As an Organizational Psychologist and 28 years working with the top three levels in Fortune 100 companies, I've noticed some common themes with some of the most successful people in the world. See if you can identify with any of these:



>> I'm not any harder on others than I am on myself.
 >> I'm harder on myself than anyone else ever is...and it's never enough!
 >> This is not rocket science. Why is it so difficult to find people to do their job?
 >> I wouldn't have these issues if I were allowed to hire my own people!
 >> You say, perfectionist like it's a bad thing...
 >> I wish everyone were like _____ (the one you are accused of favoritism for).
 >> I only want what's best for everyone.
 >> I AM NOT ANGRY!!!!!!

At first glance, these belief systems seem rational and logical, and part of the success formula for the high achiever...or are they? I call them "BS" Belief Systems that hurt leaders because of their unintended consequences in their relationships at work and at home.

BS #1 A Leader's Job is to Whip You into Shape

If I can do it anyone else can...and it's my job to push you to your highest potential. I'll never forget my first year in my doctoral program...I took an internship on the East Coast with a prominent consulting firm and loved the fact that my nickname was "The Ice Queen of Attila." I had a reputation for cracking the whip, and I thought that was a good thing. My Partner in charge pulled me into his office one day and asked why I was so tough on people? I answered that I was trying to make them into better people...that it was for their own good. He thoughtfully retorted "Did they ask you to make them better people?" That was an AHA moment! I could be hard on myself to

my heart's discontent, but I had no right to make others miserable. Leadership by dictatorship went out with assembly lines.

BS #2 Perfectionism is a Noble Endeavor

The majority of leaders I've met are recovering perfectionists, and their ability to be effective was highly correlated with the level of recovery. As Steve Farber wrote, I too have the Dis-Ease of Perfectionism which robs me of the joy of accomplishment. On the one hand, the benefit of perfectionism is that I work very hard, I set and meet goals, and I get a lot done. But working 60-80 hours a week will take its toll on health, wealth and relationships which usually throws the perfectionist to try even harder...and it's NEVER ENOUGH!!

Picture a horizontal line where the left end is Zero or Start, and the far right is 100% and Finish. High achievers are almost always at 88%...they tackle all goals/jobs/projects with gusto and get to the 88% yard line. The 12% gap between where we are and Finish is where we live. It's where the tension is...what still has to be done, what isn't finished, what is still wrong. The good news is that it gives us the impetus to strive forward, the bad news is that it's where stress lives, and that anxious feeling will take its toll. And then the straw that breaks the

overachievers back is that if and when we do hit the 100%, we are off to the races on the next project/goal/activity and right back at the 88% mark. The lesson in this line? We need to stand at the 88% mark and instead of lamenting what still needs to be done, turn around to look at the 88% that has been done/accomplished/completed and smile with a "Wow, that's great work" to self and others, we would reduce our stress by 88% and give ourselves and others the validation they/we crave.

BS #3 I Need Smart people to Execute, I Don't Have Time for This Touchy-Feely Stuff

Every single one of my executive coaching clients has started with the same vent, "I don't know why things have to be so difficult...it's not rocket science, it's common sense!" My response has not changed, "There is one organization where pure logic, rational thought prevails, where's there no politics, power plays, peripherally located egos, conflict and miscommunication...the CEMETERY! Where there are no people, there are no problems! Once my clients accept the B.S., they spend less time fighting the illogical, irrational part of organizational life and can allow for the natural human dynamics at work. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Consulting Psychologist Dr. Marissa Pei is author of, "8 Ways to Happiness from Wherever You Are" that outlines eight ways to transition from sadness to being happy. She has been speaking, coaching and facilitating to hundreds of Fortune 500 firms for nearly three decades.

