

53 Leadership Challenges – Week 8

Cancel that order!



My mom was a worrier. She worried about money, her kindergarten students, and anyone driving. For a long time, I was a worrier, too.

My husband flew helicopters in the Army. In the beginning, I worried about him. “He is going to crash” was a common thought. I was exhausted when I finally heard from him after a flight.

Then I realized a couple of things. First, worrying about what may or may not happen is a huge emotional energy drain. Second, my worrying did not improve anyone’s chances of success or survival.

Worrying and negative self-talk are habits just like any other habit. We can change them with some effort. I designed a mental game to help me

change my worrying ways. I pretended that every thought was a request for something I wanted. When I thought about something, I was placing an order for it.

When I thought, “He is going to crash,” I was placing an order for that to happen. Immediately I would think or say out loud, “Cancel that order!” Then I would replace the “order” with a new one: “He is going to have an uneventful and enjoyable flight.”

The fancy, technical term is cognitive restructuring. We are intentionally changing the way we think. It’s very powerful. Great leaders are in control of their thoughts.

CHALLENGE: Pay attention to your thoughts. Anytime you hear yourself worrying or participating in negative self-talk, cancel that order! If you walk to the closet thinking, “I don’t look good in any of my pants,” cancel that order! Replace it with what you do want. “I look good in anything I put on.” Creating a positive internal dialogue makes life way less stressful and way more enjoyable.

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