

## Tis the Season to Be Jolly...or Not



"Bah! Humbug!" Ebenezer Scrooge is famous for his statement in the well known Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol*. Have you heard someone proclaim this idea lately at work? Have you felt like saying it yourself?

It doesn't have to be the holidays to experience the "Bah Humbug" feeling. Unfortunately, we hear the sentiment (if not the word) year round in many workplaces.

People get stuck in a "Bah Humbug" way of thinking and they are tough to be around. Hopefully, you're not experiencing the feeling yourself.

Ebenezer Scrooge was no different than the rest of us. He let the stresses and struggles of this life take over his mindset and actions. He became the poster child for "miserable" in all aspects of his life. YUCK!

Well, you can't control if you work with an Ebenezer Scrooge type of person, but you can surely control your response to him or her. You may already know what I'm going to suggest - especially if you've been reading my newsletter for any length of time.

When you run into a coworker, customer, vendor, stranger, etc. with a "Bah Humbug" attitude, just *SHIFT* to a better state of mind.

Here's how it works:

Aggravating Situation: One of your coworkers is in a really bad mood and is taking it out on you.

### **S: Stop and breathe**

By consciously stopping yourself before you go into "habit mode" - you can plot the course for dealing with this person. The breath helps you focus and sends oxygen to your blood. It also keeps you from saying something you might later regret because you can't breathe in and talk at the same time!

### **H: Harness Knee Jerk Reactions**

In this case, your knee jerk reactions might include being in a bad mood right back (that will show him!) or killing her with kindness (that will annoy her even more). Consciously put a stop to these reactions before you stir things up and make matters worse.

### **I: Identify and manage negative emotions**

Your negative emotions can run the gamut from feeling sorry for the person to feeling sorry for yourself because you have to be around the person. You might feel disheartened, concerned or annoyed. The key is to take a few minutes to recognize what you are feeling. Then, and only then, will you be able to manage the emotions. I'm not suggesting you just put on a happy face. I'm suggesting that you manage the emotions through some of the options you will work on in the next step.

### **F: Find new options**

Come up with as many as you can before deciding what new path to take. One option can be to disengage - after all, this isn't your problem. Other choices include checking in with your coworker to see if you can help him or to coming right out and asking her to stop taking out her frustrations on you. The idea here is to do something that is productive for both of you and to maintain a positive connection while you do it.

### **T: Take one positive action**

You get to pick. It often depends on the specific person, your relationship and the situation.

If you start to feel the "Bah Humbug" feeling yourself, you can use the *SHIFT* step as well. The process is the same, the specifics will be different. It works while standing in holiday lines, dining with the relatives and of course with getting your work done every day.

Proclaim an "Ebenezer Scrooge Free Zone" and you'll see how you *SHIFT* from "Bah! Humbug!" to "Ho, Ho, Ho!"

Happy Holidays!

Vicki Hess