

THE 7 DEADLY WORK-SINS

by Dr. Smiley Blanton



Leading exponent of the approach to mental hygiene that combines religion and psychiatry, Dr. Smiley Blanton is a well-known counseling authority who has guided thousands of American families toward happier, sounder lives through his work as associate founder and director of the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry. The following article is adapted from his latest book (with Arthur Gordon), *Now or Never: The Promise of the Middle Years*.*

They can interfere with your proficiency, and it's never too late to overcome them.

I HAVE heard many top executives say that in most jobs neither technical skill nor creative ideas are as important as the ability to get along with other people and get the most out of yourself. Here, in my opinion, are the seven deadly sins most likely to interfere with the progress and proficiency of your work.

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1. Self-depreciation.

A great many people lack normal self-love. This tendency toward self-criticism, self-belittling, is one of the commonest problems we psychiatrists are called upon to deal with. It is cases like this that emphasize the importance of honest self-appraisal in the middle years. You may need help in restoring the sense of dignity and personal worth without which no man or woman can hope to live effectively.

2. Hypersensitivity.

All of us are capable of having our feelings hurt, and this is nothing to be ashamed of. But some people are too thin-skinned. Recently there was a patient at our Foundation—an advertising copywriter, and a good one—whose work was suffering because rejection of one of his ideas created an intense emotional turmoil within him. Such people seldom climb very far up the ladder of success unless something happens to give them insight into their own personality defects, and the courage to set about toughening their ego so their morbid fear of rejections is brought under control.

3. Resentment of authority.

Although circumstances often force them to conceal it, many people resent those who outrank them in their jobs and from whom they receive instructions or orders. At the Foundation we try to make such a person see that authority is essential to a business corporation. "Perhaps on occasion people have been unjust to you," we might say, "but the way you meet this situation is the thing that counts. Maturity comes late to some of us, but better late than never."

4. Inability to manage people.

As a person rises higher in his chosen field, sooner or later he will be called upon to direct the activities of others. This, in itself, is an art. The truth is that people do not mind being given orders or assignments—but they are quick to resent any order given without regard for their dignity as human beings. The most valuable single attribute a worker has is pride in himself as a useful member of society.

5. Lack of self-discipline.

Most jobs provide a certain number of external disciplines. But none of these compulsions can take the place of self-discipline. All of us can re-examine ourselves and consequently tighten the screws of self-discipline in the areas where there seems to be too much laziness, evasion of responsibility, or self-pampering.

6. Lack of realistic self-appraisal.

One of the basic causes of job-maladjustment in the middle years is the persistent failure of some people to see themselves clearly. They often have a concept of themselves and their capabilities that simply does not square with reality. Obviously this leads to trouble. People should make a serious attempt to analyze their own personalities and be guided accordingly in their choice of work. Sometimes this sort of self-knowledge comes late. A man who came to us at the Foundation was discouraged by his work in a bank, feeling that advancement was too slow. After careful examination, we advised him to seek a job that would allow him to be his own boss. As a bond consultant he became a happy and successful man, and the patience and sacrifice this decision demanded of him and his family were well invested.

7. Lack of courage.

This is the most inclusive and self-evident of the "sins." It takes courage to accept or ask for additional responsibility, to trust your own judgment, to disagree with your employer. The list is endless. The mature person has confidence enough to accept responsibility and take reasonable chances.

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These, then, are the seven deadly work-sins as I see them. The reader should remember that the many qualities of success were not born in their owners; they were acquired. And the heartening thing is, it is never too late to acquire them. You must know the truth about yourself, that is all. The truth will make you free.

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Cover:

From night is no time for Dad to be checking one's report card, but chances are Junior will get the car keys—along with some fatherly advice about studying harder next year. Painting by Charles Dye.

Family
Weekly

May 17, 1959

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PATRICK E. O'ROURKE Advertising Director

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Address all communications about editorial features to
Family Weekly, 40 E. 56th St., New York 22, N. Y.

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