

On the job... Are you finished?

Situation:

On my job at the sheltered workshop last Tuesday morning we were working on letters that had to be mailed out. The person before me was folding the letters, then my task was to put the paper into an envelope, stick on the address label on and seal it. About 11:25 the man in charge, Nick, came over and said to us, "Are you finished with those letters? They need to go to the post office today." That's when I started to get worked up.

Symptoms:

Right away my face got hot and I could feel myself trembling inside. I was upset. In my mind I said, "Who does he think he is? I'm going as fast as I can. It's not like it was me who was holding things up. If Judy would fold faster, I could stuff faster." We still had about 50 more to go. "Why doesn't he get someone else to help fold? This is too much work for two people to do. I don't want to come back here tomorrow!" The more I thought, the more upset I got. When I noticed my stomach feeling funny, I knew I had to work to calm myself down.

Solution:

The first thing I did was tell myself that irritations, frustrations and disappointments are part of everyday life. And this was one of those moments. This was distressing, but not dangerous, both the situation and my symptoms.

I know that fear and anger are what cause my tension and my symptoms. I realized that I was angry at Nick, I was judging him wrong for what he said. And he wasn't wrong, he was average. All he did was ask if we were finished and he mentioned that the stuff had to get out to the post office. He didn't sound angry. He just asked a question. He was doing his job.

And as I looked at what I was thinking, I realized that I was a little mad at Judy too. The fact was, Judy was folding as fast as she could. So she wasn't wrong either, she was average. And as for me, I wasn't wrong I was average, I was keeping up with my task. Once I calmed down I thought, "I can help Judy fold some of the letters." So I did.

In the past:

Before I would have got upset and stayed upset. I would have talked to Judy about what Nick had said, all the time thinking he was wrong and we were right. In the past my talking about what happened would have made Judy more upset too.

This time because I made an effort to be calm, I think Judy was more calm. With all my fear and anger thoughts before I would have never thought to help Judy out.



And I probably would have not gone back to the job the next day. I would have made some excuse or say that I just didn't like the work. Before I really thought it was the work I didn't like, when it was really that I didn't like feeling uncomfortable. Now I know what to do when I'm uncomfortable. I like the way I handled myself this time.

