
What Have You Learned Today? Make a Professional Commitment to Learn, Grow, and Contribute!

Dr. Connie Jo Smith

Would you want to go to a physician who does not know about the most current medical treatments? Would you want to visit a dentist who skips out of professional conferences to play golf? Even though your hair is likely to grow back, you probably do not even want to let a cosmetologist or barber who does not have proper credentialing or dedication to their profession cut your hair. Likewise, families do not want to trust the care of their children to staff without proper training, knowledge, skills, and interest in their job. No one wants to use the services of a professional that says, "Hello, I am from that second-rate program down the road. I am not qualified to do my job and really do not care either."

Professional Commitment: Just as doctors and other professionals have ethical and code of conduct standards, the field of early childhood does too. An updated [Code of Ethical Conduct](#) by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is available free on their website (www.naeyc.org). Seven free online [videos](#), each under 10 minutes, highlight the history and changes in the Code of Ethical Conduct. The NAEYC Statement of Commitment is a separate document, but it is included at the end of the Code of Ethical Conduct because of the close linkage between ethics and professional commitment. The [NAEYC Statement of Commitment](#) states that each of us in the early childhood field should, "Continue to learn, grow and contribute as a professional." The NAEYC Statement of Commitment also notes that it is important to participate in self assessment and reflection, be open to new ideas, and learn from others since who we are, what we do, and our beliefs can impact children and families in positive and negative ways.



Without a professional commitment and dedication, you are likely to leave your job and the children who have come to depend upon you. While children may be resilient, the frequent adjustment to new teachers can be harmful to establishing relationships, building attachments, and trusting adults. Yet, it is worse for children when teachers stay in a job where they do not have a professional commitment. At a minimum, children may not receive positive experiences and could even be unsafe.

Job Satisfaction: Do you ever think the "grass is greener" elsewhere, leading you to always search for that "perfect" job? You may have plenty of company since a survey

conducted in 2010 by [The Conference Board](#) revealed that only 45% of Americans are satisfied with their work. The survey revealed that only 51% found their jobs interesting, with an even higher percent of workers, under the age of 25, reporting that they were unhappy at work. See the YouTube video [We Can't Get No-Job-Satisfaction](#) for a review of the survey results.

Why are so many people unsatisfied? Of course, each individual may have their own reason, but some common ones include: **lack of employment preparation, inadequate job resources, dysfunctional dynamics, lack of meaningful activity, differences in values, or personal overload.** Successfully addressing these various issues requires the commitment of both the individual who is dissatisfied and the supervisor.

Employment Preparation: Do you feel prepared to be successful at work? Lack of employment preparation is influenced by who the administrator hires. Advertising all open positions broadly, combined with proper interviewing to ensure that qualified staff members are selected can help prevent dissatisfaction. Creating a training plan with each individual upon hiring can help further ensure each individual learns that which is needed to be successful. Each individual is ultimately responsible for their professional development and should contribute to the training plan development and implementation, as well as take an active role in continuing to learn about their job. As a knowledgeable and skilled worker, you will be less frustrated and more satisfied.

Inadequate Job Resources: What do you need to do a great job? A simple lack of appropriate classroom equipment, materials, and supplies can add stress to the job of a teacher. Addressing obesity issues can be harder when the playground has limited equipment or space. How is one to encourage early literacy if there are very few books, all of which are tattered? Being active in training is more difficult when an agency does not have funds to cover registration fees and the salary is too low for individuals to pay for training. Money may solve some of these issues, but there are other options too. The public library has a wealth of children's books. Many outdoor activities do not require equipment. Scholarships for training exist. And, learning can happen free through observations of other classrooms, reading articles online, and talking with experienced staff. Supervisors can identify public resources for staff to access, and each professional should also look for resources. What ideas do you have for free resources?

Dysfunctional Dynamics: Have you ever worked with one of those people that you just cannot get along with? Each of us has our "baggage" and it could be that for someone out there, you are the one they see as difficult. Honing communication skills, learning to be forgiving of others, and projecting a positive attitude can go a long way toward improving the atmosphere at work. Do you say "good morning" like you really mean it to everyone you work with? Give it a try! While each individual should work toward creating a positive work environment, the administrators should also ensure that no one is physically or verbally abused, just like teachers need to protect children from bullies.

Lack of Meaningful Activity: When so much time is spent changing diapers, toilet training, feeding, wiping noses, comforting crying children, or settling school age squabbles it may be difficult to remember that high quality services for children can make a significant difference in their future. Knowing that a job well done matters may help you see your job as more meaningful. For a reminder, watch the very short online video [Early Learning Matters](#). Watch the YouTube video, [Change the First Five Years and You Change Everything](#) for a powerful story through the eyes of a child. Showing these at the beginning of a staff meeting could help everyone get focused on the importance of their work. We all have some job tasks that feel meaningless, but understanding why tasks are required may be helpful. An individual attitude adjustment is sometimes the answer. A wide range of online sites that focus on being happy at work agree that choosing to be happy is essential. What ideas do you have for being happy at work? Make a list and compare yours to lists online.

Top 10 Ways to Be Happy at Work

By Susan M. Heathfield, About.com Guide

http://humanresources.about.com/od/success/tp/happy_work.htm

Ten Tips to Stay Happy at Work

By Beverly West, Monster Contributing Writer

<http://career-advice.monster.com/in-the-office/work-life-balance/ten-tips-for-staying-happy-at-work/article.aspx>

How to be Happy at Work – 10 Tips

Parker Associates

<http://asparker.com/blog/2011/06/how-to-be-happy-at-work-10-tips/>

Want To Be Happy at Work? Dozens of Tips, Plus a Few Quizzes, To Consider The Happiness Project

http://www.happiness-project.com/happiness_project/2010/07/want-to-be-happy-at-work-dozens-of-tips-plus-a-few-quizzes-to-consider.html

Tips for Staying Productive, Happy at Work this Summer

By Erica Finley

<http://www.dalecarnegiewaymi.com/2011/06/15/tips-for-staying-productive-happy-at-work-this-summer/>

the supervisor and employee can help each see that similar values exist, even if terminology is different. Other times, the values are just at opposite ends of the spectrum and the match is not a good one for either. Individuals who are interested in seeking different employment may be interested in taking advantage of the many online career inventories, many of which are free, to help them assess their values, interests, and skills.

Career/Self-Assessment Related Resources

“The Quick and Dirty Career Test”

<http://www.blogthings.com/quickanddirtycareertest>

“Personality Type.com”

http://www.personalitytype.com/career_quiz

“Common Careers for Personality Types”

<http://www.personalitypage.com/html/careers.html>

“Workplace Values Assessment”

http://www.quintcareers.com/workplace_values.html

“Skills Assessment Exercise”

<http://www.himss.org/content/files/SkillsAssessmentExercise.pdf>

“Transferable Skills Survey”

http://www.d.umn.edu/kmc/student/loon/car/self/career_transfer_survey.html

Other Assessments

<http://www.quintcareers.com/test.html>

O*Net Interest Inventory Software:

<http://www.onetcenter.org/CIP.html?p=3>

O*Net Interest Profiler Online:

<http://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>

Personal Overload: From time to time we all have life struggles. It is hard to be happy at work when there are home problems, such as overdue bills, divorce, abuse, illness, or death of a loved one. Job burnout can result from overload at home, even when no major stress exists at the work site. Addressing home issues and taking care of yourself is essential for job satisfaction. Consult some of the job burn out literature for guidance. For example, [Job Burnout: Spotting it – and Taking Action](#) by the Mayo Clinic Staff may be useful. Another useful resource by Mayo Clinic Staff is [Job Satisfaction: How to Make Work More Rewarding](#).

A professional commitment to learn, grow, and contribute to the profession may lead to higher job satisfaction. What have you learned today?

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