

# “The Mentor” Digest 4

First published in Professional Fundraising magazine

July – October 2007

## July 2007.

**Q:** I've had feedback that I often react emotionally when challenged and need to present a calmer, more professional response. I am aware of this and often feel bad afterwards. My job is really stressful, and I often don't have chance to think things through properly, especially since most of my days are filled with meetings. What can I do?

**A:** Take charge of planning as much of your day as you can, even if that is only 10%. If you have an 'open' diary system, then block out time to complete work you need to do, and mark it as busy so that others will hesitate to override it.

Often the most stressful thing for a reflective person is a lack of reflection time, so build some in, either at the beginning or end of the day. Even 15 minutes can make a huge difference to how you feel. Make sure that you also give yourself permission to do the things that matter to you. If you've given up activities that energise you, like exercise, build them back into your schedule in a way that works.

Finally, ask yourself what being challenged reminds you of. When in your past did you find it hostile or negative? Often making the connection will allow you to realise that today is different, and the threat you felt then is not relevant now. As a client once said to me, “my boss isn't my headmistress, is she?”

## There was no issue in August 2007.

## September 2007.

**Q:** I've just been promoted and have to attend management meetings. Although I prepare for them by reading the papers, I am still nervous, and often freeze when asked to say anything. I am terrified of making a fool of myself, but I realise I must do something about this, before I lose credibility.

**A:** Reading the papers for a meeting is helpful, but there is more to preparing, especially if you are nervous. Your comfort will improve if you assess what you can contribute, consciously go in with a positive attitude, and shift your focus away from yourself onto the other participants.

First, look at the agenda. Be clear about where your contribution is expected or could be valuable. Choose two or three specific issues on which your knowledge and experience equip you to comment. If you know your subject, you will be more confident.

Next, think about how you are talking to yourself before and during the meeting. What are you assuming that makes you terrified of making a fool of yourself? How realistic is it? Choose to believe that what you say will be welcome and helpful.

In the meeting, listening is as important a contribution as speaking. If you really hear what others are saying, your response will be all the more relevant. You can only concentrate on one thing at a time, so you will find you have also stopped worrying about what others think of you.



**annlewis coaching**  
leadership for life

Email: [ann@annlewiscoaching.com](mailto:ann@annlewiscoaching.com)  
Tel: 01273 553026  
Mobile: 07885 291410  
Website: <http://www.annlewiscoaching.com>

## October 2007.

**Q:** A member of my team has confessed that she hates networking events. She says that when she walks into a room full of strangers she “wishes the floor would open up and swallow her”. I know she has one or two bad experiences with cliquey groups. What tips would you offer her?

**A:** The first step to successful networking is to be clear why you are doing it. A client of mine recently had a similar issue. Together we looked at what she needed to bring back from the meeting. Some of the delegates were important contributors to a new initiative she was managing, and she decided that she would make contact with five specific people. This gave her meeting focus and she came back with a sense of having moved the project forward. So why does your team member attend her networking events? Help her to focus on some specific outcomes.

The “room full of strangers” syndrome is familiar to anyone who wilts in crowds. I often encourage nervous networkers to look out for someone who looks as lost as they feel and to introduce themselves. Realising that they are far from alone in feeling uncomfortable can be a revelation.

The act of making someone else feel at home will shift your team member's focus away from her unease. Because she knows what's needed to feel comfortable, volunteering to buddy people new to a group is another way to build her confidence.

<http://www.professionalfundraising.co.uk/>



**annlewis coaching**  
leadership for life

Email: [ann@annlewiscoaching.com](mailto:ann@annlewiscoaching.com)  
Tel: 01273 553026  
Mobile: 07885 291410  
Website: <http://www.annlewiscoaching.com>