



Timely Information for Personal Success

A Micromanager's Recovery Guide: Part I



By Kate Zabriskie

Ask yourself if any of the following work scenarios sound familiar?

He gives me an assignment and tells me to do it my way. I only wish he meant it. My way doesn't seem to hit the mark. He changes the smallest details. I dread getting new work.

I've had this job for six years. At this point, I think I understand how it works. It's so frustrating to be treated like someone who just walked in the door.

Yesterday, I found her checking my spreadsheets when she thought I was at lunch. It feels terrible not to be trusted. I need to look for a new job.

Regardless of their intentions, people who micro-manage often create an environment of fear, mistrust, and disengagement. The constant oversight, checking in, and nitpicking wears down even the strongest employee. Turnover goes up, engagement goes down, and all the while, the managers who micro-manage may not even know they're the source of the problem.

The good news? With a little self-awareness and some hard work, micromanagers can learn to let go.

❖ **Recognize the behavior pattern.** If employees don't take initiative and wait for you to micro-delegate, you may have created a culture where employees don't feel comfortable taking the next step without your say so. Want more signs? If you find yourself redoing work, checking and rechecking assignments, insisting you be copied on everything, chances are you have some micromanaging tendencies.

❖ **Think about the consequences micromanagers eventually face.** Micromanagers exact control. In the short term, they have command of the future. Long term, however, many micromanagers

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Do Supplements *REALLY* Help Depression?

❖ **St. John's Wort.** The results of studies on the effectiveness of St. John's Wort for depression are mixed. Research is clear, however, that St. John's Wort supplements can interact with a variety of medications in dangerous, even life-threatening, ways.

❖ **Omega-3 Fatty Acids.** The evidence is inconclusive as to whether or not Omega-3 fatty acids, such as those found in fish oil supplements, may help relieve symptoms of depression. Though generally safe, minor side effects, including gastrointestinal symptoms, may occur.

❖ **Vitamin D.** Deficiency of the "sunshine" vitamin, an essential fat-soluble nutrient, has been associated with depression. However, no causality has been determined, and low levels of this vitamin may just one of many factors that contribute to depression.

❖ **Methylfolate.** The link between folate and depression is not clear, evidence on whether a methylfolate supplement may be helpful for depression is inconclusive. ■

Source: *Health & Nutrition Letter, Tufts University.*

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Editor/Publisher: Mike Jacquart

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find themselves stuck in roles, unable to take vacation without calling in, and essentially tied to their jobs.

Recovering micromanagers have a better chance of self-rehabilitation when they know how they will benefit from changing their behavior. Ask yourself: Where do you want to be in a year? How about year three? Do you have a replacement identified? Is that person ready to take over for you? If not, there is work to do if you plan to move on or at some point have a life outside the job.

❖ **When delegating, ask yourself if how is important.** Once the recovering micromanager recognizes the problem and knows why change is important, it's time to get practical and start focusing on *what* instead of *how*.

In other words, if how something is done doesn't matter, treat people like the adults they are, and let them complete work in a way that works for them.

In cases where how something is accomplished matters, explain why that is the case. For example, if you work in a lab, explain the importance of the work instruction and why the person performing the work must do so in a specific way.

❖ **Show people what A-Grade work looks like.** Recovering micromanagers will reduce their propensity to backslide if their employees deliver great work. What exactly does great work mean? Good question! If the micromanager has not explained what makes an A an A, how can that person possibly expect employees to produce a stellar work product with any regularity? Take the time to be complete, and you may be surprised at your team's ability to rise to the occasion.

Summary

Any activity that requires change can be hard work and at times even a little scary. For micromanagers, this can be especially true.

Nevertheless, as most rehabilitated micromanagers will profess, it's a lot more productive and rewarding to work in a place where people have the freedom to do their best work. ■

NEXT ISSUE: Kate presents more tips for micromanagers in reducing their controlling ways.

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