

In class reflective exercise for Professional Career Development

I am working as a cleaner in a holiday let cleaning company. Each morning, at the office, upon arrival, our manager puts up jobs for houses to be cleaned between the workers. We work in teams of 2 or 3 members and clean approximately 2 to 3 houses in one day. I make the beds very well, neat and agile quicker than them. That is why I always volunteer for the job of bed-making. I believe it is the best way of maintaining our standards as well as saving time. As I am making all the beds, my colleagues will have started cleaning the kitchen and bathrooms. Once I'm through with the bed making, I take over other tasks that are remaining to be done to complete the work.

Over the last couple of weeks, I've noticed that when I am on bed-making, my colleagues tend to slow down. This past Friday, I was working with a woman named Casey in a 5bedroom property. I went ahead and finished making the beds to come find her still in the bathroom. I went on to clean the kitchen, vacuum, and mop the house while she had finished only the bathroom.

This was quite an unfair situation to me. However, I didn't confront her face to face. I went home and anxiously felt awful. Being angry, suffering from stress, made me unable to react to the situation. I decided to message the manager, telling her that I was uncomfortable with the workload division and would not be able to work the next day. My manager gave a suggestion that those kinds of concerns I could bring sooner so she could discuss them with the team before things get out of hand.

STAGE 2 - FEELINGS (What were you thinking & feeling?)

I felt others were taking advantage of me; they were being lazy, and just putting most of the work on me. Nervous and stressed, didn't want to come back to work the next day. It was not fair that I had to feel this way because I had always tried to be a team player-giving my best to keep the standards high, while they acted selfishly.

Meanwhile, I don't like such kinds of people who snitch on somebody. I did not want to throw dirt on anybody, but I had to do that for solving this situation.

That means, after discussing with my manager, I understood that sometimes talking is necessary in expressing my opinion and feelings, especially in the workplace. It is not gossiping; I am not talking badly about my colleges, just their attitude towards work and this is what is needed for solving problems at work and avoiding an unfair situation. If I share my discomfort and speak frankly with my manager, she can take action accordingly.

STAGE 3 - EVALUATION (What was good and bad about the experience?)

Bad:

How I handled the situation at the beginning. By allowing frustration to build up over weeks that were left unaddressed, it cost me so much in unnecessary stress and anxiety, feeling resentful toward my colleague. This even further influenced my attitude to work in that it made me feel demotivated and overwhelmed, considering the fact that this day I did not want to go to work since I felt stressed out. This was exacerbated by my late talking over with the colleague in question or my manager. I never wanted to complain about it, being classified as a complainer, and that made me suffer in silence far too long.

Good:

I came to realize that to speak was not wrong, it was liberating to me.

It was about seeking equity. I felt that my manager supported me, and that helped me understand I had done the right thing talking to her about the situation. I have also understood that at work, one needs to be forthright and free to express his or her views. I don't need to wait until situations become uneasy; I can discuss whatever is wrong or unfair in the beginning stages of work.

STAGE 4 - ANALYSIS (What sense can you make of the situation?)

I have learned a lot from this situation: how to work with other people and how to handle problems at my job. The first time, I just kept silent because I wouldn't like to act as a troublemaker or some person that can complain all the time. But keeping silent did make the problem larger, and it was stressful with no well-being at all.

Now I understand that discussing all questions openly with colleagues and the manager is necessary. If I had spoken earlier, everything was so easy to fix, and I would not feel frustrated as I did. Now I see that if I haven't said anything, this unfair situation at work could go further, and that is not good for me or for the team; I would probably leave the job.

One important thing that I learned is that speaking out does not necessarily mean that I am courting trouble but rather fairness in my way of treatment towards everybody. Explaining what was bothering me to my manager, made she know what the problem is and gives me support to make me feel OK. Also, I came to realize that if I wanted things to get better, instead of waiting until I get angry, I should take the matter into my own hands and deal with it at the very moment it happens. I also could have talked with my colleague and asked her to share the tasks between us by having a nice and polite talk.

STAGE 5 – CONCLUSION

Now I can see that right from the beginning, the situation could have been dealt with in a different manner. Instead of allowing frustration to grow over time, the first thing I should have done was talk with my colleague, Casey, when I began to feel the workload imbalance. A simple conversation could have cleared up misunderstandings and perhaps made the work more evenly balanced right from the start. Waiting until being overwhelmed only made things worse.

Another alternative would have been not to feel guiltier or more apprehensive than necessary but rather to discuss the problem with the manager right at the outset. By giving my opinion constructively, I could have helped to find a solution before. Now I feel that not having such conversations for fear of being perceived as a complainer or troublemaker was unhelpful. It is okay to express when something isn't fair, provided it is done in a respectful manner and for better purposes.

I learned the importance of clear and open communication in the workplace. I learned that minor problems can easily escalate into big problems whenever not dealt with early enough. By waiting too long to say something, I let the situation affect my mental health and my motivation at work. What I would do in the future is make sure to bring up anything that concerns me, even though at that moment it would have seemed a small issue. It will avoid unnecessary stress and hence provide a healthier and fairer environment to work in.

I have also learned that going to my manager was not a weakness, but the alternative move needed because the situation was such that it could only be resolved in this way. Now, when something of this nature is going on, I am more confident. I realize that being honest and proactive is the key to making sure fairness is within the working place, and it's possible to communicate these issues without causing any conflict, but rather finding a solution that will benefit all parties.

STAGE 6 - ACTION PLAN (If it arose again what would you do?)

In the future, if a similar situation occurs, I would take it right from the beginning. I will try to speak directly with my colleague in a cool but respectful manner about my concerns upon having noticed a problem.

Apart from talking to my colleague, if that does not provide a solution or if I feel uncomfortable addressing it directly, I would go to my manager sooner rather than later. Through experience, I have learned that my manager is open to talking about workload concerns.

I also plan to work on improving my communication by being assertive without feeling guilty. I'd make sure things are clear and that I am part of the problem-solving much sooner before the problems would begin to affect the work atmosphere.

I will be inquiring from myself how I feel at work. If I am sure that I am stressed or frustrated or close to it, I immediately act on it and will not wait for it to degrade further.

In the future I'll be even more open, act quicker, and address it in a manner allowing fairness and team cooperation that can avoid stress building up.

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