

*The following is an excerpt from Dr. Sylvia Lafair's award winning book, 'Don't Bring It to Work'. Dr. Lafair also contributed to 'Working Together' and wrote 'Pattern Aware Success Guide' companion to 'Don't Bring It to Work,' currently available on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com), or visit our website at [www.ceoptions.com](http://www.ceoptions.com)). Sylvia Lafair, Ph.D., is also President of Creative Energy Options, Inc. (CEOinc.), a global business consulting company redefining leadership and optimizing workplace relationships. Dr. Lafair's unique leadership model has revolutionized the way teams cooperate, relate and innovate.*

### ***'Don't Bring It to Work' Excerpt***

Jeanette Walters, a senior research scientist, was an annoying person. Not just a little annoying; *very* annoying. She wore bright red lipstick and interrupted everyone. She answered every question whether she knew anything about the subject or not. She took up so much air time that the rest of her group was suffocating. "Jeanette just doesn't get it," her boss said. "Sure, she's highly accomplished and great at her job. But her co-workers would love to stuff a sock in that big, red-lipped mouth. Frankly, I would, too."

Every workplace has a Jeanette, or some version of her: That guy on your team who never stops complaining. The supervisor you dread talking to because you know she'll tear your work to pieces, just like she always does. The co-worker in the next cubicle you can hear on the phone all day, spreading gossip and rumors.

In fact, just about everyone at work makes you want to stuff a sock in their mouth at one time or another, don't they?

Such frustrations are understandable. But what most of us, including Jeanette's boss, never really "get" is *why* people behave the way they do, and what can be done about it. The problem isn't always other people's behavior, either. How many times have you regretted something you said or did at work and thought, "Why do I always do that?"

Ever want to help your employees find out what is holding them back? Or holding you back? Ever want to kick a habit that won't let go or one you think you have mastered only to have it boomerang with great intensity? Ever want to create a new way of relating to your colleagues but you haven't a clue where to start?

This book will help you find answers. It will help you reinvent yourself, your team, perhaps your entire organization. You'll help employees discover new, more productive ways of behaving -- and you'll be able to do the same for yourself. You'll understand conflict as a creative force that you can harness. And, as a special bonus, you can take what you learn about yourself in the workplace and transfer that learning to your personal life.

But first I'd like to add a word of caution. When you understand the essence of this approach you become like a magnet. People are drawn to you, to your charisma. All sorts of possibilities begin to open; new ideas, amazing situations and a sense of freedom that defies description. You need to be ready to use this information for the good of everyone rather than just for your own personal gain. It prepares you to take a quantum leap into an exciting and rewarding world that was always there, you just were not able to see it. The very fact that you have chosen to read this book indicates that you are searching beyond the obvious, beyond the superficial, to become the best you can be and to help others along the way.

Once you learn how your past family life and your work behavior connect at a core level you will know where poor performance originates and conflict starts. Then you gain the skills to do something about it. The reason most organizational programs abort is because they fail to deal with our childhood memories and that is at the foundation of work place anxiety, tension and conflict.

Ever notice that even though companies spend billions of dollars each year on programs to enhance communication skills and team collaboration, interpersonal conflicts and disappointments continue to cause undue stress and unhappiness? We are still so frustrated when disputes waste productive time at work and there is a sense of going round and round the merry-go-round. We all have that unsettled sense that something is missing. There are even “office politics” web-sites dedicated to assisting befuddled and confused employees. And yet, not much changes.

This book helps you get to the bottom of workplace behaviors that simply don't work for you or your organization. More importantly, it shows you exactly what you can do about it. You learn practical steps you can take that improve your professional relationships and make you a better leader, a better mentor, a better teammate. You gain a remarkable new understanding of yourself and your colleagues almost immediately. The key is to apply the **Pattern Aware Leadership Model™**, an approach based on my more than 30 years of experience as a leadership development consultant, executive coach, and family therapist.

Yes, I did say family therapist. I have taken the important skills from this arena into the workplace to help you learn how family baggage can derail even the smartest business people and how to get back on track. This book is all business with a human connection. I have spent years at off-sites, in staff meetings, working with mergers and acquisitions and in one-on-one executive coaching sessions looking for the „magic bullet“ for fast and effective change. What I have learned I want to pass on to you. Just know that behavior patterns from our history, our baggage, are intimately connected with every aspect of our adult lives, not least of all our work lives. And more importantly, while you can never fully leave your family behind, you don't have to bring it to work.

Now back to Jeanette. When I was asked to speak with her I learned that this accomplished oncologist had grown up with a mother deformed from childhood polio. At a young age, she became her mother's legs, participating in track and attending college on an athletic scholarship. When she gave up track to focus on her studies, her mother was furious and rejected her, saying she would never amount to anything. That's when Jeanette's annoying behavior began to escalate. Having given up compensating for her mother's disability to pursue her education, she now needed to compensate for her mother's rejection — so she began talking to prove how much she knew. And talking. And talking. And talking.

And now for the good news: With a bit of hard work, Jeanette discovered how the pain of disability had traveled through the generations, how even though she had two perfectly capable legs, she was becoming “disabled” at work through her uncontrolled talking. She was amazed at the revelation and her behavior began to change. Did it take effort? Of course. Was there resistance? You bet! Yet as Jeanette learned to ask more questions rather than have all the answers, she found out how deep her sadness had been watching her mother cope with daily discomfort. She realized how determined she was to find not just a cure for cancer, but also ways that patients in chemotherapy could suffer less. She was astounded when she came to the realization that she talked and talked and talked to fend off anyone seeing into her own deep anxiety that had been there since she was a little girl. And over time her talking became less guarded, she became more relaxed and her team more appreciative.

Hidden patterns like these wreak havoc in the workplace. They rear their ugly heads in the form of power games, “cover your ass” strategies, and a variety of disruptive behaviors. Harboring old and often hurtful memories, we react to problems with preconceived notions about how our interactions with bosses, peers, and direct reports will turn out. And these notions usually become self-fulfilling prophecies. A circle of predictability ensues that produces bad behavior, poor work performance, misused sick days, lawsuits and untold time wasted rumoring and gossiping. This is more than making friends with your “inner child” more than liking or disliking your parents or the events from your childhood. It is about claiming and taming the world of interpersonal relationships.

This is critical learning for 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders. Advanced emotional and social intelligence require a strong comprehension of the workings of the interactive world of whole systems“ thinking and relationships. We can include, yet must go beyond our personal internal worlds of likes, dislikes, hurts and disappointments. It’s time to get out of the sandbox of childhood and gain a deep knowledge of the fact that we are all connected and no one wins unless we all do.