

On the job... Irregular break times

Situation:

Let me start by saying that I'm a rookie when it comes to mental fitness. And this has happened more than once. I know I'm supposed to pick one incident, so I'll pick yesterday afternoon. It was 3:21. I know because I was watching my watch. We're supposed to have a break at 3:15. That's what they told us – 3:15.

Usually the man who is in charge of two other departments comes over and tells us it's time to break. He was nowhere around. And I found myself getting more and more upset.

Symptoms:

I was thinking: "I need to use the rest room. And pretty soon, I'm going to need to use the restroom really bad. Where is that man? He's always late when it comes time to giving us our break. This isn't fair.

I'm going to go to his boss and tell him what I think: that they ought to stick to the rules around here. I want a cold drink. By the time he gets here I'm going to have to choose between the restroom and the break room where I can get a Pepsi."

Physical symptoms? All I can remember is that I felt tense. All over – head to toe. In fact I felt my feet cramped up in my shoes.

Solution:

Like I said, I'm just starting this business of changing my thoughts and the only thing I could think of was Rose's favorite: "This is distressing, but not dangerous." I repeated that over and over and over again in my mind. When I stopped repeating it, the negative insecure thoughts came back.

So I just started up again, "This is distressing, but not dangerous. This is distressing, but not dangerous." I have no idea how many times I said it.

And I did remember one more thing, about not always looking to see what time it was. I knew that would be hard for me, so I took my watch off and slipped it into my pocket without even looking at it. That wasn't as hard as I thought it would be.

I calmed myself down enough to concentrate on what I was supposed to be doing. And the time seemed to pass faster. Before long, the manager came by and told us to take our regular 15 minute break.

In the past:

Before – well before I would have been really miffed. When the man finally came I would have told him he was late again. And I wouldn't have been nice about what I said. Then later on, I would have played things over in my head and gotten

mad at myself for not handling things like I wanted to. And I'd be worried about what the man thought about me because I sort of told him off. And worried if I'd lose my job. This time even though I basically used only one tool, I calmed myself down.

I'm learning that I do have control over my behavior – what I say and when I say it.

