

How Safe Is Your Peace of Mind from Annoying People?

By Andrew Gabelic

The other day I was asked about the heroes in my life. And I realized something weird: whenever I'm asked this question I automatically go to the past. I search for my favorite amongst the truly amazing heroes from 50, 100, or 500 years ago.

And I just started thinking to myself, why haven't I ever thought about someone I know in my life when asked that question? Why do I always go to the best of the best in human history?

Well, I don't know....if I'm being asked about people I admire, and I'm assuming the rule is it can be anyone living or dead, then it only makes sense to go to the top of the pool. But it is also true that if you asked me directly, my first inkling would be to say I don't know any amazing people personally.

I hear their stories and read their biographies but I don't have any personal relationship with any of them. Nothing could be more wrong.

I have a tendency to not appreciate the strength of some of the people that I've interacted with and gotten to know over the course of my life. I'm probably saying that I don't know anyone awesome out of habit, not out of an actual interest in analyzing that question objectively.

If I took a step back from my automatic response I would find pretty incredible heroes in my life. I've had two truly amazing bosses in my career, out of about five different jobs. And I can appreciate everything that they are in hindsight, and everything that can truly be admired about them.

I can clearly see how special they were and how many impressive things they have accomplished with their lives. Some of that is inevitable because I worked for them when I was young and I didn't have anyone to compare them to.

But even as a young person who didn't know any better, I also think that when we're in front of amazing people, we still prefer to just focus on their faults. And if we don't pay close attention, we could easily walk around life only paying attention to everyone's faults. It's not something we decide or even want to do, it's just something that comes naturally. It definitely happens to me.

I'm put in front of somebody who is amazing, and I prefer to think about their faults. I completely ignore everything there is to admire and learn from, and prefer to tear them apart inside my head: this person is so stupid for acting this way, they need to learn this, they need to figure this out.

Like I'm perfect. Nobody is perfect. Not even those heroes from 100 years ago that we admire. I don't care how many times somebody is mentioned in a history book, they are

not perfect. If you knew them, you'd find a million faults too. You would be like woah! Abraham Lincoln, never grabs his underwear from the floor, keeps his desk so disorganized, can't pay attention when you talk to him. Doesn't appropriately appreciate his employees! Who cares! Who cares! Nobody is perfect! But look at everything that is right about them! And look at how far they have come in their lives! How many awesome things they've accomplished! Why aren't I looking up to them too? Why aren't I appreciating them? Why aren't I giving them a break when they screw up?

It is so easy to give people a break and understand that a fault is always going to be there.

No they are not the perfect boss. Yes they're making mistakes. But I make a thousand mistakes too, every single day. And if I look at this situation even closer, I can see the same pattern in my relationship with myself. I don't think I'm perfect either. I'm very hard on myself too, and I apply the same ridiculous standards to myself as I do to other people.

I also expect perfection from myself and am always disappointed when I fall short. I spend my days walking around thinking: I'm not doing this and I keep messing up in this and that way. And I also don't always appreciate my great qualities, and all the ways in which I've changed and learned and grown. Everything I've accomplished. All I should be proud of. It goes both ways.

Many of my ridiculous standards may be completely unnecessary. But this one is not: I have to start giving people a break when they screw up. And I'm not at all in the habit of doing that. I can be polite. I can be respectful. I can even be diplomatic. But none of that matters if inside I'm still judging the hell out of everyone.

And life has connected me with real heroes too. If I told you their life stories, what they did with an idea and some enthusiasm, how they've left their mark on the world and influenced many with beautiful transformational work, you would be proud of them too.

These are amazing individuals, true heroes. And I always admired them, but I never gave them a break when they screwed up. I always focused on their faults. My internal monologue dissected their mistakes for years and years.

This is something I have to change. And it shouldn't matter if someone is a "hero" or not.

Whether or not I think I admire them, everyone has accomplished many things that come hard to me, everyone does the best with what they have, even when they're majorly screwing up and I can see it and can't help but criticize it.....I can still give them a break. It's so easy to give people a break.

Why don't we give people breaks? Why don't we do that? Why don't I do that? How many times is it actually necessary to be offended, to be frustrated, to be angry at someone, for making a simple, inconsequential mistake. Why do I need to let them

know? And why do I need to stop admiring them when they do it? Why are we filled with so many strict and ridiculous expectations for our co-workers, our bosses, our family, our roommates, and our significant others?

I know - it's easy to say and hard to implement in real life. I can have a moment of clarity all I want, but I'm gonna go to bed and wake up and within seconds get completely pissed off at the people in my life for X, Y or Z reason.

But you know what? I think a state of mind where 99 times out of 100 we give people a break, and don't take things personally, and just find something in everyone to appreciate, is completely attainable.

I know I can make myself that way. I agree that it's hard, but I will never agree that it's impossible. I have actually met people like this. And I want to be like this. I want it. And I don't care if it's hard to implement. I will get there as soon as I can.

From now on, this goal is as important to me as my career, my health, and my finances. And it will get just as much attention as all those other things.