

Serenity at Work at Work

What was your emotional state on your first day at work? My first days on each new job would not be called serene. Every new job, every new job setting brought me back to zero on the serenity scale. I was fearful, worried that I might not be able to do the job and that I might not be liked. I still remember my first day as a classroom teacher when in less than six hours I used up lesson plans that had taken eight hours to prepare. How was I going to be successful doing that for the next 180 days? On another job I remember wondering till the day I left—after six years—when my boss was going to call me in and bawl me out for some mistake I had made. It never happened, but I worried about it for six years.

Serenity at work can come naturally just by surviving for some extended period of time. That type of serenity would be limited to the work and surrounding circumstances remaining unchanged over time. Change any element—new duty, new supervisor, new work location—and the level of serenity drops if not disappears for a time. On the other hand, in all circumstances and with any change, I can live with serenity based on faith and hope—on faith that there is a God who has redeemed me for life everlasting and who works all things to the good and on my hope, confident expectation, that I will receive the divine blessings I desire.

This does not mean I need do nothing to address the fears that keep serenity at bay. Faith and Hope provide a base from which to act toward and achieve serenity at work. The work I can choose to do includes recognizing, naming, the fear that I harbor in my heart. I need to identify the worse that can happen if what I fear does happen. Then I plan what to do if that worst fear should actually happen, somewhat like NASA plans for its space missions. Then if the worse happens, I am not lost; I have a set of actions, planned in calmer times, to take in order to ameliorate the situation.

More important though is the next step. I consider “What is the best that could happen in the given fearful situation?” I then create a plan, a set of actions I can take to bring that best result into existence. In these actions I am choosing my attitude and my reaction, whatever happens.

I pray for good health and I buy long-term care insurance. A friend works in a high tech field that experiences frequent shifts in priorities and job functions. He learns and works at his job keeping the company’s systems working. He has developed a plan for implementing a new job search within hours of his job ending, no matter how suddenly. The last time the job ended, he had a new one ready to go to the first workday after his layoff notice took effect.

As I see it, serenity is not a life without problems or tension. It is a life in which the problems and tensions are seen in a context of the larger values of my faith and in the context of means for dealing with the worst and the best that could result from those fear-causing problems. I choose my attitude, serenity, by my faith and my preparations.

SERENITY — A Faith Based Value at Work

1. What does applying the faith-based value of serenity in your workplace mean to you? What do you think it would mean to those with whom you work? How does its meaning change for your different workplaces, for example, home or where you volunteer?
2. Why is it important to gain an understanding of serenity in the workplace and how to apply that understanding?
3. How do/could you apply the concept of serenity in your workplace(s)?
4. What would happen in your workplace if you took and actively applied the value of faith-based serenity in your workplace(s)? How would the workplace sound different? Look different? Feel different?
5. What first step are you willing to take this week?