

NCCI Member's Book Aims for Less Stress at Work

NCCI member Kathleen A. Paris says her new book, *Staying Healthy in Sick Organizations: The Clover Practice*, "is for anyone who works for a paycheck."

The Clover Practice™ offers less stress and more peace of mind at the end of the work day. The practice comes from Paris's 20-plus years as a management consultant and author. NCCI members may know Paris from her studies and articles on strategic planning in higher education.

The Clover Practice, mirroring the three-leaved plant, consists of three principles:

1. Tell the truth, always
2. Speak for yourself
3. Declare your interdependence.

All three of these principles are simple, but not easy to practice. "If peace of mind is the aim," Paris says, "we need to be truthful, even when it's not convenient." White lies, she says, compromise integrity and the degree to which others trust us.

Paris says that talking to others about how things look from your perspective—using specific language about what you have observed and experienced—is a much better way to be heard than telling people they are careless, uncooperative or incompetent. "If you make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and are willing to entertain other views, you are more likely to be heard. In any work situation, there are as many 'truths' as people in the room," says Paris.

Declare your *interdependence* is the third leaf of The Clover Practice. Paris says this is a hard sell in a country that celebrates its *independence*. "Our personal success at work depends on other people being successful." Paris notes that what happens in one part of the organization affects many other parts as well. When we acknowledge these connections, we can choose behaviors that support shared success and reduce conflict and stress.

Paris compares organizations to the human body. She asserts that just like people, organizations can become tired, sluggish and not as productive as they could be. "Modern organizations are plagued by three weaknesses: obsolete hierarchical, patriarchal command and control structures and methods; too many people without adequate management preparation or support; and a willingness to cling to illusions. These factors create stress and often quite toxic work environments for their employees."

Paris notes that while some organizations may produce varying levels of stress, others are "pathological." Employees in such unhealthy organizations should consider a change. For anyone considering a move, Paris suggests ways to prepare, including career counseling, more education and networking in professional groups. Paris also encourages readers to do their "grown up" homework. "Some of the behaviors we learned as children coping with family situations may not serve as well as working adults." She provides a series of questions to help get that homework started.

Staying Healthy in Sick Organizations: The Clover Practice™ may be ordered from Amazon.com. Paris also provides workshops and conference keynote addresses on staying healthy while you work with The Clover Practice™. Hear interviews of Kathleen online at *Working Week* <http://www.management-issues.com/2008/9/9/podcast/the-working-week-68.asp> and at Facilitator U

http://www.facilitatoru.com/experts/staying_healthy_in_sick_organizations.html. Watch a video at <http://videos.med.wisc.edu/videoInfo.php?videoid=5347>.

Readers may download the first chapter of the book free of charge at kathleenparis.com. Contact her at kathleen@kathleeparis.com.