



Healthy Rebellion

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I recently read a wonderful book: *Embracing Rebellion* by Steven L. Anderson. In it, Steve discusses the concept of rebellion and how it may be not only healthy for both our workforce and our teenagers to rebel, but it may be necessary in their development. To my surprise, this very small book that took only one weekend to read is filled to the brim with tips about assertiveness, new ways to look at leadership from a psychological perspective, insightful quotations and writings, personal trials with lessons to be shared, an array of interesting book suggestions, and many research-based methods shared on how to become emotionally intelligent, listen to others effectively, develop your team, and more.

Among the many profound and helpful ideas in the book that surprised me was when I read that most parents think their job is to protect their children, just as many managers want to protect their team. Steve asserts that this may not be the best approach. It has been my feeling throughout my parenting that my job was to protect; and it is, to an extent. If my child is about to touch the burner of a stove, I will grab his hand away to keep him safe. But I can see how protecting may fall down a slippery slope into managing and then controlling. When employees (or teens) rebel, managers (and parents) will often argue with them. Some managers and parents, Steve says, may think they have to be right all the time. These people think being wrong shows weakness, and they believe they are simply keeping others in line with this dominating behavior. By showing respect through truly listening to an employee or teenager instead, and giving them the space to learn and grow, Steve believes you change the dynamic of arguing about who is right to doing the right thing.

In *Embracing Rebellion*, it is noted that psychologist Erik Erickson said that human beings have to resolve crises as they move through life in order to advance to the next stage. During these struggles, teens behave in a rebellious manner, and Erickson argues that we must let them struggle so they can face self-doubts and learn more about themselves in the process. Our employees, too, have these struggles. Many times managers hand employees decisions instead of letting the employee struggle with the situation and come up with their own method of dealing with it. It is through this struggle that real learning and emotional development takes place.

Sometimes employees need to assert themselves to help change their manager's behavior to one of support instead of control. This can be scary for both employee and manager, but it may be a necessary step in the process of emotional and professional growth. In his book, Steve provides a four-step process for helping employees assert themselves in the workplace. In essence, here is how to rebel the healthy way:

Step 1: Tell the other person what they are doing that upsets you. Example: I feel upset when you interrupt me.

Step 2: Tell the person how their behavior makes you feel. Example: When you interrupt me, it makes me feel frustrated because I feel like you are not interested in what I have to say.

Step 3: Look them in the eye and explain to them the changes you would like them to make. Example: I would really appreciate it if you would listen to me until I finish without interruption.

Step 4: If they will not cooperate, do not get angry. Instead, set forth a consequence if the behavior continues. Example: It's your choice if you want to continue interrupting me, but just realize that the next time you do it, I will end the conversation.

All of these steps are explained in more detail in Steve's book. If you haven't yet, I encourage you to read *Embracing Rebellion*.