

“I’m Just Not Good Enough!”

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I’m not patient enough. I won’t deny it. That limitation has been thrown in my face many times in the past two weeks. My wife hears about it when I’m struggling with marketing my business. She sees it when I can’t find the right words to inspire my client. And, unfortunately, she feels my impatience personally sometimes. That really disappoints me.

Well, what about you? You’re not without limitations, are you? Here, check all that apply. You’re not disciplined enough. You’re not creative enough. You’re not compassionate enough, smart enough, or confident enough. You don’t delegate as much as you should.

Okay, so neither of us is perfect. But what about those other people who work with you? They’re not dedicated enough. They’re not motivated enough, reliable enough, or loyal enough. They’re not honest enough with you. And they don’t care enough about the success of the organization.

Just what is this concept of “enough” and “not enough”? The impression can either inspire you to improve, or it can demoralize and even paralyze you. Further, it’s such a subjective concept. I have difficulty quantifying what’s “enough.” I simply know that at times I feel inadequate.

The whole concept tears me up. I’m a “maximizer,” which means that I love taking something that’s already strong and moving it in the direction of superb. I love looking for improvement opportunities. Excellence is my target. “Good enough” is rarely good enough for me.

Yet when I don’t perform as well as my high standard, I start feeling that I’m “not enough,” and I go into a funk. It doesn’t occur often, and I’m getting better at catching myself when I feel it coming on. I rarely go back to bed and pull the covers over my head (though it’s tempting!).

I’ve learned that it’s helpful to go to my wife and admit that I’m feeling inadequate. She used to work to reassure me, seeking to make me feel better. But sometimes feelings just “are,” and it’s hard to change them with logic.

Also, we’ve admitted to each other that we are, indeed, inadequate. We think God probably made us with limitations so that we’d have to rely on each other. Maybe you’ve noticed that over the past couple of months, my articles have stressed the importance of collaboration.

I’ve also learned that the sensation of “not enough” usually occurs when I am overwhelmed, feeling out of control. So, my wife and I spend some time sorting. We’ll identify what I really can control, what I can at least influence, and what I genuinely can’t control.

One thing that always falls into the “can control” category is my response to the current situation. And I always realize in a fresh way that I can influence a lot!

Related to “not enough” is “almost enough.” That concept is certainly conjectural. You can work and work, improving all the time, and “almost enough” keeps you barely short of your objective.

Ah, can you finally be satisfied in reaching “just barely enough”? Hardly! Why would anyone settle for “just enough”? If what you’ve accomplished is sufficient, of what value are the words “just” and “barely”? Why not acknowledge your success and enjoy the appropriate satisfaction?

Maybe by holding back on the celebration, you’re trying in some artificial way to keep yourself inspired to keep working until you’ve achieved “more than enough.”? If you finally do, are you satisfied? Do you feel grateful for having more than enough time, money, energy, ideas, and love?

Isn't this concept of "enough" really about a state of mind rather than quantity? If it's not about amount but about perspective, what would it take for your outlook to change from "not enough" to "more than enough"? What would you do differently if you had more than enough of everything you need?

If you saw abundance where you now see lack, would you give more, appreciate more, encourage more, serve more?

Being content for some people is boring. However, others find contentment to be extremely exciting. As you consider what makes (or will make) you content, be aware that you could be seduced into allowing the world's measure of "enough" to drive you, rather than your own internal satisfaction.

Be both suspicious and curious about this concept of "enough." Realize that you're not really measuring "what is." Instead, "enough" or "not enough" is the meaning you apply to what is.

For every example where the world says you're "not enough," there are dozens of examples where you are and have more than enough. Be grateful for what you are and have. Work on what you can influence and find ways to work around what you can't control.

And that's more than enough for this week!

As a leader, you may not be able to talk openly with your colleagues about "enough." You can contact Dennis at dennis@buildingfutureleaders.com or 404-575-3050 for a free exploratory conversation.