

## Why You Shouldn't Always Be The Smartest Person In The Room

### Every Leader Needs A Personal Carbon Monoxide Detector

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*That which drives and nurtures your ego has the greatest potential to negate your leadership effectiveness. - Kendall C. Wright, "The Actualizer"*

Working with an insecure, immature, ego-tripping leader is tantamount to being slowly poisoned by carbon monoxide. Upon first glance, this bold assertion seems an unlikely analogy, perhaps even a far-fetched exaggeration. But upon further review and exploration, the similarities between ineffective leadership and carbon monoxide poisoning are startling.

As you may know, carbon monoxide is a deadly odorless, colorless, and tasteless gas. It is most readily associated with petroleum based fuels, but not exclusively. Carbon monoxide can be produced by burning any substance containing carbon. Actually, carbon monoxide is an unavoidable by-product if the carbon element isn't completely burned.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, carbon monoxide is one of the leading causes of death by poisoning, with more than 400 victims in the United States each year. Amazingly, in excess of 4,000 individuals are hospitalized as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning. Incredibly, annually, approximately 20,000 people visit the emergency room with symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. Clearly, carbon monoxide poisoning is pervasive and a serious concern. And equally as clear is the need to step up the utilization of carbon monoxide detectors. Carbon monoxide detectors save lives, and in the workplace a personal "carbon monoxide detector" can save a career.

Most leaders love to be valued and appreciated. Most leaders enjoy being a resource to their associates and colleagues. What most leaders may not know is that their secret desire to establish themselves as the smartest person in the room is slowly poisoning their organizational culture and putting a ceiling on progress and innovation.

Always being the smartest person in the room is dangerous – on so many levels. Not to be misunderstood, intellectual horsepower is usually a prized asset. However, the desire, goal, or preoccupation with "flaunting" yours and "smashing" others is extremely common among ineffective and immature leaders. Those leaders who seek, even crave, the dubious distinction of always being the smartest person in the room often create a toxic environment for those with whom they frequently interact. Such an environment closely resembles an environment deluged with high concentrations of carbon monoxide. In fact, the impact on the inhabitants of each environment is very similar. Listed below is a short inventory of symptoms common to both ineffective leadership and carbon monoxide poisoning.

**Headaches** – pompous, pretentious, and domineering leaders tend to leave their associates with throbbing headaches. The reason being - the associates don't have the opportunity to get their great ideas out of their heads.

**Blurred Vision** – it won't be long before team members lose sight of what they are working toward if their insights and observations are routinely demeaned, devalued, or disregarded.

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**Chest Pain** – when competent, ambitious, and creative associates are habitually shut down and shut out from contributing, it pains their hearts. If their hearts are shut out, it won't be long before they defiantly walk out.

**Weakness** – this applies to both the physical and emotional states of the associates. Haughty leaders and caustic environments take an incredible toll on the physiological and psychological strength of their associates and colleagues. Ineffective leaders systematically erode the bonds of affinity and loyalty within the organization.

**Vomiting** – yes it is disgusting, but it is even more repulsive when associates regurgitate their frustrations all over anyone innocently standing near.

As this abbreviated list of symptoms common to carbon monoxide and ineffective leadership highlights, long-term exposure to either can result in some very unfavorable and undesirable consequences. This list should serve as an alarm to every leader to diligently guard against the temptation of having to always be the smartest person in the room.

Today, fire departments all across the country remind us of the importance of having carbon monoxide detectors in our homes. Every leader needs a "carbon monoxide" detector in the work place. The leader's carbon monoxide detector is someone who alerts the leader to any stifling or suffocating behavior which shuts others down or shuts others out.

As a leader, if you are always the smartest person in the room, you may be slowly poisoning the environment for those you lead and direct.

**Leadership Lesson:** Needing to always be the smartest person in the room is a sign of immature and ineffective leadership. Such a preoccupation creates a toxic environment with symptoms similar to carbon monoxide poisoning – headache, weakness, blurred vision and vomiting. So, the next time an associate complains of a headache and nausea, check your personal "*carbon monoxide detector*" to ensure you aren't the source of the contaminant.

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Kendall C. Wright, "The Actualizer," CEO of Entelechy T&D, Inc., helps business leaders -at all levels- fulfill the hard parts of their job descriptions. He is the author of *Affirming and Confirming SuccessFUL Living* and most recently released *Conversations On Success*, featuring insights from Les Brown, James Kouzes and other top tier international speakers. Find free resources at [www.EntelechyCan.com](http://www.EntelechyCan.com). Contact us at [Kendall@EntelechyCan.com](mailto:Kendall@EntelechyCan.com) or 513.860.4934.