

Litzinger Career Consulting

7625 W. Hutchinson Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15218 • 412-242-5342 • www.KarensCareerCoaching.com

Top Five Networking Gremlins and How to Reframe Them

Networking! For some the word brings anxiety and the distasteful word schmoozing comes to mind. For the lucky ones, you can rally and do what you need to do, yet may not feel you are having success.

Networking to clarify career goals is an important strategy to ground career decisions. Networking in the job search is critical since it has a 50-80% success, exponentially better than the black hole of the Internet. And for getting clients and advancement on the job, it's a reality that people like to do business with individuals they know and like.

Sometimes we have plenty of networking strategies, yet something keeps us from moving forward or being successful. That something is often our internal gremlins, our negative self-talk.

Negative self-talk is tied to cognitive behavior theory in psychology. The theory is that our thoughts affect our feelings which affect our behavior. Reframing our negative thoughts to something more helpful can have a positive impact on our feelings and then actions. Using this theory, we still want the reframed thought to be grounded in reality and believable, not simply a positive affirmation, although that is another strategy for dealing with negative thoughts which will be covered later.

#1 Gremlin Thought: Networking never works for me.

Resulting Feeling: Pessimism, hopelessness, dread

Resulting Behavior: Procrastination, Inaction

Strategy- Dispute it like a lawyer: "Really, has it NEVER worked? What about that one time you got a useful insight about ____? Even if it doesn't lead to a job or new business, maybe you'll get one tidbit of useful information or at least practice. It seems to work for other people so maybe you can do something different to help it work for you. Maybe it will work this time. You won't know until you try.

Reframed Thought: Although it feels like networking hasn't worked much for me in the past, I've heard so many stories about it being valuable, I'm going to rally and give it a try again. Maybe I'll ask someone for advice about how networking worked for them and try something different.

Resulting Feeling: Somewhat hopeful, encouraged, empowered.

Resulting Behavior: Action, reaching out, perhaps reading about strategies.

#2 Gremlin Thought: I hate how it feels superficial, insincere, like schmoozing.

Resulting Feeling: Distaste, disgust, superiority

Resulting Behavior: Not reaching out, not attending events

Strategy – Dispute it like a lawyer: Even if you think some people are insincere, you could choose to be sincere. If you have a sincere purpose like asking for information, advice or contacts, it's not superficial. Ask people about themselves with genuine curiosity and listen more than you talk to have a positive interaction. You don't have to be "working the room" making lots of contacts. If you focus more on conversation quality than quantity, it could be more meaningful.

Reframed Thought: Even though I've thought about networking as superficial at times, I will remember that I have a purpose and I'll balance that with a genuine curiosity about people and information.

Resulting Feeling: Openness, purposeful, curious, authentic

Resulting Behavior: Reviewing purpose, preparing questions, attending events, initiating conversations, staying in touch

#3 Gremlin Thought: I hate to ask for help.

Resulting Feeling: Like bothering people, not deserving, nervous, stubborn, superiority (two different??)

Resulting Behavior: Not reaching out, continuing to do the same actions with same results, not reaching potential.

Strategy – Dispute it like a lawyer: Would you try to help someone if you could and had the time? Maybe someone would be flattered if you ask for their advice? If you don't ask for help or have a conversation, you limit your chance of success.

Reframed Thought: I remember times that I've been asked for help and have been willing or happy to do so. I realize that my not asking for help limits my chance of success. Everyone needs help now and then. Maybe someone will even feel good and valuable by being able to talk about themselves and help me. I'll pay it forward and plan on helping when I'm asked.

Resulting Feeling: Hopeful, more confident, interconnected

Resulting Behavior: Reaching out, sending thank you notes, helping others

#4 Gremlin Thought: I'm never sure what to say in networking situations.

Resulting Feeling: Insecure, resistant, nervous, perfection feelings

Resulting Behavior: Not taking action, stumbling, have negative experiences

Strategy – Dispute it like a lawyer: Do you think anyone is really sure what to say in networking interactions? Haven't you had a few interactions that weren't a disaster? Can't you do something to prepare more or practice? What's the worst that can happen if you say something that's not so clear? If you don't say anything or don't reach out, then you'll never know if it could work out.

Reframed Thought: Even though I feel awkward, I will try to increase my confidence by preparing some opening conversation line or preparing questions to ask. Maybe I'll even practice to decrease my anxiety. Even if it's not as smooth as I hope, I will have at least tried and maybe it can be helpful.

Resulting Feeling: Willingness, increased confidence, hopeful, self-acceptance

Resulting Behavior: Preparation, practice, reaching out, taking risks

#5 Gremlin Thought: I should be able to do this on my own.

Resulting Feeling: Independent, superiority, stubborn, resentful

Resulting Behavior: Staying insolated, doing the same things over and over, stopping action due to discouragement

Strategy – Dispute it like a lawyer: Why do you think you should do this on your own? Haven't you asked for help in any other situation? You've heard people get jobs and business through networking, so why are you limiting your opportunities, even sabotaging yourself?

Reframed Thought: I like to be independent, and also realize success could be faster or easier with help. Getting help doesn't mean I'm not competent, it means I'm smart. I accept that networking is how people do business to open doors and trust that competence is still the most important element.

Resulting Feeling: Acceptance, openness, competence, optimistic of better success

Resulting Behavior: Taking charge, strategizing, reaching out, following up

Affirmation Approach

Positive affirmations are another strategy for combating negative self-talk. The view is that the positive statements and acting "as if" you believe something will help create it as reality. Here are some examples to try that relate to the above five gremlins.

#1: "I attract networking opportunities that work for me."

#2: "I create positive networking conversations that are good for me and for others."

#3: "I trust that people are inherently generous and will want to help me."

#4: "I am guided to say clear, friendly and genuine statements in networking interactions."

#5: "I open myself to accept help and will give help to others when needed."