



Dear Friends and Clients,

Jack is a smart and talented young man with strong academic credentials including an MBA from a leading university. During his six-year career with a large consumer product company, Jack has received good performance ratings and higher than average compensation.

But Jack isn't satisfied with the rate of his career progress. He resents being left out of some interesting projects, he believes that he doesn't get enough face time with his boss, and he is still angry about being denied a promotion in 2009.

Jack is starting to quietly explore jobs at other companies. He may be wise to look for a fresh start in a new place, but I think that the same problems are likely to recur unless Jack also finds better ways to address the kind of setbacks that occur in all our careers.

Jack has trouble accepting criticism and he isn't able to recognize and learn from his own mistakes. Once problems occur, he seems to exhaust his bosses and colleagues with demands for apologies or reassurance, so that ultimately they begin to avoid him.

I have read that some of today's young professionals grew up with so much parental praise that they learned to depend on it. Now, the theory goes, they need so much positive reinforcement that they don't perform well in tougher professional environments.

There may be some truth in that theory, including in Jack's case, but I think that dealing with professional rejection is an age-old problem. And, as I'll discuss in this issue, philosophers writing centuries ago about such challenges offered practical advice that is useful today.

Warm wishes, Bev

**Don't Obsess About Bad Breaks
-- Steer a Steady Course
in Both Good Times & Bad**

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Shijo faced a career crisis. He had served his boss loyally for years, but now he was out of favor because he had suggested radical new ways of doing things. His boss had threatened to demote Shijo and transfer him to a remote branch of the organization.

Shijo's innovative but controversial ideas had been inspired by his mentor. So he wrote to that wise man, expressing frustration and seeking advice. Hot-tempered Shijo may have been surprised by what the mentor wrote back. He told Shijo, essentially, to suck it up, keep a low profile for a while, and look within himself to find gratitude for favors that the boss had bestowed in earlier years.

Shijo was a 13th Century Japanese samurai, committed to serve a powerful warlord. Shijo's mentor was Nichiren, the founder of a school of Buddhism that challenged the authoritarian doctrine of the day and that offered the Buddhist way as a practical path available to ordinary people.

Nichiren speculated that Shijo's rivals might be speaking ill of him. He urged Shijo to restrain his anger, act cautiously and genuinely bury any resentment he might feel toward his lord. In a now-famous letter to Shijo, Nichiren offered this advice:

Worthy persons deserve to be called so because they are not carried away by the eight winds: prosperity, decline, disgrace, honor, praise, censure, suffering, and pleasure. They are neither elated by prosperity nor grieved by decline. The heavenly gods will surely protect one who is unbending before the eight winds. But if you nurse an unreasonable grudge against your lord, they will not protect you, not for all your prayers.

In writing about the "eight winds," Nichiren suggested that an enlightened person is unfazed by either disaster or good fortune. An essential part of his message was that, regardless of the unfair situation in which Shijo found himself, it was up to him to stay cool and find a way to make things better.

Nichiren offered excellent strategic advice, and Shijo eventually got his career back on track. He refused to be shaken or humiliated during his years out of favor, and he persevered in seeking ways to support his boss. Ultimately the warlord noticed Shijo's loyal service, and restored and expanded his old job.

In "**The Buddha In Your Rearview Mirror**," Woody Hochswender says that what Nichiren was describing is sometimes known as "grace under fire." It is, he said, the quality that George Washington displayed when he resisted despair during the darkest days of the Revolution.

But there are also four positive winds that we are wise to resist. It can be dangerous to be infatuated with your success, or preoccupied and sidetracked by

wealth or praise. Hochswender suggests that we observe the sad personal histories of lottery jackpot winners for examples of what happens with too much prosperity, too fast.

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