

"I've already been bumped once. You can't do this to me!" says one angry soul.

"Sir, we're overbooked, but I'm sure I can get you on."

"You better."

Another pair of voices, "Ma'am, this woman and I have the same seat assignment on our boarding passes."

"I'm sorry" the gate attendant says kindly, "We've had a little trouble with our computer, and this has happened a couple times. Let me see your boarding passes."

You exchange anxious looks with an older woman across from you and check your boarding pass, realizing it's not going to tell you if it's a duplicate. You try to tune out the still-angry man, who's "already been bumped once," and is now saying, "Even if your incompetent airline has to take someone's boarding pass back, you better get me on that flight."

"Sir, we're going to take care of you," the gate attendant says.

"Right!" says a woman in a velvet track suit, "Like you did to me when you called me up here and told me my online seat assignment wouldn't be honored."

You look around. No one has their nose in a book any more. People who were sitting are now standing, people standing are edging closer to the boarding counter, where there is now a crooked line of six people.

The man across from you says, "I've got my seat assignment, but my wife was meeting me and she's late, and they wouldn't give me her pass, cuz she has to check in with photo ID; those damned terrorists are still screwing us over." You wonder: What are the chances I'm going to get to Orlando tonight?

That to me is just like the health care debate that raged in our country for a decade and is peaking as I go to press: Hurried conditions. Uncertainty. Apparent scarcity. A couple of people vocally and angrily express their fears and soon a contagion of fear and scarcity-thinking snakes through the "boarding area" of the country watching health care reform. Downsizing companies can feel that kind of spreading fear and scarcity, too. The same flames of fear can leap through a crowd of adults at a senior-parents college night or at a pre-season tryout meeting, ignited by a highly emotional critic who says "I know for a fact that Acme College (or Coach Smith) has their own private list of who gets in." A job-application line can feel the same way. Scarcity + vocal anger = waves of panic. And, man, does everybody's work get hard as their minds "flood" with emotion.

Have you ever tried working when someone is yelling at you?

I could write about what the "authorized leader" (the ticket agent, coach, teacher, job provider, congressman) might do in such circumstances, but I want to suggest a different point for ALL of us as leading-followers. What if we came from a standpoint not of scarcity but of abundance? What might we come up with? Here's a partial list of our health care abundance. If we can somehow cultivate our awareness of our abundance, I believe, we can radically change our problem solving ability, and work to make health care work:

We have phenomenal health care systems: nurses, doctors, meds, processes, hospitals, alternative approaches, IT systems, and excellent for- and not-for-profit organizations. America is rich with capability.

We have a fantastic representative democracy with people we have elected, an imperfect system that's grown for over two centuries; we have forums, multiple media outlets, blogs, and countless other ways to talk, listen, and where helpful, to vote. Our democracy has (we have) proven again: We're alive and well!

Brilliant researchers—in universities, think tanks, foundations, corporations, etc., and rich data that gets better every single day.

Imagine the different kind of problem solving we'd have: at tryouts, at job application lines, at down-sizing companies, and in our health care reform efforts if we came first from a sense of abundance! How might you shift the way you're looking at your situations—to emphasize capability and abundance first?

Readers Lead

Mick McKellar wrote: Although I agree in principle with your concept of approaching all impending crises with the positive energy that flows from a feeling of abundance, I can say from personal experience that a drowning man feels much more keenly the scarcity of oxygen in his lungs than the abundance of air . . . just out of his reach above the surface of the water. There is ample evidence that fear and anger prevent the human mind from reacting and behaving rationally.

I worked for many years with extremely angry senior citizens and incredibly upset disability claimants yelling at me and even threatening me and my family. As a Social Security Field Representative, I was doused with a cup of hot coffee, hit with a number of canes and walking sticks, chased by an angry claimant with a chain saw, and had a gun pulled on me in the office. In nearly every case, once we could quiet the aggrieved person, the issue was resolved quickly and fairly—even amicably. But until the rage and fear were defused and diffused, no communication took place. First, you have to control the drowning man so he won't drag you down as well, and then get his head above the surface so his panic can subside and he can think about what he is doing. If we can quench the fire of fear sweeping our country, flames often fanned as much by well-meaning and concerned citizens as by blowhards with political agendas, the dialog concerning all the wonderful abundance of our health care system can go forward and the sense of abundance has a fighting chance. We are all lifeguards of the future for our fellow travelers on this planet Earth, and we need to consider how to rescue those drowning in anger over today or fear of tomorrow.