



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SERIES

THE SUMMARY OF THE ONE-LIFE SOLUTION

Dr. Henry Cloud
Collins Business 2008

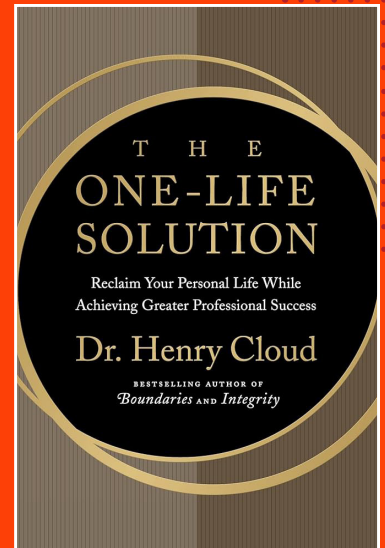
Part One: Foundations

CHAPTER 1:

Identifying the Problem—and the Solution

This is primarily a book about work. It is about your business, your performance, your career, your passion, and your sense of well-being at work. I hope it will help you to lead better, manage better, and do what you do better. So, our focus will be mostly in the context of work. But it is also a book about you and your overall well-being, and with the fragmentation of work and life we're all experiencing, we will also talk a lot about you and the way that work affects your life and vice versa.

Our focus will be on constructing and developing better boundaries. We will do that first by talking about what boundaries are and



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what they do for your work and your life, and how they affect your power to do both of those well. That will lay a foundation for you to understand the concept in order to apply it better.

Next, we will move to specific boundary practices and structures as they are lived out in the context of the leadership, management, and work life. Some will be descriptive and some prescriptive. I will give you some tips on specific structures and practices that you can implement that will do two things. First, they will solve many problems in your leadership, management, and work. They will help your performance. Second, by doing them, they will also build better boundaries for you as a person. As you implement them, you will grow and change, as well as the people above, around, and below you in your organization.

Then, throughout all of it, we will be integrating life and work. Remember, this is about you as a person. It is not just about work problems and situations or personal problems and situations. This is about you, the person who has to live in both of those worlds. The intent is not necessarily to bring both of them together, but to bring you together to live in both worlds in an integrated way. As you integrate, you will be able to live more and more from a strong core, and create the life you were designed to live. The one life that only you can live, and live well.

CHAPTER 2: Your Vision and Your Boundaries

What is it we are trying to accomplish in *The One-Life Solution*? The simple answer is this: GAIN CONTROL.

We are not trying to gain control of other people or of all the circumstances or even all of the outcomes. Those things will take care of themselves as you gain control of the only thing you can ever control—your-

self. As you do that, you will experience the things all of us desire in the integration of work and life.

The irony is that most people are so caught up in trying to control the things they cannot control—other people, circumstance, or outcomes—that in the process they lose control of themselves. And here is the real paradox. It is only when you do take control of yourself that you will begin to have significant influence on those other things: people, circumstances, and outcomes. People in control of themselves the most influence everyone and everything around them to good ends, results, and profits. But they start with themselves, and that is the essence of boundaries.

Life is not an either-or proposition in which everything is either wonderful or miserable. But there is an either-or choice we can make when it comes to how we will live the times that we do have, good or bad.

There is a proactive life lived with purpose. While there may be hardships, losses, and even times of poor results in various areas, life lived this way has an intentional direction to it, even when bad things happen. The person who lives like this feels empowered to live and exert positive energy to accomplish effects that are in line with who he is and what he wants.

There is also a life that is dictated to, where the one living it has little choice and even less control over the circumstances of his existence. In short, he feels more like a result than a cause—a victim if you will. And that gets us to the essence of the vision for what we are trying to accomplish here: YOU ARE A CAUSE, NOT A RESULT.

In other words, you will be empowered by your choices and your actions to bring about the results you want in your work and in your life, as opposed to your work and your life bringing about its results on you.

CHAPTER 3: Structure and Boundaries

What do you think of when you think of the word “structure”? For some people, it is their worst nightmare. “I do not want to be in an overly structured environment,” they instantly think—and probably for good reason. Everyone has had some experience where rules, policies, and other structures virtually snuffed the life out of all those who were caged within its walls. If structures are too stifling, they can limit us to such a degree that we feel as if we cannot move. Ask any teenager with a rigid or controlling parent about the need for more space.

But, while problems with too much structure and not enough open space are one thing, a bigger problem is the lack of structure itself. We cannot live without it, any more than we can live without a roof over our heads. It provides the basis for us to know who we are, what we want, what we feel and think, and what our ability is to make choices and do something about those things. People use the phrase, “it is beginning to take shape,” when speaking of a project, or a dream, to mean that it is beginning to have struc-

ture. You can actually see how the pieces are coming together and its form emerges.

A person is exactly like that, relationships are like that, and businesses are like that. Literally, the word “structure” comes from the Latin word for “to build.” Think about the word “construction,” where something is built. It is about the parts becoming organized into a cohesive whole. And when the whole is constructed, the parts hold together and work. But if the parts are spread out all over the place and there is no structure holding them together, or if they are too flimsy or movable, they do not work.

Your boundaries are the structure of your personality, and as you live them out, they organize the structure of your self, your relationships, your work, and your life.

So, if all goes well in your development, the structures are in place that allow you to experience yourself as separate and differentiated from others, contain harmful patterns and keep them from spreading, define yourself and know who you are, set limits when needed, possess and live out your values, and have self-control—and thereby be free and autonomous.

Part Two: REBUILDING BOUNDARIES

CHAPTER 4: Reclaiming Your Power

You can only control yourself—not others—but when you control yourself well, you will do well with others. You lose your power when you have a personal weak spot. One of the most important questions that you will ever ask yourself: Where, with whom, and under what circumstances do you lose your power? What are the chinks in your armor? Where are the holes in your fences?

There are a variety of unhealthy needs, fears, inabilities, and other conditions that tear holes in our boundaries:

- The need for security
- The need for approval
- The need to be perfect
- The need to have others see you as ideal
- The need to identify with other people's problems, pain, or hurt

- The need to rescue
- The fear of being alone or isolated
- The fear of conflict and need for harmony
- The fear of disagreement or differing opinions
- The fear of anger
- The fear of feeling inferior
- The fear of someone's position of power
- The inability to say "No"
- The inability to hear "No" or accept limits
- The inability to tolerate the imperfection, incompetence, nonperformance, or failure of others
- Idealization and hero worship
- Lack of internal structure
- Dependency
- Vulnerability to bad conditions or outcomes

OK, if you did not identify with at least one of these needs, fears, disabilities, or conditions, then you live in a cave, and you need to get out more. In other words, we all have some sorts of situations and people that get to our underbelly and turn us into less than who we want to be. Becoming aware of your pattern—knowing when you lose it—is a key step in getting better. So identify the holes in your fences and own them. Watch for them and address them.

CHAPTER 5: The Audit

Your time is your life. Period. How you spend it ends up being what your life is. No matter what you want to do, wish you had done, plan to do, or fantasize about

while you are doing something else, the final reality of your life is how you spent your time.

So, one of the greatest structures that you have to build the life you want to have is the direction of your time. However, turning your time into a life that you want involves more than time management.

I find that often people do not know what they are actually spending their time on, nor why they are spending it in the ways that they are. They feel overworked, stressed out, spread too thin, and also dissatisfied with the results of all that effort. Yet, they have never connected the dots to see that their results are a function of how they spend their time. They wrongly think there is just too much to do. They miss the great truth that governs time. The truth is that there is zero to do. You are the one (unless you are in prison or elementary school or are dealing with an illness or other tragedy) who has chosen to go from zero to whatever you are choosing to do. How you are spending your time is exactly that—you spending your time. You are choosing to do with it whatever you are doing with it. What has to happen is that you have to take a look at what you are getting for your effort, and if you do not like it, then spend it differently. But you can't do that until you know exactly what is happening. Time and purpose audits will do that for you.

Conducting an audit will make you aware of three very important things: where you are spending your time, the (dis)connections between your values and how you spend your time, and the personal issues that contribute to the problem.

Begin by identifying your values, vision, mission, and goals. Then log your time in thirty-minute increments—for weeks or months—and write down what you discover, using percentages. (For example: "I spend 40 percent of my day on operations, when I need to be spending my time on vision and relationships.") Then identify your personal disconnects and

seek to understand them. Finally, develop some rules to deal with the discrepancies between your goals and the current activities that are consuming your time. (For example: “No answering e-mail except for these two time slots each day.”)

CHAPTER 6: The Law of Boundaries

The next step is to understand the ten key laws that govern boundaries themselves. These laws constitute a set of principles that you can use to make decisions with people and situations, and also use to figure out why some situations are askew.

1. THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING. This principle says the one who is doing a given behavior is the one who should be reaping the consequences of it, good or bad.
2. THE LAW OF RESPONSIBILITY *FOR* AND *TO*. You are responsible *for* yourself, and responsible *to* others. You should be helping others do what they should be doing, and thus empowering them, not doing for them what they should be doing for themselves.
3. THE LAW OF POWER. Power over yourself is the only kind of power you ever have, so it is the only kind of power that you can ever gain or lose.
4. THE LAW OF RESPECT. You are to command respect of yourself, and you are respectful of the boundaries of other people.
5. THE LAW OF MOTIVATION. You do things for positive reasons, and not because you do not have the freedom to say “no.”
6. THE LAW OF THE EVALUATION OF PAIN. Hurting people is not necessarily a bad thing. However, harm is not good. The truth sometimes hurts.

Like with a dentist, hurt can be sometimes helpful. You can hurt without harming.

7. THE LAW OF PROACTIVITY. Anticipate what is going to be needed and do it before it is needed. You can act, or react—and acting is better.
8. THE LAW OF ENVY. Envy defines what is good as what we do not have. If I do not possess something, it takes on a higher value. We will have greater self-control if we are motivated by our real desires instead of envy.
9. THE LAW OF ACTIVITY. Nothing happens if you do not do something.
10. THE LAW OF EXPOSURE. Groups that have the best outcomes are the ones in which the expectations are clearly known by the group. Direct, open, honest, firm, and kind boundaries that are communicated directly make every kind of relationship better.

Think of the laws of physics. They order the way the physical universe operates. When we heed them, planes stay in the air. When we don't, we fall off the roof.

The laws of boundaries are similar. They describe the ways that life is ordered. When we operate within them, we do well. When we try to break them, we suffer. The result of living these principles will be that your relationships will go better, you will feel better, and you will get better results. In addition, the big goal of having one life will be realized as you become one person, living out an integrated character in all of your life contexts: work, family, friendship, health, leisure.

CHAPTER 7: You and Your Words

Have you noticed there are people who routinely find themselves in some situation they do not want to be in? Inevitably, they land in some activity, relationship,

scheduling conflict, or problem they did not want. They basically never say “no.” This is usually about their relationship with the word “no” itself. They are conflicted about this word at a very deep level. Consider the ways that these words might affect your ability to experience positive outcomes:

“I THINK . . .” tells others what you think defines who you are. It differentiates you from them and their opinions and beliefs.

“I WON’T . . .” tells others where you stand and where your boundary line is.

“I WANT . . .” keeps you from getting leftovers in many situations, and can give you the performance you want out of other people.

“I WILL . . .” is what you will do—which should be lined up with your desires.

“YES” and “NO” . . . are boundary words. They keep you in control and on track to having one life.

“I DON’T KNOW . . .” is a powerful, self-defining act. You escape the pressure to fake it around others and it lets you be yourself.

“I WAS WRONG . . .” takes responsibility for your side of something, which makes relationship possible.

“WHEN YOU . . .” is acknowledging that someone else is doing something that you do not like, are uncomfortable with, or is flat-out wrong.

Do not assume that you are immune from having a characteristic pattern of using or not using certain words. Ask yourself what is consistently missing in your life that could be present if you could say the things you need to say to bring them about.

Develop some new patterns by seeking out some new good experiences to replace the bad experiences. If needed, script your conversations and what you need to say in situations when it is difficult for you. Talk

about this issue of free speech with a wise, experienced person or your team.

Your words are one of the most important boundary structures you have. Do everything possible to make the right ones available to you. Develop a good relationship with words.

CHAPTER 8: Make the No-Choice Choices First

If you are like most people, you either have a mortgage or pay rent. So, when the first of the month rolls around, you pay it. What I want you to see is the automatic nature of this particular choice. It is a choice, but you do not perceive it that way. Certainly there are a lot of other things vying for that money. But they do not get in the way of the mortgage. The consequences are so great that to not pay is not even an option. It is your choice to make something a “non-choice.”

I’d like to get you to look at certain other choices in life in the same way. They are not an option. But the paradox in all of this is that to do that itself is a choice. And that is why many, many people do not succeed. To succeed in the areas you decide to care about, there are some choices that you will do well to see as not optional.

In life, there are some activities that are the big ones, and what I mean by that is that they are the ones that will define the outcomes of your vision, your mission, your values, and your life itself. They are the ones that are most important to you. If you give them the first of your time and energy, then you will live well and succeed. If you don’t, you won’t. And your dreams, goals, vision, and values will be foreclosed upon. You will be evicted from your most treasured goals.

It is a truth of life that some of the most vital activities are not the most urgent activities. Often, vital (necessary for the maintenance of life) activities can be put

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aside, and you can do something non-vital instead, and feel no pain. At least for the time being. But if you continue to do that, something is dying. There are activities that are vital to your business, your vision, your mission, your health, your goals, your soul, your relationships, your family, your future, and your life that you can ignore and not feel any immediate consequence.

Decide, proactively, to structure your life so that you never have to choose in the moment whether or not you are going to do the vital as if it were optional. You have already made the choice that they are non-choices. And the way to do that is to structure them, just like paying a mortgage.

CHAPTER 9: Follow the Misery and Make a Rule

Freedom that is unlimited causes a lack of focus. Freedom within boundaries, within a structure, is real freedom. You become all that you can be within that space.

When you find that something is continually happening in your life that you do not want to happen, or something is not happening that you desire—and, some sort of misery is the result—I think you have to make rules for yourself. I do not suggest this for everyone, but only for those who can't seem to achieve some sort of desired result. That is when a rule is needed.

I have found that a couple things affected my performance in my public speaking. First, meetings before a speaking event were an energy drain, and I learned

to have a rule against them. Sometimes, especially when travel is involved, a big conference is not only where the big event is occurring, but many people that you need to meet with are all gathered in one place and it is a good time to get with them and save yourself another trip. So, often, if I were going to be speaking somewhere, I could get requests from someone to “get together before you speak.” That is a great idea, and I would do it, until I found that after some of those meetings I did not have all of the creative energy that I would need for the event. So, I found that I need a rule: no meetings before giving a talk. That really helped.

Second, I found that a late arrival time the night before was an energy drain also. Weather delays, air traffic, and just getting in late and having no down time before an early event was not affording me my best available energy for the event. To go before an audience of thousands of people and not feel as if all the cylinders were firing was just not good, and sometimes even frightening. So, I made a rule: no late arrivals. I began to plan my travel in a way that got me in before dinner, and it made that part of my work totally different for me—and much better for the poor souls who had to listen to me.

Addicts have known this for a long time. Where self-control is not present, the misery will come unless you have some strict rules to protect yourself. Rules are not made to be broken—they are made to keep us from getting broken. So, make some.

Part Three: BOUNDARIES ON THE JOB

CHAPTER 10:

Time, Space and E-Mail

What may be the worst part of e-mail is the implied assumption that because someone sent it to you, you should respond. So, by definition, you have lost control of who you need to talk with or not, and if and when you choose to talk with them. They now have more implied control of that, through e-mail, than you—if you use e-mail like a lot of people do.

They sit down at their desk with an important agenda, task, or project to focus on and finish. (If not, why are they there?) So, they begin to work on that project, and then, after moments of focusing on what they really need to focus on, a little sound goes off or a small box appears on their screen, alerting them that an e-mail has arrived.

They then turn their attention from what they were working on, presumably what they have deemed important, and they read the e-mail. Then, they either answer it or go back to what they were doing. If they answer it, it could take a moment or two, or it could take them onto a whole different path of work and focus. That e-mail, just by showing up, has changed the agenda. It is like a person walking into a meeting and changing the whole focus.

Whatever is in the in-box is what gets the attention. There is little difference in this person's goal setting and the person working at the counter at McDonald's. Both serve whoever walks up to the counter.

Obviously, you cannot ignore e-mail. That would be like ignoring work itself. Instead, you would do well to think about how you are working with it. One problem with e-mail is that there is no door. So you have to create one.

If you are going to spend your time doing what is important to you, you have to create agenda boundaries—or structure. Your in-box is not your boss. After seeing the way a lot of high achievers work, I would suggest that you think about protecting the important time in a way that an arriving e-mail or phone call or other intrusion cannot get you off track, or even distracted. For example, you could block out a period of time when you close your e-mail program. Or you could assign times for checking e-mail and voice-mail and for returning calls.

CHAPTER 11:

Getting Your Balance Sheet in Order

Strength and security precede the ability to be free. It begins at birth. You do not see a hungry baby walk away from her mother. She does that years later, only after she has had her needs met. You do not see a weak, dependent spouse walk away from an addict. He does that later, after he has joined an Al-Anon group to give him the strength. You do not see people who have no savings or little chance for another job tell an abusive boss to stick it. They do that later, after they have saved enough money or gotten a further degree or gotten another job. You do not see people walk away from a negotiation with poor terms if they have to make that deal. You see the ones who do not need the deal walk away from terms that are not favorable to them. You do not see people who are spiritually and/or relationally bankrupt walk through tough circumstances unscathed and do well right after. You see others transcend similar circumstances as a result of having spiritual and/or relational equity in their lives.

Get this about your dilemma: You are responsible to deal with it, as it is your problem. However, you may

have remained stuck because your balance sheet is not in order. So, here is what I am asking you to do: Admit that you need to get stronger, and focus on that first.

Admit to yourself that you have been stuck because you have omitted some form of personal, spiritual, financial, relational, emotional, or vocational growth in your life that has kept you in a place where you do not want to be. Then, get to work. And that probably means getting the help and support you need to get there. The people who are able to do what you cannot do are usually not better people than you, only stronger.

So, your job is to enrich the part of your life or skill set that is causing the need that keeps you stuck. When you do that, you will find that you will be able to execute the kinds of boundaries you need in order to have one, integrated, fulfilling life of love and work.

CHAPTER 12:

End Some Things Now

It is true in life and in work that things end. Relationships end, projects end, careers end, and different seasons of life end. Some of those are planned, and some of them are forced upon us. Some of them we would never want, but find ourselves needing to execute. But one thing is true: If someone does not have the ability to end things that need to end, they will never have the one life we are talking about in this book. They will also always be hampered by problems that should no longer be problems.

In life, you will get what you tolerate. Period. There is a natural drift south, in all aspects of life. Problems—and problem people—seek out situations and people who will allow them to exist and to have a space. As I told a woman in a seminar who asked, “How do you deal with overly critical people?” the answer is “Just be honest with them. You will never hear from

them again.” In other words, tell them that you are not finding their input helpful, and if you want it, you will ask for it. If you do not tolerate it, they will go away and find someone else who will take that kind of treatment. And you will have that space for someone who is more helpful.

So, at times, to make it all work, you will have to end some things. And not all of the things you need to end are bad. Now and then you will have to end some good things that are taking up space in your life. Sometimes putting up with something that is OK keeps you from finding the option that is best.

Here is the truth: You are probably involved in and attached to activities that are good, in and of themselves, but that are keeping you from having time and energy for activities that would be the best for you. But because you don't like endings, you are loath to let them go. It might be hard to say good-bye to them.

It is probably time for you to consider ending some things. Some will be getting rid of negative things, and some will be getting rid of good things. But, you still have to take the step. In a house, sometimes you throw out trash and other times you give away or sell possessions that have value, but not to your current or future life. Let them go.

CHAPTER 13:

Communicating Your Boundaries

In dealing with people, remember that one size does not fit all. There are wise people who listen to feedback, take it in, and respond to it. They correct themselves, and own their behavior. They learn, and they are a joy to work with. My suggestion with them is to resource them, give them more input, knowledge, training, teaching, and whatever you have because they tend to use it. It is a good investment.

With people like this, you do not have to do much except have a good tone, be clear, be specific, listen well, and you will get great results.

The second group is not so much fun, but sometimes workable. They are the defensive ones, who sometimes blame and excuse and cause what I call “collateral damage” for others. They are not trying to hurt anyone, but because they won’t take responsibility for themselves, they do cause other people problems. And, part and parcel of that problem is that when you give them feedback, they do not accept it.

With this group, remember that more feedback usually does not help. So, why are you continuing to do what does not help? You are wasting your breath trying to continually talk about a problem that the person is not owning. Instead, make the lack of responsiveness and lack of change the problem of focus. Focus on that, and move away from talking, to consequences. Then, you sometimes will get a turnaround, and other times, they will go away as they do not like to be held accountable. Either way, you are better off.

And then the third group are just destructive people—not by accident, but by intent. They like to bring you down. They take glee at someone else’s demise. They would rather be right or be seen as good than have good outcomes happen. They are not looking out for anyone, but are actually trying to bring others down. They are out to harm, so make sure your strongest boundaries are intact.

With them, there is not only no talking, there is also usually no hope. Get serious about protecting yourselves and others from their agenda and take appropriate action. While group number one needs input, and group number two needs consequences, with the third group you have to go into protective mode.

Boundaries are about self-control in the service of your vision, mission, goals and purposes, including

good relationships with others. But, as the law of exposure says, they cannot be in secret. They have to be visible to others through our communication. The best leaders and most successful people in fulfilling the call of one life are the ones who can communicate their boundaries well. If you can’t, that is understandable. You might never have seen it done or never been taught. Just look back at your family of origin if you want to see your earliest schooling in communication. How did that go? Now you get it.

But, if you have had no training since then, then how can you expect to be better? You can’t, but you need to. Go get some training. Take a course, a workshop, get a book and practice, meet with a friend, or meet with your team. Any way you learn, getting better at it will pay for itself many, many times over. You will get what you tolerate, and what you communicate.

CONCLUSION: The Path Ahead

There is a saying you hear often in business circles after all the explanations, excuses, spin, and interpretations have played out, and only the stark reality of the numbers remain: “It is what it is.” The performance—the profits or the losses—are what they are. No amount of editorializing can change them or the real-life implications. And in turn, those results reflect something very real about the people who generated them. As Heraclitus said more than two thousand years ago, “Character is destiny.” Where we end up has a lot to do with who we are.

No matter what “potential” someone has, or the talents, brains, or opportunities they possess, if they do not have the personal character to bring it all to fruition, success rarely happens. Dreams go unrealized and are sometimes destroyed. Who you are really, truly matters.

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Humans were created and designed with the capacity for deciding which path, of the many available, they will take. I have seen people, from each and every rank, regain that capacity where it has been lost, and create the kind of life they once thought was not available to them. My hope and prayer for you is that you will find the path you were designed for, and rediscover the ability to make that a reality.

The Pastor's Perspective

Henry Cloud's *One-Life Solution* could just as easily be titled *How to Win at Life*. He basically covers the key issues that can sabotage us in our pursuit of a life worth living, and gives next steps in how to address them.

The fundamental issue is learning how to set boundaries. Either we will set them for our lives, or other people will control what we do and how we live. Given that alternative, it's worth whatever it takes to learn how to set boundaries—decide for ourselves what we will and won't do, and how we will use our time and energy.

"Most people try to control things they can't control. All we can really control is ourselves." That is one of the most important truths any pastor can learn. I know many pastors who feel responsible for how their people live—and I've seen how destructive it can be. I remember as a young pastor realizing that I was working harder to help some people change than they were working at their own change. It was a relief, and very healthy, to commit to not working harder for someone than they would work for themselves.

The distinction between being responsible *for* someone vs. being responsible *to* them has been very helpful in that regard. I am not responsible *for* what anyone else does, or for what choices they make. I am responsible *to* tell them the truth, encourage them, and love them. The difference is that I can control the latter things, but not the former.

Pastors, and leaders, who don't understand the difference will either burn out or become controlling, as they work hard to make sure people do what is "right." Neither is a good outcome.

I was also challenged, in particular, by this one sentence: In life, you will get what you tolerate. Ouch! That puts the responsibility squarely on me for my life. If someone is being disrespectful, and I tolerate it, it will continue to happen. If someone is chronically late, and I tolerate it, it will continue. There is no one else to blame but myself.

That has caused me to look at my life with fresh eyes. What things in my life am I tolerating? What would change if I stopped tolerating them? That question could be answered superficially, or possibly in an unhealthy, selfish way. I don't want to do that—but I am taking the time to think about that question, with the perspective that it's my responsibility to address it, not somebody else's. I can't expect anyone else to do anything different if I don't speak up about it.