

# I REALLY REALLY DO NOT CARE

*“What is complacency anyway?” he asked. I replied,  
“I don’t know and I don’t care.”*

*By Sue Pivetta<sup>1</sup>*

In the 9-1-1-world complacency is a bad bad word. However *self-satisfied* is the actual dictionary definition and not a bad bad thing – right? However, the dictionary goes further to say complacency is satisfaction to the degree that the complacent person becomes unaware of ‘potential dangers’.

The Call Taker may dull their sense of intuition. The Radio Dispatcher may be less inclined to do a status check. A Supervisor may procrastinate on a complaint. A Trainer may give grace to a trainee that is ‘likeable’ but not skilled. A Manager may attribute complaints from staff as nature of the animal.

*“Why bother?”* A complacent attitude is not to rock the boat or a laziness and disconnect. And true, although rare, all of the above complacent reactions could result in the loss of life or disregard for safety. Aren’t life and safety the values held highest in the 9-1-1 industry? So then, why would anyone allow this complacency in his or her promise to protect and serve? Answer this question and you have the answer to reversing the trend of complacency.

Anthony Robbins says ultimately, **everything we do** in our lives is driven by our fundamental need to **avoid pain** and our desire to gain pleasure. We will do far more to **avoid pain** than we will to **gain pleasure**. In order to awaken the senses of the complacent person or agency there must be either;

- a. Ongoing fearful reminders of the painful consequences of even one disconnect - or
- b. Ongoing praise, support, training, permission and encouragement for maintaining a high level of vigilance and watchfulness for potential dangers at all levels.

In my humble opinion Option A has been our motivation of choice. Liability, liability, liability has been pushed into the people to the extent that workers may have shut down their edgy intuition and the good traits of their Type A personality. Often supervisors and trainers are not rewarded for enforcing high standards or acting quickly and firmly on problems. A Manager who is connected and involved may be considered too ‘touchy feely’.

When a rock blocks a stream there is no need to study the composition of the rock, just remove it. In order for leaders to overcome complacency they must first admit their own complacency in allowing complacency. Next publicly out the problem (if there is one) with true examples of the *behaviors* associated with the complacent attitude, make a general list. Next create a time and space for a training exercise to ask for input on the possible consequences of the behavior in order to gain a buy into the problem. Clearly, overtly and publicly encourage an agency wide urgency to remain vigilant to complacency (now that it is defined in behavioral terms). I believe those who work within 9-1-1 love the exciting and edgy nature of the work. We may just need to remind them.