

“Look, Grace, that balloon incident is in the ocean. It’s done, and hopefully you’ve learned from it. Yeah, Tom is a grumpy old coot, but he’s the best damn fire telecommunicator I’ve ever worked with, and he’s forgotten more about it than I’ll ever know. He’s just grumpy. He doesn’t mean anything by it, and he says he thinks you’ve ‘come along’ nicely.” Grace looked up at Anna, hopefully. “Really?” she muttered.

“You remember that Batavia apartment fire? That came in as an appliance fire, and because of the way you managed that phone call, it was dispatched as a Box Alarm and probably saved lives and property.”

Grace thought, *Yes, that’s true.*

Anna continued, “And, you were able to support Tom on that call the whole way through, getting him utilities and other notifications completed, just in time. And don’t forget, there’s at least one baby that’s alive today because of your actions on the phone with a hysterical mother.”

Grace was beginning to see that she was focused on her own mistakes, and not on any of the good things she had done. It was *Grace* who was focused on the balloon incident, not

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everyone else. Still, there was the fact that people didn’t really reach out to her much.

“Grace, we’re not here to be friends. I’m here to make sure you become the best telecommunicator you can be first, and then we’ll be partners, and then, maybe, we’ll be friends.”

Cracking a smile, she added, “Well, Tom probably won’t ever be friends with anyone here, but he will be a great partner. And, I might add, how many times have you reached out to anyone to start a conversation? Some of the others think you’re a little arrogant.”

“What?!? Oh, my goodness, really?” Grace was horrified to think that anyone thought that. But it was then she realized it was all going to be OK. How people reacted to her didn’t really matter much, it was how she reacted to and managed all these things that mattered. It was in her power to control the

outcome of all these things that she perceived as roadblocks to her success.

“Thank you, Anna. You’ve helped me figure out what to do! Sorry I didn’t come to you first. I guess it’s taking me a little while to get used to the whole “chain of command” thing. But I see now why it’s so important! See you tomorrow.”

“See you tomorrow, kid.”

As she lay in bed that night, Grace realized she had contributed to most of the feelings of isolation and failure she had been experiencing. Yes, it hadn’t helped that others didn’t reach out to her first, but, she thought, why should they? She now knew that she at least needed to give them the opportunity to communicate, too. She felt like she had a mentor now in Anna, and the ice had been broken.

It won’t be perfect, but I think I can go back and do this now, she thought to herself as she drifted off into peaceful sleep. ●

Matt Schreiner has passionately worked for over 25 years to provide public safety with innovative technology solutions and tools to enable them to meet their life-safety mission, and is currently lending his talents to Motorola Solutions.

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