

Tough times?

How to  
leapfrog  
your personal  
influence 

Do tough times bring out the best in you, or does stress make you a little cranky? Either way, chances are good that the people around you - at work, home, or in your community - are influenced by how you handle yourself in difficult times.

Are you wondering if you really have that much influence? You probably have more than you realize! Unless you live tucked away in a cave, your attitude, actions, and energy create a chain reaction with others around you. It's like sending a pebble skipping over a pond. The pebble doesn't reach the other side, but the ripples do.

### Here's a quick exercise to illustrate this point

Draw a circle on a piece of paper. Make it large enough to write in each of the names of the people you interact with on a regular basis. You can do this for family or for work. We'll call these folks your "#1 wave."

Now draw another, larger circle around the first one. The first circle will be contained in the larger one. In the space between the two circles, note the people who might interact on a regular basis with your #1 Wave people. These become your "#2 Wave" people.

You can even do this a third time, drawing a larger circle around the other two, and filling in the space with the names of the people your #2 Wave folks come into regular contact with.

**What you have is an image  
of how interconnected you are  
to the people around you.**

[Continued...](#)



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#### ***"Training and Coaching Since 1985"***

**MARK W. ZALKIN, M.Ed., MSW**, has been coaching and training professionals, executives, entrepreneurs, small business owners, government officials and non-profit staff members since 1985. He has been described as optimistic, conscientious, enthusiastic, insightful, honest, humorous, caring, and supportive.

When he is not coaching, Mark teaches a wide range of workshops and facilitates team building throughout the USA and in Asia. He has been an Adjunct Professor at the University of Denver where he taught a graduate course on team building.

He received his bachelors' degree (BME) and masters' degree (M.Ed.) in education from Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. His second masters' degree is an MSW from Yeshiva University's Wurzweiler School of Social Work, New York, NY.

Before the establishment of Zalkin Training and Development, Mark spent over 13 years as a supervisor and executive with organizations in Los Angeles, Omaha, and Denver.

A more detailed listing of Mark's background and programs can be found at [zalkin-training.com](http://zalkin-training.com).

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## The Ripple Effect In Action

Your tone, energy, attitude, and way of being can become a catalyst for the tone, energy, attitude and way of being of those around you... and on down the line. The question is, ***"What is the ripple effect you are generating?"***

The concept that your actions and attitudes contribute to the overall ripple effect of your pond may fly in the face of the pop-culture saying, "I can't be responsible for other people's feelings." True...and not. Ultimately you cannot be responsible for someone else's feelings. However, you can certainly contribute to the effect on their feelings. It's a subtle point but one that can have a profound **effect** if taken in light of self-management.

For example, in a work setting where layoffs have been experienced, job insecurity can easily become rampant and begin to noticeably undermine performance. Can a manager's ability to stay calm, and openly acknowledge the fear and insecurity with his/her group contribute to the effect on their feelings? You bet.

### Self-management isn't just for the benefit of others.

It's an increasingly valuable skill that keeps your stress levels low, creates a positive intention for what you want to see happen in your life, and allows you to be a beacon for personal integrity.

Let's take a look at four key ideas to keep in mind - and how you can bring them forward into daily action - that create a positive ripple effect in your life:

#### #1 Keep An Open Mind

Judgment tends to shut down ideas and acceptance of others. "A-ha!" moments happen when new ideas meet an open mind. Allow yourself to "try on" one new idea each day.

#### #2 Assume A Positive Intention

Have you ever noticed that what you focus on expands? Tough situations can create suspicion and distrust caused by misunderstandings or misinformation. But they can also bring people closer together. By assuming a positive intention, for yourself and the people around you, you can create an atmosphere of pulling together, not pulling apart.

**"The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated."**

William James (1842-1910) American psychologist and philosopher

#### #3 Ask Questions

The best solutions are revealed by asking questions. Questions create a feeling of empowerment, resourcefulness, and community. They also increase your ability to listen and understand different points of view. When you are tempted to give advice, pause and instead ask a question. The results will pleasantly surprise you.

#### #4 Acknowledge What's Working - And Do It Often!

The truth is, no matter how often you think you acknowledge someone, it's probably not enough. What seems to stop more acknowledgements from coming forth, is the notion that the receiver will "get a big head" or thinking "well that's their job, why should I acknowledge them for it" or even "he/she already knows I appreciate them." The reality is, receiving acknowledgement still rates as one of our essential needs as human beings.

The best form of acknowledgement recognizes the specific effort, idea, or action on behalf of someone. Just a word or two goes a long way! Why not try acknowledging two people each day?

#### At A Glance...

Like an echo in a canyon, your actions, attitude, and energy can be heard beyond just the people in your immediate circle.

**What is the message you are sending to your loved ones and co-workers?**

How is your attitude - be it positive, upbeat, worried, negative, etc. - affecting the people around you?

What can you say or do today to create a positive influence with the people you contact daily?

**Your sphere of influence is greater than you think!**

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