

Working smart with author Dr. Susan Fletcher

NOT MANY PEOPLE SAY “NO” to Dr. Phil. So, the second time he offered Dr. Susan Fletcher a job, she accepted. By then, Dr. Phil was appearing weekly on *Oprah* as the “Relationship and Life Strategy Expert.” Fletcher met Phil McGraw in 1997 through a mutual friend, and she didn’t know at the time that his legal consulting firm, Courtroom Sciences, Inc., was hired by Oprah Winfrey during the Amarillo, Texas, beef trial. Fletcher turned down the job opportunity because she was happy building her own practice, Fletcher & Associates Psychological Services, and she was pregnant.

Two years later, though, she read about Dr. Phil’s success in *The Dallas Morning News* and sent him a note: “Congratulations on your success. If you ever need a good shrink, give me a call.”

He called, and Fletcher began commuting from Plano to Las Colinas to work for Dr. Phil. “I loved it,” she says. “My experience with Phil ramped up my speaking and consulting skills.”

Today, Fletcher is a nationally known speaker and consultant for her company Smart Zone Solutions. She remains CEO and continues to practice at Fletcher & Associates, but she primarily spends her time speaking on productivity, change, and leadership development. Her book, *Working in the Smart Zone*, explains how to work to the best of your ability emotionally, behaviorally, and intellectually.

“There’s no better time than now for people to be working in their Smart Zone,” says the author. “People are finding out what they’re made of and how well they handle challenges.”

Certainly, companies are becoming leaner. Employers are being asked to produce more with less. Should employers decrease their expectations in hard economic times?

“I don’t know that we need to change our expectations,” says Fletcher, “but I also don’t think that we have to believe that it *isn’t* going to be okay. I think it’s important to do the best you can with the resources you have and always look for an opportunity in anything that feels like a defeat.”

She continues, “There’s always an opportunity in every challenge you have. Hard economic times are no different, and when things do get better economically, we should still be doing more with less.”

Fletcher was recently on Fox 4’s *Good Day* advising audiences on what to do when a spouse loses a job. “I know people are losing jobs,” she says. “Clearly, we’re all being asked to adjust. But I think there are a lot of people who will tell you that [these times] have created an opportunity for them...either to change professions or change the way they do business.”

She adds, “I think you have to change what you expect of yourself. In these economic times, really your only option is to ask yourself, *how* can I make this work for me instead of *why* did this happen to me?”

In *Working in the Smart Zone*, the author compares “why” questions that are problem-focused to “how” and “what” questions that focus on a solution. For example, instead of *Why were you late to the meeting?* Fletcher suggests, *What do you*

need to do to make sure you are on time?

As facilitators, managers create a results-driven culture and strengthen an organization’s EQ, or emotional

intelligence.

“Having a high EQ is about managing your emotions and understanding the emotions of others,” says Fletcher. “You don’t have to wear pink to have a high EQ.”

Men and

women both benefit from using their emotions effectively. She adds, “Having a high EQ encourages productive communication between *two* people, instead of triangulating others into the communication. Triangles are like tornadoes and are so unproductive.”

Speaking of productivity, a *Working in the Smart Zone* tip is to avoid e-mails in the morning. Fletcher says it’s easy to get lost in your e-mails, which sets a negative pace for the day.

Furthermore, the author argues that managing your energy is more important than managing your time. “I don’t know that I believe in time management as much as I believe in managing your energy and attention. You’re most productive when you have energy. For me, time management is for rookies.”



Author Dr. Susan Fletcher. Profile photo

Fletcher's children are the "energy" in her Smart Zone. She is the mom of three boys: Alex, 13, Chase, 11, and Sam, 9. She ended her employment with Dr. Phil when she became pregnant with Sam. She was on bed rest for four months and began her first book, *Parenting in the Smart Zone*. "I would have never been able to balance my life continuing in his organization. I traveled all the time, and I was the only one calling home to hear about swim lessons. While my profession is very important to me, I, like most parents, know how precious this time is raising my family. I have to practice what I preach!"

In her practice, Fletcher herself primarily provides marital counseling. She and her husband, Mark, who works for Texas Instruments, have been married for 17 years, as long as they've lived in Plano. The Leadership Plano Class 20 graduate and past president of the board for Plano Youth Leadership attended the University of Florida and received her Ph.D. from Texas Woman's University.

Fletcher & Associates is a full-service psychological practice known for their AD/HD assessments for children and adults. It is located on the northeast side of Park and Preston roads in Plano. "I purposefully chose to have my business in Plano," says Fletcher. "I believe in the community and what it has to offer families."

Working in the Smart Zone is available online at Amazon and Barnes & Noble. For an autographed copy, visit fletcherphd.com. — BRIT MOTT

excerpt

From *Working in the Smart Zone*

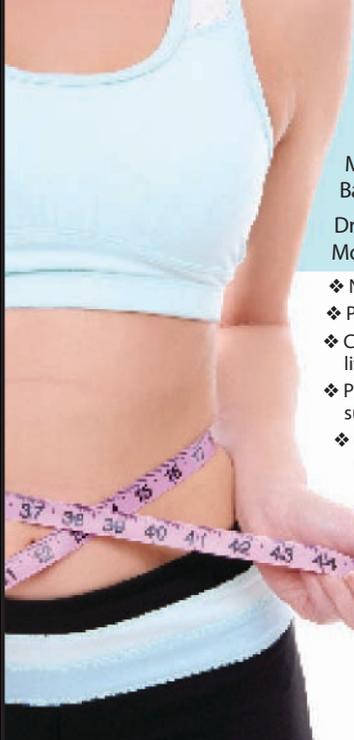
Research shows that our ability to manage our emotions and relationships with others is twice as important as our Intelligence Quotient (IQ), and that organizations with higher Emotional Intelligence predicted success.



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