

Case Study #3: Daniela

Daniela had worked at the ad agency for decades. She answered the phone, filed documents, and helped customers figure out what kind of ad concepts might be best. Some of her ideas had won awards for the agency. She felt that the people she worked with were like family to her. They were by her side when her son was born, when her mother died, and when her husband left her for a younger woman. And she was there for them. She was the one who never forgot a birthday and held people's hands through tears and life's tragedies large and small. Little by little, the old guard was retiring and younger employees were coming in. Daniela wasn't ready to move on yet. Change had never been easy for her and she had experienced her share of it even if she wasn't looking for it. The agency had been her life and besides, being on her own, she needed the money and the health insurance.

But things were changing in how they got done. There were new computer programs to learn and they weren't just about word processing. A host of new editing programs for video, presentations, visual layout, etc. were now available. The day-to-day rhythm of the work was changing and with it, the requisite skills needed to keep up. Beyond that, the customers weren't coming in anymore. They were calling on Zoom Calls and over Microsoft Teams. That was true for her new colleagues, too. On many days, she was the only one in the office.

When she got a new boss, Rajon, she was surprised that he seemed younger than her son. Suddenly her old-world sense of looking up to her more senior, experienced boss didn't fit. She felt puzzled and out of place. How would she feel working for him and how should she treat him? He had some questions for her, too. "Will you come and talk with me in my office?," he asked. Daniela had a pit in her stomach. The conversation was predictable. Being effective in the office required a host of new skills that she didn't yet have. How was she planning to build these skills and keep up with her workload? How could the office support her in doing so?

Daniela listened as the questions washed over her. She felt numb and sensing her inability to respond, Rajon invited her to think it over and said that they would talk again in a few days. Daniela nodded thank you and left the office. "Where do I go from here?," she asked herself out loud, "I certainly never thought that at my age, I would be viewed as a burden rather than an asset to a business that I helped to build." "How do I figure out how to work in this new world?"

Consider Daniela's story in light of the session on Amygdala Hijack. Reflect on the questions below:

1. Think about Daniela's past. What are some sources of trauma that might serve as triggers for her?
2. What other emotional challenges either exist now for Daniela or exist as ghosts from her past?
3. Consider what kinds of communication skills Daniela might need as she learns how to work in the present-day ad agency. What aspects of those skills might she excel at? What might be really hard for her?
4. If you could have a conversation with Daniela, what might you wish to say to her?
5. What might you want her to understand about Amygdala Hijack?
6. If you could help Daniela become a "fast fish learner" what are some of the things that you hope she would do in support of her own learning and work performance?

Note: All cases are fictional and any similarities to persons living or otherwise is coincidental.