

Don't fall into  
the **“helper”**  
trap;  
First Steps



# OBJECTIVES OF THE MODULE



- 01** Why it is important not to fall into the helper's trap
- 02** The importance of being assertive at work
- 03** Knowing how to set limits at work
- 04** Learning not to fall into the helper's trap

# OBJECTIVES OF THIS PPT



**01** What is the helper's trap

**02** How to avoid becoming a permanent helper

**03** Healthy selfishness at work

**04** Start to set limits at work

# Don't fall into the “helper” trap

It's never fun to feel like you're alone at work. **Having people you can count on around you can boost your confidence and productivity**, and help you get through tough dilemmas when they pop up.

---

Try to get people involved with what you are doing. Invite them in, give them the chance to help, and ask for advice. This tacit acknowledgement of their expertise and of your confidence in them will make them root for you. At the same time, it gives them a vested interest in the success of your work



# Don't fall into the “helper” trap



Often we make the **MISTAKE** of always contributing to what others are doing and never asking others to contribute to what we're doing

It's understandable to want to establish your worth by helping out where you can. It's a great way to demonstrate who you are, get to know people, and begin to build allies

Recognize that going overboard could land you with a reputation for being the office “helper”—the person who has the time to run around getting into everyone else's business, but who is unwilling to give others the opportunity to contribute to your work



# Don't fall into the “helper” trap

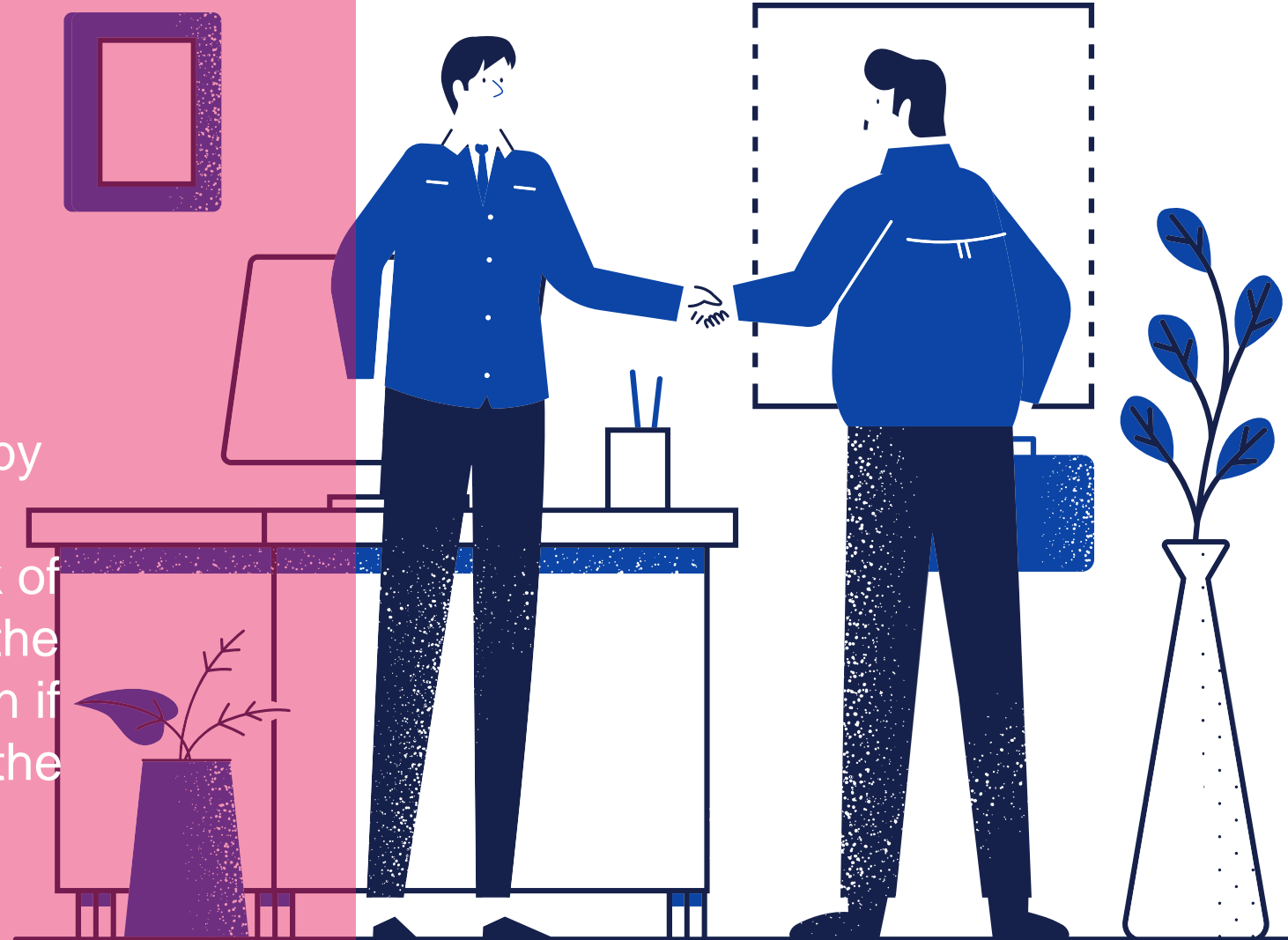
Always sacrificing ourselves for others at work not only does not make us more supportive: it enslaves us

On a day-to-day basis, it is difficult to achieve all the goals we set for ourselves at work. However, it is even more difficult to make our needs compatible with what others constantly demand of us. In other words, to offer that version of ourselves that others expect. It is clear that being there to support others is positive, but sometimes, we internalise so much of this dynamic of pleasing everyone at work that we end up sacrificing a good part of our lives in order to make others feel a little more comfortable. Knowing how to establish a balance between what you give and what you receive is more complicated than it seems.

# Don't fall into the “helper” trap

There comes a time when a member of the team, of the company's workforce, becomes the wild card.

That person who can always be counted on for a very simple reason: he or she does not know how to say no. And this type of profile is taken advantage of not only by the boss but also by other colleagues. Their problem lies in a lack of high self-esteem and a desire to seek the acceptance of others at any price. Even if that means working longer hours than the rest.



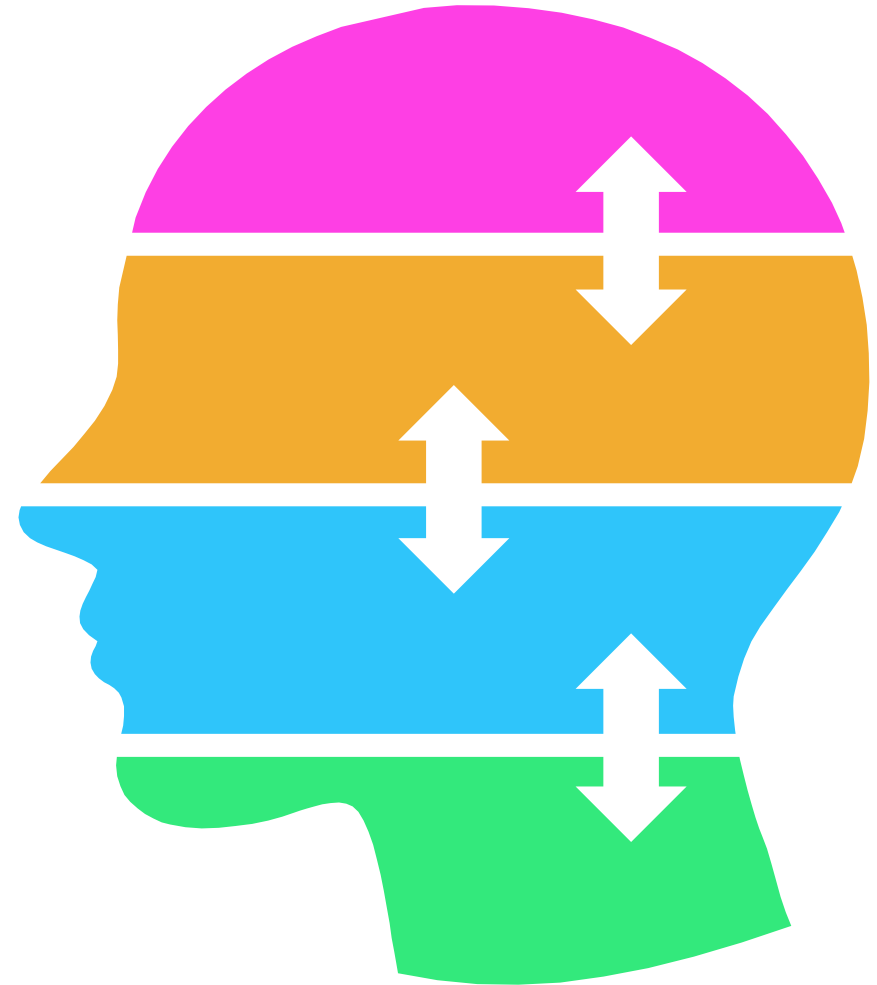
# Don't fall into the “helper” trap

## Healthy selfishness

We all like to please others, the people around us and especially at work, where we spend most of our time. This is essential for living in society. But **the problem arises when we do not set limits.**

When those around us perceive that they can always count on us, **we fall into a trap:** burdening ourselves with their responsibilities out of an irrational fear of feeling rejected.

What about our needs, don't we need to rest too? Sometimes, it is difficult to erase this kind of behaviour, such as thinking that others will stop appreciating us when the opposite is true: **in the long run, they will respect us more and value us more if we say no in time.**



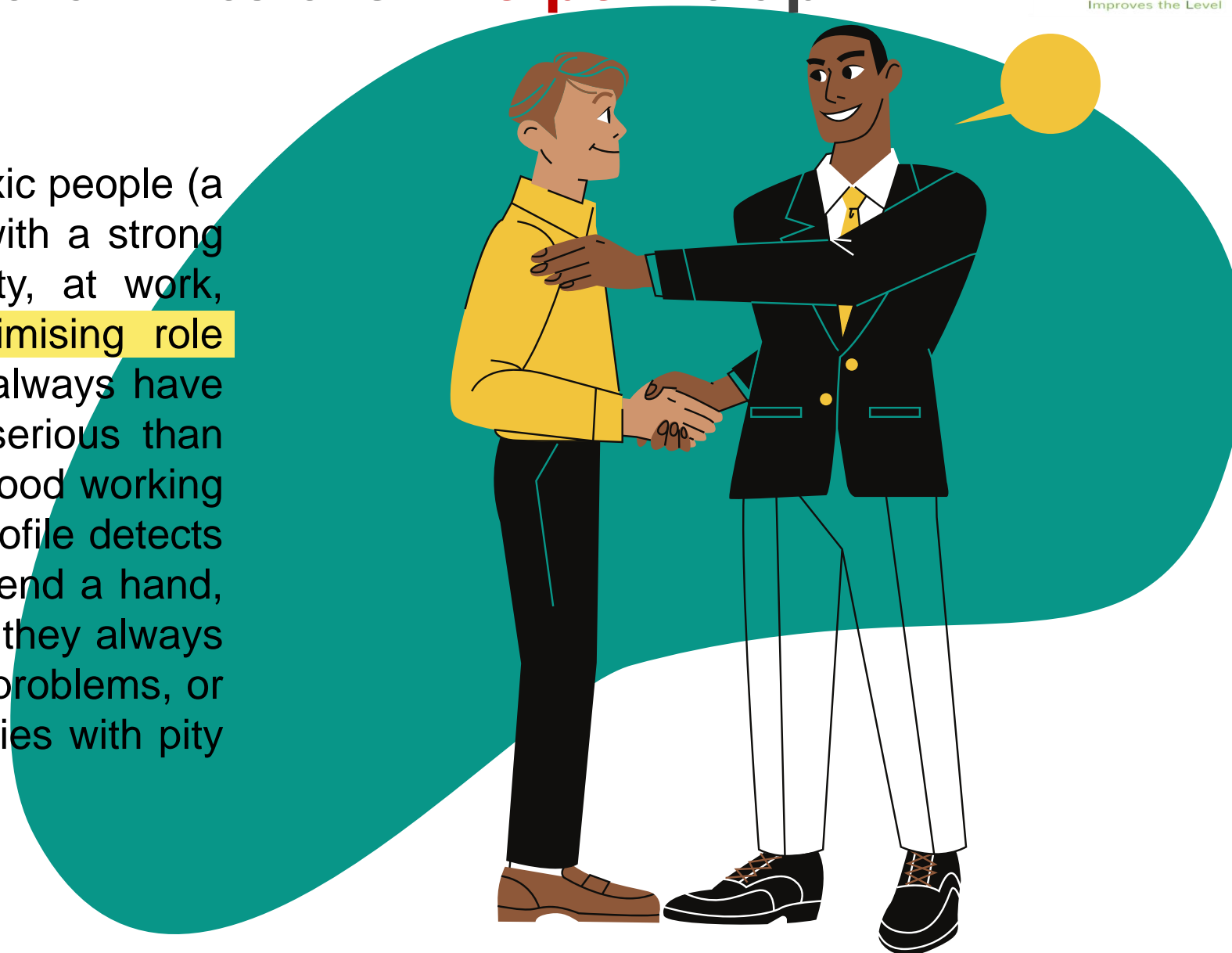


# Don't fall into the “helper” trap



## Avoiding victimisers

There is a tendency to think that toxic people (a very fashionable term) are those with a strong character or temper. But in reality, at work, those who tend to adopt a **victimising role** where 'everything goes wrong' or always have 'a thousand problems and more serious than ours', are really the enemies of a good working environment. If a person with this profile detects someone who is always willing to lend a hand, danger. We will become the person they always turn to, either to tell us about their problems, or to burden us with their responsibilities with pity as a justification.



# Don't fall into the “helper” trap



## Not intervening is also helping

Don't do anything for others that they can do for themselves. From pretending to help others selflessly to adopting a saviour role that hurts them, and hurts us, is only one step. Facing problems or adverse situations on our own strengthens us and serves as a learning experience. So, if we solve problems for others, we are depriving them of the opportunity to learn to cope on their own.

Helping without being asked, or making huge sacrifices for others, can be a big mistake. We may be motivated by a genuine feeling of generosity, but we may also be motivated by a secret desire to make others dependent on us. With this unlimited help we can make the people around us become passive and selfish.



# Don't fall into the “helper” trap



Some people may come to think that what was initially help will eventually become obligation. That is, when we do not help them, we may be reproached.

In this way, a person can easily cease to be the saviour and become the victim of the "saved". He creates the conditions to be exploited by others and others take control over him.

The secret is to lend a hand to others when they NEED it, not when they WANT it.

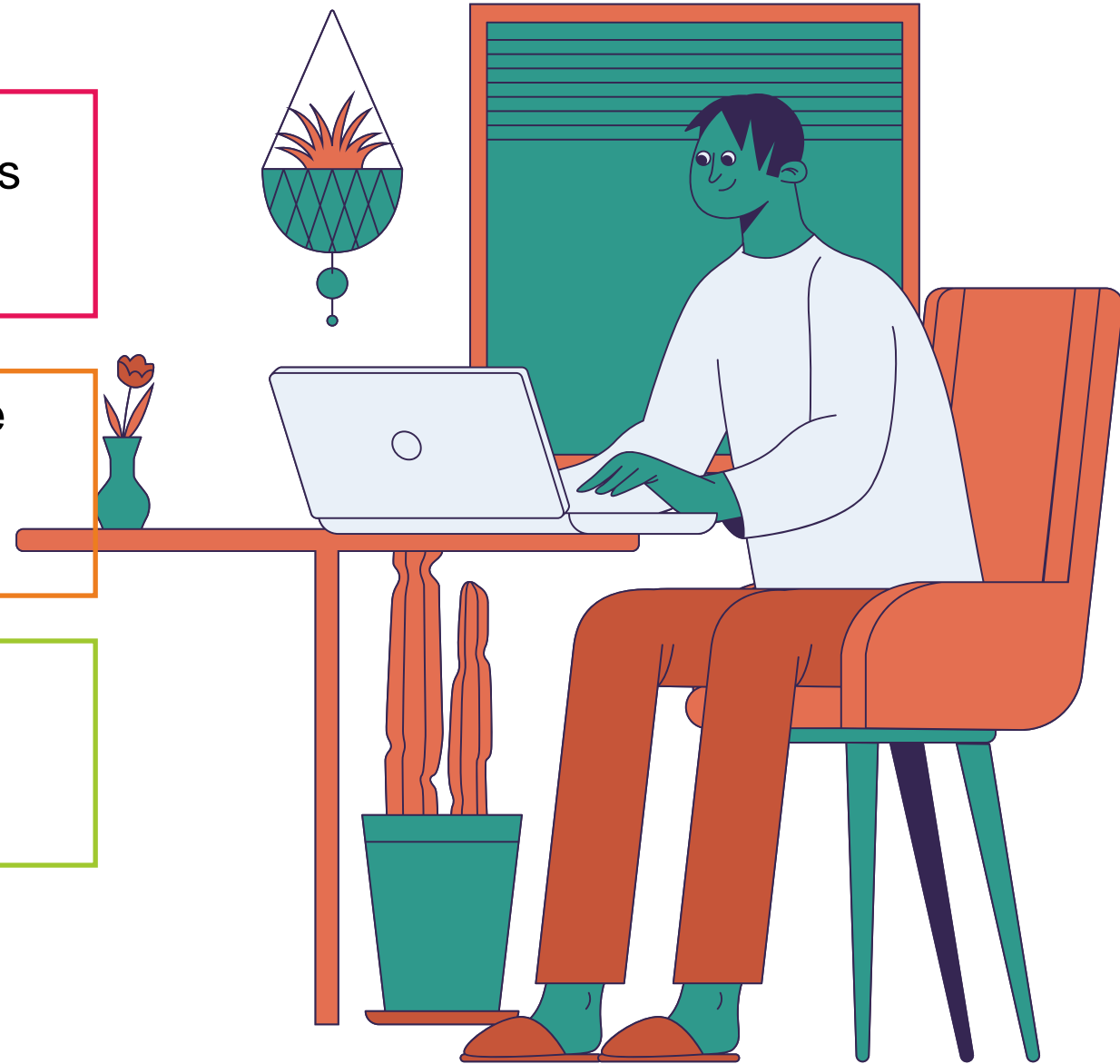
The other secret is to offer concrete help. Helping someone does not mean helping them for life.

# Don't fall into the “helper” trap

Understands that sometimes the best way to help is "not to help",

By depriving people of their own struggles, we take away a valuable opportunity for learning and personal growth.

Any unnecessary help only hinders development.



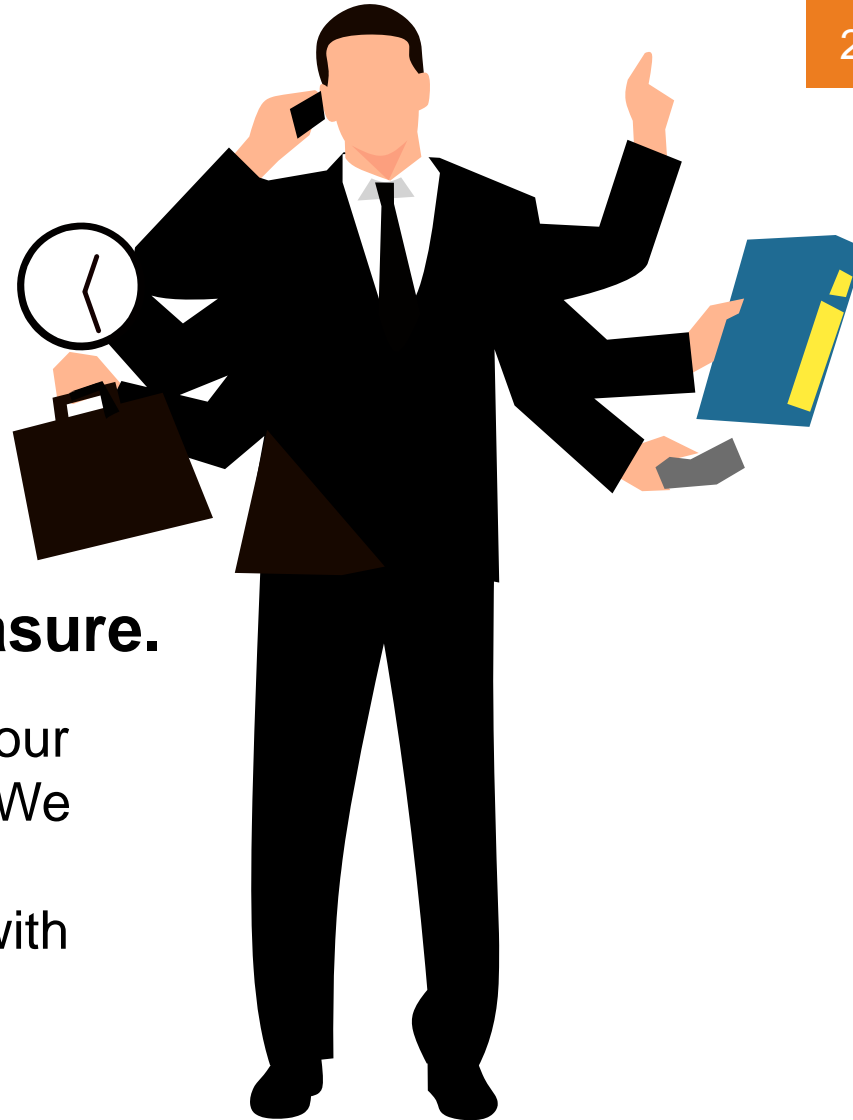
# Don't fall into the “helper” trap

## 1 No more guilt

Achieving self-respect starts with no longer pleasing co-workers or the boss, if we have already fulfilled our obligations.

## 3 Being assertive is a pleasure.

It is the ideal attitude to defend your rights without offending anyone. We must know how to express ourselves briefly and concisely, with a calm but firm tone, seeking the empathy of the other person.



## 2 Start saying NO

When we start to say "no" to those plans or extra work suggested by a colleague, we will notice that we are finally leading the life we want. Being unable to say "no" is a burden that weighs heavier than any other mistreatment because it comes from us, not from others.

# Don't fall into the “helper” trap



Any unnecessary help only hinders development. This idea has much to do with Lev Vygotski's concept of the "Zone of Proximal Development". A concept that, although it applies primarily to the field of education, could be extended to many of our environments, including the workplace.

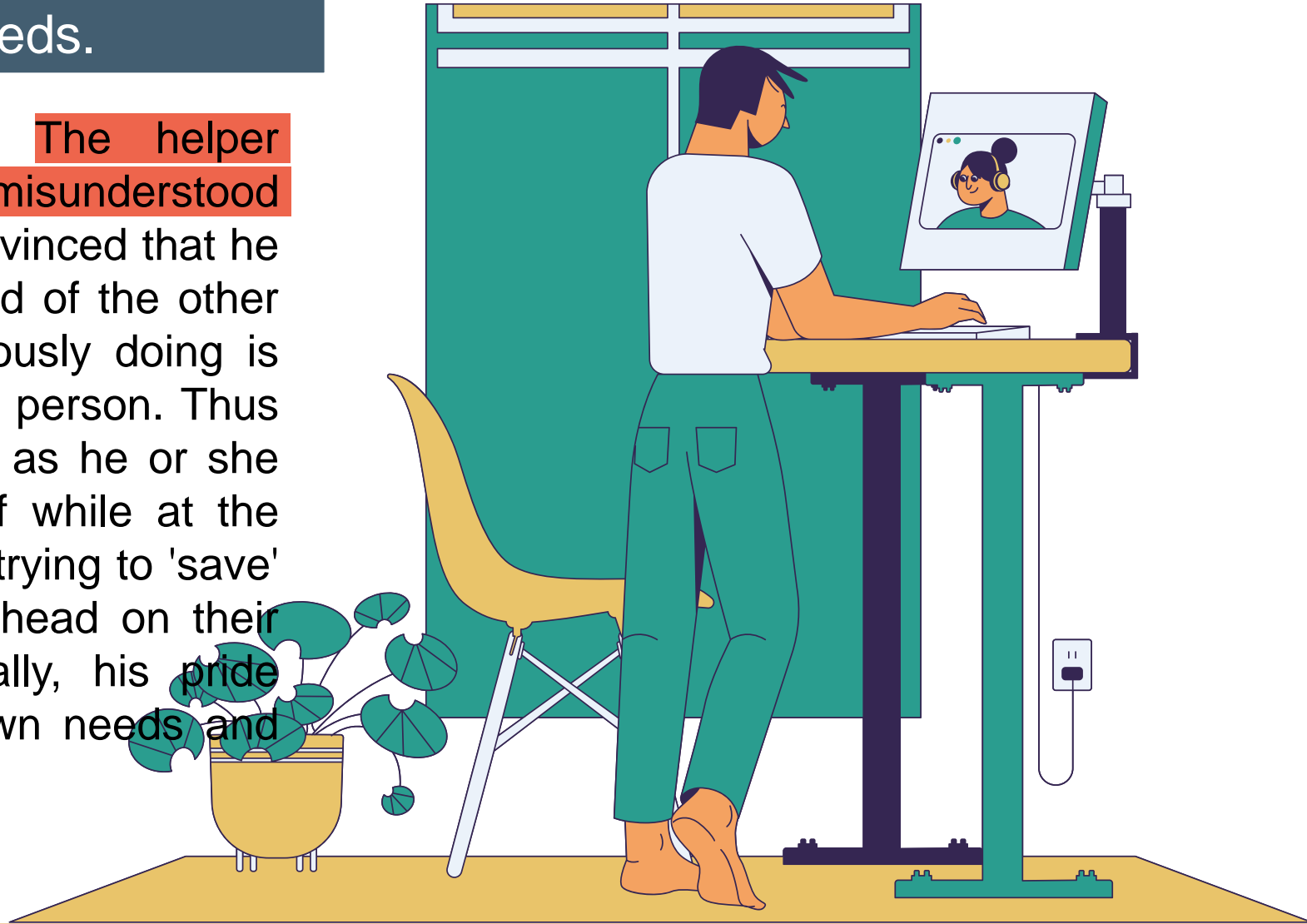
---

The "Zone of Proximal Development" tells us that in order to improve someone's abilities, we must give them the right amount of help to develop their own potential. This implies, for example, not taking on responsibilities that are not ours and identifying the points at which our help is really a stimulus for learning and to what extent we can help them to develop their own potential.

# Don't fall into the “helper” trap

When I take care of your needs, I divert attention from my own work needs.

Putting oneself above the other. The helper syndrome is partly a consequence of misunderstood generosity. Although the person is convinced that he or she is only looking out for the good of the other person, what he or she is unconsciously doing is putting him or herself above the other person. Thus a game begins in which the rescuer, as he or she helps, is aggrandising him or herself while at the same time making those he or she is trying to 'save' small, by not allowing them to get ahead on their own. At the same time, paradoxically, his pride prevents him from recognising his own needs and asking for help when he needs it.



# How to avoid this behavioural dynamic



Become aware of this pattern of behaviour. The **capacity for reflection and awareness** is the **first step to start focusing on our work responsibilities** instead of focusing on solving other people's work responsibilities.

Get used to taking care of yourself. **Taking care of yourself is not selfish, nor is it a sign of generosity to want to solve all the other person's work needs.** All you are doing is distracting yourself from your own work tasks. Dare to look inside yourself and be sincere.



# How to avoid this behavioural dynamic

Learn to differentiate empathy from sympathy.

The helper is often seen as an empathetic person, but this is not the case.

**Empathy** is the ability to put ourselves in the other person's shoes, to accompany them and help them to solve their problems in their own way, allowing them to grow.

**Sympathy** is the ability to solve other people's problems from our own perspective, i.e. from the way we would do it ourselves.



# How to avoid this behavioural dynamic



Learn to say "no". It is quite possible that, if you have been helping for a long time, the person being helped has got used to it and does not make it easy for you to give up your role. So you will have to learn to set limits and stand firm. Remember that you have every right to think of yourself and put yourself first.

The fear of saying "no" and of setting limits is one of the greatest difficulties and learning that we encounter in relation to our personal development, be it in the personal, sentimental or professional spheres.

# How to avoid this behavioural dynamic

Learn to trust each other no matter how hard it is. Things may not work out the way you think they should, and that may cause you some frustration. But it is something you must learn to sustain.

The fact that other people don't do things the way you do doesn't mean they are wrong. They just do them differently. That's all. Don't think for them, let them get it right (or wrong). And if someone wants your help, they will ask for it.

Cultivate flexibility and reciprocity. A healthy relationship is always flexible, sometimes you will support the other and sometimes the other will help you.



# References



<https://fortune.com/2017/02/21/leadership-career-advice-work-allies-enemies-feedback-input-collaboration/?iid=sr-link2>



<https://psicologiaymente.com/organizaciones/miedo-decir-no-trabajo>



[Assertiviness.www.skillsyouneed.com](http://Assertiviness.www.skillsyouneed.com)



<https://psicologia-estrategica.com/aprender-decir-no-poner-limites/>



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



[www.slow-work.eu](http://www.slow-work.eu)



**I&F**  
Instruction & Formation  
LEARNING FOR LIVING



 ORANGE HILL



ANDRAGOŠKI ZAVOD  
LJUDSKA UNIVERZA VELENJE