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## Staying Engaged: Fighting the Three-Headed Dragon



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"It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, when you live near one."  
Bilbo Baggins, *The Hobbit*

I'd like to introduce you to KODAPPP - the three-headed dragon who rages across our world, destroying the lives and careers of many who go about their business every day, unaware of his existence.

KODAPPP's full given name is Killer of Dreams and Passion/Purpose/Professionalism. But dragons have cool names - so let's stick with the acronym. He is at once a metaphor, but as you will see, also very real and very dangerous.

He eats souls.

Like many dragons of myth, the first step in slaying them is to learn their true name, so we've already made some progress. But KODAPPP doesn't make anything easy for us. He has three heads, and each head has a different name, a separate identity. They are equally important to know because this dragon kills in three bites.

The first comes from apathy, the great paralyzer of ambition and growth. Once we stop caring, we become a stationary target, setting ourselves up for the next poisonous bite - frustration, the destroyer of purpose and joy in our careers. The kill bite with the deadly toxin comes in the form of cynicism, the diabolical pride that sets in where we no longer value the opinions of others and seek to destroy their ideas regardless of merit. At this point, the dragon has completed its task, creating hollow shells and negative beings, no longer able to grow or experience authentic joy.

This dragon hunts those who stop looking to the skies or who stay too long satisfied with what they are doing and the level they are performing at.

### **The Death of Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is dying in our society and with it our uniqueness, individuality, and the nutrients



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for personal and professional growth. There are a couple of reasons this is occurring.

The first is that decades of misguided self-esteem indoctrination have destroyed our ability to see who we are, warts and all. We've been told we are flawless and faultless just as we are, that we deserve happiness and success regardless of our thoughts or actions. When we fail, it is someone else's fault. We are victims of something beyond our control.

Success and happiness are not things that come as an entitlement when we enter this world.

We must earn them.

Simultaneously, many newcomers to our industry were raised in a gentle and redundantly protected society that shields them from the kind of pain we used to feel from our mistakes. Now cars have more air bags than cylinders, everyone wears a helmet, and tag on the playground has been deemed too unsafe for our children to play. Every now and then: We need to get a dodgeball straight to the face.

Because sooner or later, in the real world, we will. When this inevitable event occurs, we are unable to deal with it. We lack the resiliency born of hardships overcome. Gentle, overly protected upbringing begets beings with soft shells.

Dragon bait.

## **Four Pools of Personal Awareness**

The reason I use the term pools to describe these areas of our being is because none of them are truly separate. They flow together like a liquid inside us. Sometimes a single toxin or pollutant - like those injected by the three heads of KODAPPP - can infect the entire pond of self-worth. But when we get them in balance, and develop them simultaneously, we can stir up a fine martini. Rocket fuel.

One of the greatest scientific breakthroughs of the past few decades is the interactions of these four elements of our being - our physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual selves. For example, we now know that things of the mind - our attitudes, mental activities, and ability to intentionally relax - dramatically impact things of the body, up to and including fighting off diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's. Conversely, our physical wellness influences our emotions, and spiritual state, and ability to learn and grow as aviation professionals.

Fine martinis don't happen by chance. Toxic pools often do. The difference between them is knowledge and intention, fueled by will.



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Dragon repellent.

So what do we believe about our purpose and professional existence?

That is the question that KODAPPP hopes you won't consider. Because when you do, you might start to care. And if you start to care, you can extract the fangs of apathy and start to grow again.

You become a dragon slayer.

For more information on Dr. Kern's employee engagement and cultural excellence programs, contact Convergent Performance at [www.convergentperformance.com](http://www.convergentperformance.com) or email Tony directly at [tony@convergentperformance.com](mailto:tony@convergentperformance.com).

## Resources

This article is taken from *The Three Headed Dragon* by Tony Kern, coming in May, 2018 from North Slope Publishers.



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