Managers in small organizations often face impossible demands. They often need to get more done than they can do, they need to make decisions with incomplete information, and they seek to meet goals which often conflict.

Often they have had incomplete training for the managerial aspects of their role, and the skills and experiences that brought then success in the past are no longer sufficient.

At the same time, employees and workers of all kinds face increasing difficulty as well. A common management belief is that when workers are constrained and face great pressure, they’re more likely to get the job done – as management expects and demands. One problem with this is, discomfort and duress themselves do not impart increased work capacity to workers. Workers get the most done in optimal conditions; adding pressure and demands generally degrades worker’s output rather than improving it.

Employees look at managers more critically now than ever before. From their perspective, being a manager looks so much easier and more fun that it ever is, and managerial behaviors thought of as essential (maintaining the image of being unruffled) actually may backfire to increase that gap.

Then the feedback loop kicks in. Managers know their employees are examining their behavior critically and without understanding all that they face. To protect themselves, they engage in evasive behaviors, they misrepresent the situation to their own advantage, they make contradictory decisions, and they refuse to share information beyond what is necessary.

And alternately, staff already face plenty of difficulties in the workplace; and with the access of proximity, people close by make the best targets. A boss can become a stand-in for all that is wrong with the organization, the entire sector, the economy, etc.

Workplaces in these ways become more and more challenging and dysfunctional.
Both parties often believe that trying to improve the situation will make them more vulnerable, and probably won’t help – so why bother.

The thing the people forget is that they have choices at every moment, and it is possible to make small choices to start moving toward a better place. Also, making any choice at all – and owning that choice – is itself a breakthrough that can yield positive energy and surprising results!