

Title:

Intelligent Optimism Wins In Today's World

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612

Summary:

Learn to be more optimistic despite the constant bombardment of negative news and the erosion of our culture.

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intelligent, intelligence, optimistic, optimism, negative, negativity, culture, happy, happiness, depression, sadness

Article Body:

The reality of today's world seems to leave little room for optimism. Almost every news story can lead because it does bleed. We hear of critical food shortages in Africa, daily gang deaths on city streets, the profiteering from child pornography, and the climatic disasters prompted by global warming. Health care costs move up faster than a hummingbird in flight and more children now spout profanities as a regular part of speech. With such negativity, no wonder a 2004 U.S. government survey found that depression afflicts one in 10 adults 14 days a month or more.

You probably get depressed just reading the opening paragraph. But wait! There is hope. Not the cock-eyed optimism that became fodder for a song from the musical South Pacific, but rather what psychologists in France are calling "intelligent optimism." Such optimism does not deny the reality of today's world, but rather seeks to LEARN how to fashion a life amid such difficulties. Martin Seligman, the psychologist who had made optimism and happiness his life's work, would agree with the French: optimism can be taught.

Consider these basic steps:

(1) Focus on what you can control. Don't get carried away by circumstances you cannot change. You might not change global warming but you can control your energy consumption. You can't stop the downsizing in your company but you can arm yourself with marketable skills.

(2) Reframe the event so that you are not a victim. There is always another way to view a situation. The flight cancellation that caused me to miss (and

forfeit) a major engagement was not "planned" to "get" me. It just was. My choice is to figure out what I can do to help the current client and what I will put in the place of the cancelled work.

(3) Think "enough". When we concentrate on what we don't have, we miss all the many things we do have. The truth of the matter is that if you are reading this article, you do have enough computer power. You do have enough intelligence. You do have enough time.

(4) Cultivate optimistic responses. Like a farmer tending a field, optimism will never grow unless it is watered, fed, weeded and nourished. We all have days in which negativity can take over. And, sometimes, that is a WISE response because it keeps us grounded in reality. Just make sure it is reality and not the imagination making extraordinary leaps into conjecture. Weed out that conjecture. Ask what you can DO to see a result that gives you a sense of power. If we don't cultivate such intelligent optimism, be aware of reality and willing to find options, then we might do what Alexander Graham Bell warned. "Stare so long at the closed door we fail to see the one that is opening."

(5) Remember the power of generations. Children of depressed parents are more prone to depression. Children of optimists are more prone to be optimists. What do you choose to pass along? Even if your parents were negative, you can break the cycle with stopping, freeze-framing a situation, listening to the negative self talk, and then literally giving yourself a different message. Yes, this takes practice but you can make it a habit if you work it over time.

Ultimately, intelligent optimists understand that change and chaos are given. They know that "this too shall pass". In the meantime, they CHOOSE to take whatever action they can within their own sphere of influence and then settle back. It is enough.

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