

## **RESOLVE TO BE POSITIVE**

At this time of year, people begin thinking about resolutions to improve their lives, make them better people, more attractive to others, and more successful. With all this contemplation, there is one New Year's resolution most people never consider — a positive attitude! We resolve to diet, to be nicer, and to work harder; but we seldom resolve to be positive. Yet, a positive attitude would take care of many resolutions we might make. It makes us better people, more attractive to others, and we attract more success in our lives through a positive attitude.

Negative attitudes develop over time. It's a process. We don't just wake up one morning and decide to be negative. Family and friends influence our attitude by the things they do and the things they say. Where we live may be an influence. Co-workers affect us — you ask how they are doing, and they bemoan, "It's Monday"; when Monday is no different from Wednesday. Other influencing factors are the news media we watch and hear, television shows and movies, video we see, electronic games we play, and magazines and books we read.

A major factor is time. We cling to the past, wishing we were the captain of the football team again. We avoid the challenges and pressures of today by mentally reliving our past or dreaming of a better tomorrow. Then, we worry what the future may bring. We allow "time" to control our emotions and our lives, rather than living in "today".

## **Being Negative Is a Journey**

To be negative or positive is a constant process, though it's easier to be negative. Either is a choice — your choice.

We all have an ego, and the ego has only one purpose — *to enjoy pleasure and avoid pain!* We avoid pain by suppressing it, blaming other people or events for it, indulging in destructive behaviors to forget it, and generally creating negative cycles that keep us in the middle of it.

“It's all Sarah's fault!” Blaming other people or events is a negative reaction to pain. It creates more anger and hurt feelings, and a cycle that may have permanent negative effects in your life.

We all have destructive behaviors. They give us instant gratification (the ego craves pleasure) in response to pain. We may eat, when someone criticizes our weight. We may drink or do drugs. Maybe, we shop, spending money we cannot afford to spend. We may demoralize another with cutting, controlling remarks that make us temporarily feel superior and better about ourselves. Whatever the destructive behavior, it only re-enforces the negative cycle. The eating brings more criticism, spending money you don't have brings more problems, hurting someone else causes them to get revenge, and so on. And the most destructive factor is that we build a tolerance to these behaviors. The more you use the destructive behavior, the more is needed of it to mask the pain in the future.

When we avoid pain, our nervous system heightens our emotions. As we react to avoid the pain, we facilitate the negative cycle, bonding the negative to ourselves. Though our intent is to avoid pain, we actually heightened it, creating and

attracting more negative into our lives. Over time, the stress of this cyclical negativeness may cause physical ailments or even death. So, there's good reason to resolve this year to be positive!

### **Eliminating Negative Influences**

The first step in eliminating influences that bring negative into your life is to evaluate the activities in which you participate.

How many forms of the news do you see, hear or read? Choose one and eliminate the rest. You only need to hear, see or read it once. The rest is negative repetition.

Next time you see that co-worker, don't ask how he is doing. Instead state, "This is a glorious day. I truly look forward to Mondays!" Don't give negative people, including family and friends, a chance to ruin your day by bringing you down to their negative level.

How many negative television shows, movies and videos do you watch? Love those crime shows? CSI, NCIS or how about Law & Order? Though intriguing and attention keepers, combined they add subconscious stress. You don't have to eliminate all of them, but you can choose your two favorites and replace the others with better programming or reading a good book. Do the same with other such activities.

Time? Take control of it. Master it by facing the challenges and pressures of today. Living in "this" moment may be a bit uncomfortable for a short while (which is why it's easier to be negative rather than choose to be positive), but it leaves no lasting effects.

## **Proactive Resistance**

The best way to live in today is to actively resist reacting to negative people or events. Such proactive resistance may cause you a momentary struggle, but the almost immediate calm and clarity are worth it.

When you react to negative stimuli, your body tenses and you feel pain of some type (hurt, anger, anxiety or upset, and you become defensive). With proactive resistance, you can stop this reaction by taking a deep breath, calming yourself, and then asking yourself if these feelings and the negative reaction your mind has conjured up is going to provide you a positive result. Let go of any emotional reaction, regardless of whatever else is happening. You wish to break the negative cycle, and your reaction is the real problem — not the negative stimuli.

Once you calm yourself and shut down your reaction system, you allow yourself to become an observer. As long as there is no safety issue, just listen and observe. If someone is shouting at you, let him run out of steam. Let the event play out. Don't react.

Being an observer allows you to look past the event. Allow your positive feelings and behavior to come forth. See the event with clarity (why is Jim really upset?). Look for positive solutions. It's difficult at first, but you will find it becomes easier with practice. Don't chide yourself for "backsliding" now and again. Just stop whenever you see yourself adding to a negative cycle and apply proactive resistance at that point.

Remember, being a positive or negative person is a process. Change the process, and you change your attitude. Change your attitude to a positive one, and you will accomplish those other New Year's resolutions with much less effort.