

**Let the Sunshine In**  
**By Barbara Ashcroft B.A. M.ED.**

Are you aware that we become what we think about? Whatever we focus on, we can be sure we'll get more of. That's why taking inventory of our daily thoughts is a must. Negative thinking often creeps up on us, becomes a regular habit and steals our joy every day. When we allow these thoughts to consume our conversations, fill our personal head space and permeate our whole being, we close the door on any cheerful and hopeful thoughts that might be waiting to enter. We are choosing to keep a large grey blanket of cloud over our heads shutting out any rays of sunshine that might be trying to break through and brighten our day.

Scientists tell us that we have about 60,000 thoughts a day- 1 per second-and that 95 percent of these thoughts are habitual. Now check this out. They believe that 80 percent of these habitual thoughts are negative which means that the average person has 45,000 negative thoughts a day! Now that's a 'downer'.

*"Your day goes the way the corners of your mouth turn."* Anonymous

### **Removing the Clouds**

Choosing to think positively is just that, a conscious choice. Yes, some people, by their very nature, do have a more positive outlook on life than others, but improving your outlook and attitude in life is an accomplishment that can be learned and applied by anyone. When you do decide to start thinking more positively, life will begin to offer you new opportunities, more satisfying relationships and increased fulfillment.

The first thing you must do is to monitor your thoughts. Do you actually notice when you are filled with thoughts that are dragging you down? If your body feels heavy and your spirits are sinking low, take a check on what's going on in your head. If you are tired and lack energy ask yourself, "What have I just been thinking about?" More often than not, you will discover that your mind has been focusing on some past transgression, complaint or situation that is really out of your hands. If you can start to become aware of your thoughts, you can begin to have some control over what you feed your mind. We are all going to have negative thoughts at one time or another, since life will give all of us an occasional unpleasant and maybe even tragic experience. The problem occurs when we continue to entertain these thoughts, rethink them over and over again and make them a constant part of our daily conversations. When you are aware that your thinking is negative, simply acknowledge that thought and choose to visualize it moving on and away from you. Then, take your thinking to the joy and appreciation of the present moment at hand or recall a past pleasant experience. Let this practice become the new habit. Listen closely to the messages your body is giving you. It won't be long before you realize how different you begin to feel both physically and mentally when you choose to keep those old nagging, negative thoughts under control

### **What Gets in Our Way?**

Old programs often run behind the scenes in our minds. Tapes of hurtful events replay over and over and we give them further air time by rehashing and retelling the lengthy details to all who will lend an ear. If you can't bear the thought of destroying these old mentally destructive tapes,

at least remove them from your mind and let them collect dust on an old shelf. The scary part of harboring all this negativity is that we absolutely lose our wonderful authentic ourselves over the years. Eventually this negative persona overrides our true joyful selves. We **become** our miserable, unhappy story. Choose new tapes.

Keeping company with chronic complainers and critics won't do much to lift your spirits. See how you feel after a whole evening of blaming, accusing, complaining and gossiping about others. Do you return to your home or work refreshed with new energy and ideas? It's much better to use this time coming up with possible solutions to problems, rather than making the problem the focal point of the evening's conversation. If solutions are not part of your mandate, better to spend your time working out, or on any other activity that feeds your soul. Look out for toxic people who want to spend hours discussing everyone else's flaws and failings. They love to engage you in their poisonous past times. Choose new friends.

Seeing yourself as a victim of life's circumstances will just reinforce a negative attitude. We can all play 'victim' at one time or another. Life has taught me that we will all have some 'less-than-perfect' personal experiences at different times on our journey. Even great wealth does not protect one from unforeseen misfortune. It is our response to these setbacks that determines our future quality of life. Every event that has happened to you in life has had its purpose. At the time of these unwanted and painful experiences it is very difficult to see any positive aspect or meaning to them. Yet, often when we look back a few years later, we find that new and better opportunities or relationships eventually did appear as a result of that trying time. Whenever we are in the midst of a life crisis, we must hold on and know that something good will come from it in due course. Playing 'victim' keeps you at a perpetual 'pity party' of one. Other options are available. Choose to see the opportunity you are being given.

*"Every adversity carries with it the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit."* Napoleon Hill

### **Changing Your Perspective**

How do you see the glass, half-empty or half-full? Optimistic people always see their glass half full. How do they do this? They constantly focus on what's good in their lives. They give thanks for all their wares, talents and friends every day. They become conscious of the goodness of the people and the beauty of their surroundings in the present moment. They wake up in the morning excited to greet the day to see what opportunities or challenges it may bring. They choose in favor of their passions and engage in work that is both rewarding and purposeful. They keep their eye on the "big picture" of life. They don't spend time sweating the small stuff. They let go of the things they can't change. They forgive themselves and others, pick themselves up and move on. They keep their conversations solution-oriented, future-based and uplifting. They choose friends with similar outlooks who energize them. They value each day they have their health and they don't waste life whining and complaining. They know that what they focus on will multiply, thus they keep the clouds of negative thinking to a bare minimum.

Remember, you alone are responsible for your attitude. You do not have to stay tied to old ways of negative thinking. The secret is to make up your mind that you are tired of entertaining depressing thoughts that bring you down and drain your energy. Imagine that your mind is like a beautiful garden. Begin to catch yourself when these 'poor me' thoughts or old negative

tapes start to crowd out the colorful blooms. Keep the weeds out. You are in charge of what you think about. Choose to let the sunshine come through.

*"Change your thoughts and you change your world"* Norman Vincent Peale

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