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Coach's Corner: Optimism - medicine for adversity

By: Sharon Pahlka , Journal Newspapers

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I was recently inspired by a man named Nick Vujicic. I don't know him. A friend suggested I visit his Web site, and I was left speechless. Animated, enthusiastic and full of life, this man was smiling, silly and having fun driving a boat. But he has no limbs.

Suddenly, my challenges seemed small by comparison, and my approach more negative. So, I decided to try to change some of my negativity to optimism.

Of course, snapping my fingers didn't work. Optimism is easier when things are going well but more demanding when life gets hard. Keeping a cheery disposition on a gloomy day can be harder than you think. Learning to take an optimistic approach when receiving bad news is a real challenge. But I am discovering that you can learn. Even on the hardest days, there are things we can do to stay positive and not let it get the best of us.

Keep your sense of humor. Almost every situation has a humorous side. Find it and use it. By seeing the lighter side you will decrease stress and increase your ability to cope. If you need help, just rent a funny video or visit that friend with a wonderful sense of humor.

Have a strong support system. I don't think we are meant to go it alone. Keep connected with people that you love and that care about you. It is much easier to cope and stay optimistic when you have a strong group of people who care and are willing to support you.

Walk away. If things get to be too much, just take a walk. Getting away helps with a new perspective and exercise also helps.

Know that everything will work out. Take the action you need to take and then let it go. Worrying about it won't help or change things. Do your best and then let it go.

There is scientific evidence that being optimistic is better for your health and can actually help you live a longer more productive life. It all has to do with how we choose to view life. We can make the best of almost any situation by keeping an optimistic viewpoint and adding a little humor.

When we approach life's obstacles with optimism, we not only increase our chances for success and survival, we inspire others to move forward with hope.

Coaching Question:

Are you willing to be an optimist? Who can you leave happier and healthier with your optimistic attitude? How about leaving them speechless?

Coaching Tip:

Write down five ways you can be more optimistic. Plan on implementing all five ways within a month. Keep track in your journal or at least become aware of what a difference being more optimistic makes for you.

Quotes:

"It doesn't hurt to be optimistic. You can always cry later."

- Lucimar Santos DeLima

"Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create that fact."

- William James

"A man is literally what he thinks."

- James Lane Allen

Resources:

* *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* by Martin Seligman

* www.authenichappiness.com - good resource for personal growth

* www.lifewithoutlimbs.org

Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon's column, *Coach's Corner*, offers helpful tips from her work.

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