

Change the quality of your thoughts and you'll change the quality of your experience.

INTENTIONS

May/June 2000
VOLUME 3
ISSUE 4

"Life offers us the friction of experience. It either grinds us down or buffs us up. The choice is ours, completely."

- John Felitto

Slow Down and Benefit from "Negative" Emotions

Do you enjoy being sad, confused, uncertain, troubled or frightened? Of course not. Do these feelings show up every so often in your life? Of course they do. Before reading any further, take a moment to reflect and ask yourself, "How do I react to these feelings when they first show up?"

Life is a series of mood shifts between pleasure and pain. Your logic tells you, "I want to return to pleasure and move away from pain as quickly as possible." Madison Avenue feeds our desire for instant fixes. Have an ache? Here's a pill; Not enough time to eat? Here's some fast food. Unfortunately, this rush to pleasure cuts us off from the much deeper and more satisfying life which emotional soul-work offers. It is within these deeper layers of ourselves, that we tap into a greater sense of self-knowledge, love, nurturing, inner-peace and inner-connectedness. In my opinion, being so out of touch with our emotional selves is at the root-cause for much of our troubles, individually and collectively. In our eagerness to regain comfort, we do ourselves a major disservice and lose the opportunity and insight that these so called "negative" emotions offer.

We were given a full range of emotions for good reason. This was not a design flaw by God or mother nature. If we come into contact with a hot stove, as much as we don't enjoy it, we can see how the physical pain helps us avoid an even worse outcome. In much the same way, our emotions serve as an alert system; a call for our attention.

Many self-help gurus offer techniques to shift the mind away from negative self-talk and toward a more affirming inner dialogue. These methods can be very helpful and effective if used appropriately. However, if applied incorrectly, these methods can prove to be quite detrimental. In Elaine De Beauport's book, "The Three Faces of Mind," she points to an interview with Bill Moyers, where Candace Pert, leading researcher on brain chemistry and emotion, gave her opinion of repression and positive thinking. "It's clear to me that emotions must play a key role, and that repressing emotions can only be causative of disease. Positive thinking is interesting, but if it denies the truth, I can't believe that would be anything but bad." Therefore, it is imperative for us to first make a thorough study of our "negative" self-talk before we summarily dismiss it in our rush for comfort.

The new field of psycho-neuroimmunology is helping us understand the relationship between the emotional center of our limbic brain and disease. When you learn to be more aware of the signals your body and mind are sending

"Programs designed with the whole brain in mind."

John Felitto, trainer & coach

you, you can make better choices and avoid much unnecessary illness and disease.

Emotional discomfort first comes in a whisper, then a scream, then a shove on the shoulder and ultimately a frying pan. Emotional stress moves from subtle to gross; from a sense of uneasiness, to a tension headache, a cold, bellyache, high blood pressure and perhaps even cancer. As you learn to hear the subtle messages and take directions from those signals, you enhance the quality of your whole life, as well as your health. Paradoxically, the time invested in attending to your feelings, rather than fleeing from them, literally speeds up the transition from discomfort to the state which you most desire; more consistent pleasure. As with most emotionally intelligent behavior, it is the willingness to defer immediate gratification in favor of a more meaningful, long range benefit. The tortoise always wins.

When you become aware of a so-called "negative" mood, consider the following approach. Understand, I am not a psychotherapist and this is not medical advice. This applies to the everyday, commonplace mood swings we all experience. If you are experiencing significant, prolonged or reoccurring sadness or depression, I strongly encourage you to seek appropriate medical attention.

Body-Mind Wisdom Model

- 1) Stop and observe
- 2) Attention
- 3) Reappraise
- 4) Information
- 5) Awareness
- 6) Acceptance
- 7) Action
- 8) Gratitude

Stop and observe - Take the time to observe the emotion. Realize that you are more important than whatever else may be going on in your life right now. Observe your feelings by asking yourself questions. Why do I feel this way? What is my body trying to tell me?

Attention - Allow the emotion to speak to you and give it attention. Your feelings hold great wisdom. Avoid the temptation to analyze the feeling. Allow the discomfort to express itself and flow through you, lest it be stored somewhere in your physiology. Children are masterful teachers in this regard. In one moment a child sheds a pool of tears, while in the very next moment, gleefully giggles.

Reappraise - Strip the label of "negative" from this less than pleasant mood and reappraise it as body-mind wisdom which holds opportunities for greater joy and pleasure.

Information - Jose Silva said that all problems can be solved when we have sufficient information. By engaging emotions, you can gain volumes of information that you would not get by taking the quick escape route of a midnight binge, an alcoholic beverage or some other distractive, pacifying diversion.

Awareness - Engaging in the emotion offers more insight to your body-knowing. You get to know yourself better. You increase your mood-intelligence quotient and build a new bank of intuitive reference points. You become more skillful in identifying your needs. This may be the first time you've met your emotional self in a loving, patient way.

Acceptance - Accept your emotional center as a valid source of wisdom. You've probably accepted logic as the only rational means of dealing with problems. You've concluded that the irrational nature of emotions blur your judgment and have, therefore, short-circuited your communication with your brain's limbic

system. Laurie Nadel, writes in her book "Sixth Sense," that, "You must be willing to accept that information acquired through your subjective brain, which is not the brain you took to school, is valid... When you decide to close down your feelings, you are shutting off an important channel of data." My suggestion is to first draw on the wisdom of the nonlinear emotional center of the limbic brain and then organize the information with your rational brain. Not one in exception of the other, but both.

Action - Now you have the opportunity to do something productive with the information you have gathered. Now you can make mindful choices, get your real needs met, eliminate reoccurring problems and move yourself to the next level of personal or even professional growth.

Gratitude - You ultimately become grateful for the value offered by these so-called, "negative" emotions. You now embrace your natural body-mind wisdom as an ally, not an enemy. This body-mind wisdom lovingly guides your attention to insights and information which continually enrich the quality of your life experience.

Apply this 8 step approach with exercises that speak to your own brain preference. If you have a visual preference, use visualization in a dynamic meditation; an auditory preference, speak to yourself aloud as you observe your mood; a tactile preference, write down what you're feeling. If you aren't certain of what your preference is, try them all and you'll find out soon enough. If you'd like a hand, you can always call the "coach."

"Intentions" is a free publication promoting the use of the whole brain and mind, to live life mindfully and purposefully through the awesome power of awareness and intention, for the benefit of all. Written by: John Felitto, Mind Development Trainer & Coach, 65 Mendolia Ct., Pearl River, NY 10965 (845) 735-4284 Email comments to: John@EvokeYourGreatness.com.