

Features

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The power of a positive mind

A mental attitude of positivity brings many benefits, and it is within your power to generate a positive mind set.

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With the devastation going on around the world, it has been undeniably overwhelming for our country to be going up against a global pandemic. Everyone is anxious to have an end to it with a cure and hopeful that we are better prepared for what the future brings.

In light of this situation, there are some among us who remain unperturbed and optimistic despite the circumstances. They take everything in stride and flourish in adaptation with all the changes that are happening.

One might wonder how they manage to remain in such a tranquil state despite the difficulties. More so, how can we, as witnesses to this positive resilience, aspire to be more like that?

If we were to compare two individuals who have come to a misfortune, we might see two different reactions. Person A may get into depression and find it hard to move on, while Person B's reaction is to maybe take a moment to collect themselves and straight on attempt to continue on living regardless.

From a psychological perspective, it is fair to say that each individual has different personalities and is unique from one another. But if we were to examine it more closely, the reactions that we show are really influenced by the tone that reverberates in our mind.

In the field of psychology, it is proven that the human mind is complex. It could be said that emotion, attitude as well as our approach to life are influenced by our state of mind. It has the power to affect the result of our actions, responses and behaviours.

Founder of Ford Motor Company Henry Ford expressed his opinion on the matter by saying, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't - you're right."

The interpretation there is that he's stating that the mind is a powerful tool that can influence the result with which we desire. In other words, if you believe in success, you will succeed but if you believe that you will fail, then you will.

Try and imagine this if you will: you are in bed, dawn is upon you and its light is slowly creeping in through the sides of the drapes. Sluggishly and languorously you open your eyes to greet the coming of a new day. But just as you relish the sight and your con-

sciousness is barely at its peak, your mind is suddenly hit with waves and waves of worries for the troubles that lie ahead of you today. Sinking with a heavy heart, you muster up a deep breath and hurriedly blow it out of your chest, as though you were trying to expel the darkness away. However, your mind is still preoccupied, still filled with disdain, still engrossed in the thought of the bad day ahead. So you brace yourself, and with all the might that you could muster, you will yourself out of bed and hurriedly swinging your legs in one swift move. When all of the sudden, a piercing pain shoots up your leg, and the pain is almost unbearable!

You bumped your toes at the foot of the bed. Who's to blame? Your bedpost? The bedpost has always been there, ever since the day you bought the bed, and isn't it in the design you've always wanted - a four poster bed? Or maybe it's your spouse's fault? Still laying there, looking very comfortable, fast asleep, not a care in the world, completely oblivious to what's happened to you. Whose fault is it that you are now clutching on your toes, in agony and so much pain?

The fact of the matter is that none of this would have happened if you weren't preoccupied with your dark thoughts; an actualisation of a destructive anticipation. Subconsciously, you have let the despairing thoughts manifest through your actions and behaviour; a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', where we act or behave in ways that reflect our beliefs and expectations.

Dr Norman Doige wrote a book entitled *The Brain That Changes Itself* about how our brain to body functions are influenced by the way we think. The human mind, he believes, is not fixed and it is ever changing.

He also claims that our brain cells process information according to the tone set by the mood in our minds. If we were to train our minds to think positively and do so routinely, positive behaviours ensue.

In 2003, Dr Sheldon Cohen of Carnegie Mellon University from the United States of America conducted a study on the effects of mental attitude against the common cold.

He interviewed 334 healthy volunteers three times a week for two weeks to evaluate their mental attitudinal spectrum. The purpose of the interview was to assess the overall influence of mental attitudes on an individual's well-being.

After mapping volunteers' demographics, they were exposed to Rhinovirus (a mild virus that causes the common cold).

Given a few days, it was discovered that individuals with negative mental attitudes were three times more likely to show signs and symptoms of being ill compared to individuals with positive mental attitudes. Based on the findings, Dr Cohen deduced that a positive mind can boost the body's immune system.

In fact, it is also believed that a positive mental attitude can assist the body's recovery from illnesses. An article titled *Mechanisms of the Placebo Effect in Pain and Psychiatric Disorders* by RD Holmes, A K Tiwari and J L Kennedy (2016), describes the placebo effect, defined as a phenomenon in which some people experience recovery or improvement to illnesses or symptoms after being administered with an inactive substance or sham treatment.

Who could've imagined that just simply having a positive mental attitude can benefit you in more ways than one?

What are you waiting for? It is time to train your mind to be more positive! You might ask how you do that.

Researchers Elise L Rice and Barbara L Fredrickson may have the answer. In 2016,

they conducted a study on ways to encourage mental attitude into a more positive one. Their article *Of Passions and Positive Spontaneous Thoughts*, examined 402 volunteers who were asked to record their reactions to whether they felt uplifted or otherwise, after going through the given series of mental and physical activity.

Results from the study were examined, and it was discovered that positive thoughts emerge when volunteers did activities that they like or enjoyed. This tells us that we have the power to transform our mind to be more positive. Astonishingly, that is simply from having regular doses of our favourite things; things we like to do and being around things we actually enjoy.

So it's no myth, we really can take control of our own mental attitude. It is that simple. By now, you should know that it is within your power to generate a positive mind set.

Nevertheless, being optimistic or perfectly positive does not mean we can throw caution to the wind. Caution is inherent in us and is part of our natural instinct, it prevents us from catastrophic consequences. Some may call it being careful, but our instinct for caution is a powerful tool for protection against unpleasant things or hostile situations. So, good luck out there. Be positive. Stay safe.

