



## **Thriving Through Change By Sterling Newberry**

I believe there is a place in business for taking care of yourself. This is what we do so that we can come back to our work ready to contribute to the best of our ability. There are a number of tools recently developed in Positive Psychology that can be helpful.

Positive Psychology is focused on helping normal people lead fulfilling lives. In his book *Authentic Happiness*, Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman offers the perspective of a life lived with meaning and purpose; a life in which the usual bumps in the road enrich us, and we find a way to be authentically happy.

By authentically happy, Marty means that we find it from inside ourselves, not from external events and causes, and not by putting on a happy face and pretending not to notice difficulties in our lives. I take this as a sign of hope and optimism.

Businesses wanting to become successful in the new era must recognize the desire of employees to have work lives that are fulfilling, not just monetarily rewarding. For employees, finding fulfillment in ways that don't depend on external events leads to a greater sense of control and personal enrichment.

### **REALISTIC OPTIMISM**

One way to get started is to learn how to handle disappointments that inevitably accompany a rich life. A healthy optimism helps us to keep balanced in outlook, centered emotionally and more productive.

### **FIVE STEPS**

You can follow five relatively easy steps in facing a negative incident in your life. It's as easy as ABCDE.

### **ADVERSITY**

First, describe what happened in neutral terms, without judgment of yourself or others involved. For example, instead of writing "He ignored me", write "When he walked by I said hello, and I didn't see him respond". If you write down your conclusions or beliefs you won't be able to get past your already negative view of the situation.

### **BELIEF**

Now write down your belief about what happened. Do you think the other person was ignoring you? Now's the time to put it to paper. Be honest with yourself about any judgments or conclusions you have drawn.

### **CONSEQUENCES**

Now write down any consequences of your holding those beliefs about the incident. Will you feel depressed, be unable to concentrate on work, or be less likely to understand the other person? Try to think about those consequences, and whether you are willing to live with them. If not, take the next step.



## **DISPUTE**

Now write down other possible explanations for what happened. Try to view the other person as having positive motives. Try assuming that you are the only person holding your beliefs about the significance of the situation. If you were your best friend, how might you view what happened?

## **Energize**

You can energize yourself and solidify your learning from this exercise in several ways.

- Talk about it with a trusted friend. Get their perspective on the situation. This will provide you with information you weren't aware of and help you develop a perspective based more strongly in facts.
- Keep a gratitude journal. Use what you learn from exercises like this as material for that journal. This will help you strengthen your memory of these positive events.
- Practice this method often. Eventually this method for framing problems will become more like the easy routine that catastrophizing used to be.

**A realistically optimistic outlook is one part of a vibrant life. You can develop your potential to be a highly functioning person and experience life differently. Give it a try!**

*Sterling Newberry believes that what matters is not what happens, but how you respond. He works with organizations that want to move through change to sustainable solutions, and to become better at continuous improvement. You can reach him at (510) 541-9901, or by email at [sterling@thegreaterpossibility.com](mailto:sterling@thegreaterpossibility.com).*