

Staying Positive in a Negative World

By Trenton Hightower

Everything happens for a reason.

Every cloud has a silver lining.

When times get tough—on the job, or off—no one wants to hear clichés like this. If your company is merging with another, and you're worried about your future, this type of bumper sticker logic isn't much comfort. Nor is it when you're not-so-gently downsized out of a job you had hoped to retire from. Or when the economy has taken such a toll on your 401(k) that you're wondering if you'll ever be able to retire.

It is possible, however, to train yourself to think positively and stay motivated even in a negative world. Try a couple of these on for size:

Choose Your Attitude. You've heard this one before, but it bears repeating. Abraham Lincoln said it first: "People are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." Make up your mind to find something to be happy about today. It beats the alternative.

Control the Messages: The computer adage GIGO-- Garbage in, Garbage out—applies to you. Take a break from gloom. Stop fixating on inflammatory TV and talk radio. Take those cynical web sites off your Favorites list. You can't change the world, but you don't need to focus on doomsday scenarios either.

Focus on the future. Nothing lasts forever. This, too, shall pass. And perhaps faster than you might think! Stay positive and act "as if." As if you're successful. As if you've arrived. As if the fulfillment of your dreams is just around the corner. Set goals. Break them down into small steps. Accomplish them one by one.

Contemplate The Extra Degree. Personal coach and business development guru Zig Ziglar talks about 212: The Extra Degree. The premise is that at 211 degrees, water is hot. At 212, it boils. And boiling creates enough steam to power a train. The difference? Just one degree. Think about it. All it takes is one extra degree of persistence and effort on your part.

Cultivate an attitude of gratitude. When you really take stock of what you have—whether that's your health, a living, or your family—other things become less important. Some people practice writing down 3-5 things they're grateful for each day. You may be surprised at how powerful this can be.

Take Stock. In between jobs? Just not as busy as you'd like to be? Take advantage of a little down time. Gain some knowledge. Learn something new. Use this time. Distract yourself with learning, and you will improve attitude, skills, and income.

Create the Environment. Take a look at The FISH Philosophy. It's a quick read, full of tips on how to choose your attitude, have fun at work (not an oxymoron), "be there" for your colleagues and friends and "make their day." It's a quick, inspiring read.

Pick Your Companions. Lose the energy vampires. You know who they are...the ones who drain the life out of you with their negativity. If they're optional, get rid of them. If you have to work with them, cultivate detachment. Instead, give of yourself to others. Find someone to mentor. Ask an experienced associate for advice, or learn something new from them.

Here's the bottom line? There are things we can control, and things we can't. Focus on what you can control, and you'll be poised for success when the economic tide turns or an opportunity presents itself.