

Mind Sets - Developing A Success Mind Set

The Quest for Empowerment

Another way we try to create a sense of security in our lives is by seeking power. We believe that if we obtain a position of power, happiness and success will automatically follow.

Power, just like security, is an illusion. It can't prevent us from experiencing anything negative. It can't erase our deep-seated feelings of inadequacy or insecurity. It can't make us successful.

In fact, power over others often becomes a burden all its own! Along with the ability to control people and situations come the responsibilities and obligations that flank a position of power. Rather than feeling in control, we feel more out of control than ever.

As much as we might like to, we can't control certain events in our lives, and we can't control others. We can control only our own thoughts and actions.

What most of us are really seeking is a sense of EMPOWERMENT. Not control over others, not control over outside circumstances, but control over our own thoughts, emotions, and actions.

As frightening as it may seem to release the illusion of power, it's also very freeing in a way. Once we "get it" that we don't HAVE to be in control of anything except ourselves, we learn to relax and let go of what we have no control of. We learn to go with the flow and do our best without trying to meet some vague, impossible standards we set for ourselves in an effort to feel in control.

Dissolving Emotional Blockages

Even if all outer aspects of our lives seem wonderful, our emotions can still cause us to feel unhappy. Traumatic memories can stifle our development. Negative thought habits can fill us with feelings of frustration and powerlessness. Negative self-talk can cause us to sabotage any goals we set.

Emotions can be a tricky thing to understand, but it becomes easier when we consider that our emotions are fueled by our thoughts.

If we THINK negatively about ourselves, we will FEEL badly about ourselves.

If we focus on the negative in our lives, our lives will seem to have a negative theme. It's all about what we focus on the most that determines how we feel.

Think about the last time your day took a sudden nosedive because of something simple.

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Let's say you were driving to work, singing along with a song on the radio, and some jerk cut you off in traffic. Your first thought might be, "What a jerk!" (Or a more colorful term) Your next thought might be, "People are so rude these days, and I seem to encounter the rudest of them all! What did I ever do to deserve this?"

From there your mood can continue to spiral down as you ponder your bad luck in having to deal with inconsiderate people. Do you see what happens in situations like these? You have a negative experience, and then you internalize it. Not just for the moment either, but for the rest of your day. Even worse, because your attitude tends to attract most of your experiences, feeling negative will continue to attract more rude and inconsiderate people into your day.

Though it seems impossible, we can control our emotions. We can *choose* our emotions, moment to moment. And we begin by choosing our thoughts. Using the example from above, what would be a more empowering response? You could simply say, "That wasn't very nice," and then turn your attention back to the song you were singing.

That may seem like a difficult thing to do when your anger is ignited, but with practice it gets easier. Rather than internalizing the things that happen to you (especially things you can't control), simply let go of them and keep your emotional balance. If you pay attention to how you feel throughout the course of your day, you'll become aware of whether your thoughts are negative or positive. Then you can simply choose to release your negative thoughts and replace them with positive thoughts – which will make you feel better. Again, it takes consistent effort to fully master this technique.

Releasing the Past to Make Room for Something Better

Letting go of past traumas is a little more challenging because they are often buried deeply in our subconscious minds. But buried or not, they can still wreak havoc on our level of happiness.

One of the most powerful techniques I've learned for releasing old baggage is to relive the painful experiences. It doesn't sound like much fun (and in fact it isn't) but it is definitely freeing. If you stop to think about it, much of our emotional baggage is "buried" simply because we didn't allow ourselves to work through it the first time around. We squelched down the feelings and tried to ignore them, and there they still lie, festering. If we unearth the painful memories and work through them like we could have done when they originally happened, we are able to release them and achieve closure.

This is a simple process you can undertake on your own, but if you've had very large, life-altering traumas, you may want

To bring one's self to a frame of mind and to the proper energy to accomplish things that require plain hard work continuously is the one big battle that everyone has. When this battle is won for all time, then everything is easy.

- Thomas A. Buckner

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to consult a counselor or therapist to help you work through them. While the process is simple, it can be emotionally overwhelming, and having a trained professional as a guide can provide invaluable support.

Once you've worked through your emotional blockages, you may also want to examine the underlying beliefs that formed because of them.

For example, an abusive childhood might result in a deep-seated belief that you're not worthy of being loved. Working through painful memories can be freeing, but it won't automatically change your underlying beliefs about your worthiness as a human being. You could still find yourself avoiding intimacy and sabotaging your efforts to create a fulfilling life.

The good news is that once you identify your limiting beliefs, you can begin changing them with a little conscious focus.

Transforming Limiting Beliefs into Empowering Beliefs

Changing your existing beliefs is a simple process. The only thing you need is the determination to keep at it until it "clicks" in your mind.

To start with, try these three steps:

- ❖ **Replace negative thoughts with positive ones.** While positive thinking alone will not alter your existing beliefs, it is a practice that can help you get in line with your thought patterns in a more conscious way. Rather than being a victim of your own thoughts, you can take control of them and choose them moment-to-moment. As you become aware of negative thoughts throughout the day, consciously replace them with equally positive (and usually opposite) thoughts.

For example, if you find yourself thinking that you'll never be successful because you just can't seem to break out of your limiting behaviors, consciously affirm that you have just as much potential to be successful as anyone else.

Visualize yourself with the determination, courage, and optimism you'll need to succeed. And the next time negative thoughts arise in your mind, go through the same process again.

Remember that it is a process and it will take time to get into the habit of thinking positively, but it does begin to have an effect on how you feel on a regular basis. And the better you feel, the more positively you'll think. You end up creating a continuous cycle of positive thoughts, positive feelings, positive beliefs, and positive actions!

- ❖ **Develop a stronger belief in yourself.** While you're working on transforming the quality of your thoughts, you can also purposely develop a strong belief in

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yourself and your abilities. A good way to start is by making a list of your positive character traits, qualities, skills, and talents. Write down every positive thing you can come up with about yourself, even if you don't think it's that amazing.

Then simply spend some time every day reading this list and affirming your ability to accomplish whatever you set your mind to. Over time, you'll begin to feel more positive about yourself and more confident about your abilities, just because you've developed the habit to do so.

- ❖ **Empower and motivate yourself.** Another wonderful tool for forming new beliefs is using your imagination to change your self-image. Visualization is an easy yet effective tool to replace your old, limiting self-image with an empowering new one. You simply close your eyes and conjure a mental image of yourself as you want to be.

See yourself feeling confident, inspired, courageous, and successful. Before long, you'll find that you won't have to manufacture these feelings; you will feel this way nearly all the time – naturally! Again, this exercise is most effective if you do it every day, even for just a few minutes.

What ARE The Keys To Happiness?

We already know that basing our happiness on external circumstances can be tenuous at best. So what does create feelings of happiness? Happiness is a personal concept that is probably different for each of us. Take a moment to consider what happiness means to you. That's one important step in understanding how you can bring more happiness into your life.

Think about the people, places, and things that fill you with joy and peace. Do you feel happiest when you're at home, or at work? How about when you're spending time with friends and loved ones? Or when you're reading an uplifting book, watching a funny movie, or donating your time to help others? Whatever activities you enjoy the most, make an effort to bring more of them into your life.

It's easy for us to sabotage ourselves by placing restrictions on our happiness. We affirm that we'll be happy if this happens, or that happens, but not when the other happens. Of course, certain situations just aren't pleasant no matter what – but for the most part, we can choose to enjoy most of our experiences and outcomes, even if they aren't what we originally expected.

Beyond all of this, however, most important is our willingness to accept that happiness is largely a choice we make in every moment, regardless of our surroundings. Happiness is not a gift we're waiting for; it's already within us. All we need to do is choose to embrace it; which can be easier said than done, especially if we're in the midst of difficult circumstances. The true skill we should be strengthening within

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ourselves is learning how to be happy on a basic level, even if our lives aren't perfect. By acknowledging that our lives will never be "perfect," we give ourselves permission to enjoy our lives as they are now.

When it comes right down to it, I think Abraham Lincoln said it best: "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

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Wishing you a smooth transition to the success you deserve,

Mind Sets Team