



Is Your Negativity Affecting Those Around You?

Feelings are infectious. Remember the last time you saw a child laughing gleefully. Didn't it make you smile, even though you may have been in feeling low or distressed? Of course it did because the emotions of those around us are 'catchy'. This is just as true with negative feelings as it is with positive ones. This gives all of us the capacity to 'infect' the social world we are in, as well as making us vulnerable to 'catch' the feelings of those we are around. If you express happiness, then you infect others with a good mood. If you express anger, then you infect others with anger. And so on. This is why comedies are funnier and thrillers scarier when we see them in a crowded theatre.

When we are experiencing a strong emotion, positive or negative, we are wrapped up in the experience and don't typically think about the impact on those people around us. Try this little experiment to demonstrate the impact of your emotions:

Next time you are in a social situation at work or in the community, pay attention to how your mood impacts others. If you are feeling angry or low, do others become more surly, downcast or detached? If you are feeling good, do others become more talkative, engaged and smile more? In turn, does their positive or negative mood impact yours?

Needless the desirable outcome is to try to spread positive emotions. Can you make others feel happy, confident, or some other feeling, simply by expressing that feeling yourself?

Dr. Martin Seligman contends that you can in his new work on learned optimism. Here are few tips you can try to feel better each day. If you continue the experiment you will find out how powerful each of the techniques are in infecting others.

- **Refrain From Complaining:** Complaining is a negative experience that not only affects how you feel but others as well. If you feel like complaining, only allow yourself the opportunity to complain if you can legitimately put forward a reasonable solution for the problem. If you are only going to say something negative about somebody or something, then resist and keep the idea in your own mind.
- **Look to See What You Can Appreciate:** At the end of each day, write down three things that you appreciated from that day. It could be as simple as the fresh cup of coffee you had in the morning or it could be about a wonderful colleague you have at work. Do this everyday. Think about it before you go to sleep.
- **Consider the Gifts You Have in Life:** Look about your life and think through what you truly have to be appreciative of. Consider what it must be like to live in a third world country or a country at war and then think about what you have in comparison to them.
- **Try to See Some Humour in Your Work and Life:** Optimists always seem able to laugh at circumstances or even at themselves. Try to find some humour in your work and life. Of



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course, try not to laugh at others but to find good natured humour in the world around you. Go out and look for something funny.

- **Remember That You Are Worthy:** Often we feel bad because we judge ourselves harshly. Remember that you are of great worth in this world. No more or no less than others. You deserve the right to be treated equally.