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The Consequences of Being Positive

“Next time you’re found with your chin on the ground, there is a lot to be learned, so look around.”

—Frank Sinatra, from the song “High Hopes”

by Dr. Kenneth Silvestri

How many times have you heard, “accentuate the positive,” from friends when you are down on yourself. Well there is much to learn from that adage. In a University of Kentucky and University of Minnesota study of nuns over their life span, novices were evaluated regarding how they saw the glass half full or empty. The result was that the half empty individuals lived ten years shorter than their counterparts. This is equal to a life span shortened by having smoked a pack of cigarettes a day (“Nuns Offer Clues to Alzheimer’s and Aging,” by Pam Bulluck, NY Times, May 7, 2001; “Trust & Dare, newsletter of the school Sisters of Notre Dame, 2014). In a new study done at Stanford University a control group of 240 children ages seven to 10 were found that being positive improved their memory and enhanced their problem-solving skills (reported by Abigail Hess, CNBC, February 8, 2018). Another study at Stanford University, positive students were asked to think negatively for four minutes. Saliva tests confirmed that their immune system was lowered for four hours. Conversely, a group of “half empty” students were given positive input and their immune system improved for two hours (Stanford University Forgiveness Project, 2009). The research points out that negativity leads to bad health.

When you are negative, your nervous system defaults to a revved-up state and your blood leaves the areas that require the most nurturing, such as the entire lining of your gut, which needs to be replaced every seventy-two hours. When there is excessive stress from negativity your hormones curtail the immune system, further, placing you in a more vulnerable state. Dashner Keltner writes in *Born to be Good* (New York: Norton, 2009): “Positive thoughts are a biological mandate for health.” If the multifaceted and probably the most important part of your nervous system, the Vagus Nerve, which is the nerve of compassion, does not function optimally, our true karma is the survival of the good. This is further emphasized by Stephen W. Porges in his book *The Polyvagal Theory* (New York: Norton, 2011) when he describes the process of being optimistic and how it determines our becoming more safe, flexible and apt to have better coping skills.

Since the research is conclusive and has shown the effects of negative thinking, also called the “Nocebo Effect,” then it stands to reason, that singing “Oops there goes another rubber tree plant,” and any other positive thoughts will allow your calm part of your nervous system to be accentuated! You have a choice.

Here is visualizations, exercise that will allow you to expand your reality with

the wisdom of not being half empty:

Try imagining a silk thread pulling your head to an erect position. Allow your body to follow its direction. Let positive energy flow through you and around you. Sense your surrounding environment; tell your soul that it is multi-leveled. There are no accidents in this context. Open your being to connecting with others. Channel your energy through them and from them. Let your Chi or vital energy introduce your soul to yourself. Feel the energy flow from your belly to the outer most part of your body and existence. Relax your facial muscles; move Chi downward to release all tension in your body. Stand up and walk with a new spring to your steps. Feel the balls of your feet touch the ground with new awareness. Each part of you is connected to the whole, which is now more than all the parts of the universe. You are now connected to the universal positive energy that feeds our existence. ❧

**The above article is adapted from my forthcoming book, *A Wider Lens, How To See Your Life Differently*, to be published in the Autumn of 2018.*

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