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life advice

How to Focus On The Positive

Spouse got you frustrated? 4 tips to stay focused on the good stuff!

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Don't let the heat of a moment cause you to lose focus. You can be happy.

Whatever you focus on grows. Wherever you put your attention and energy will determine what happens in your life. If you focus on being kind and loving because you enjoy being kind and loving, not manipulatively in order to get something, kind and loving things will happen in your life. If you focus on your grievances, and on the feeling that "people are out to get me" indeed, you will experience many, many grievances.

The nature of focus, however, is often misunderstood. Let's say you want to increase the love in your life, but an event happens which makes you angry. For example, your spouse overdraws on your joint checking account and you only find out when you bounce a check and have to deal with the embarrassment, bank fees and all the rest.

You want to increase the love in your life by focusing on being kind and loving, so you deny your anger or push it away. After all, it's hardly loving to be majorly pissed off. You tell

yourself, "It's all right, the overdraft is no big deal, I'll just pay the fees and that'll be that. No need to get all riled up about it."

You're certainly making a valiant attempt at keeping your focus on love, but you are misunderstanding the nature of focus, and it will only cause you problems down the line.

Focus is how you concentrate your energy; what you do with something once you've noticed it. Denying the anger or frustration that an event causes to well up within you will only put those strong negative feelings somewhere else in your mental/emotional/physical system. They're bound to crop up later as some form of distress. At a certain point, you'll blow up at your spouse over nothing, or you'll nurse your repressed anger into an ulcer or worse.

Instead, try the following: 1. Acknowledge the reality of the event. You are hurt and mad and don't want to put up with this anymore.

2. Allow yourself to feel your feelings and express them appropriately and fully. Pound a pillow (safely placed in the middle of your bed), or scrawl your anger all over a pad, or scream your frustration in your car with the windows rolled up; whatever works without endangering yourself or others. Make sure you're really cleared of negative feelings before moving on to the next step.

3. Concentrate your energy (focus) on loving values. Appreciate this opportunity to figure out a better way of managing the family checking account. Deliberately bring to mind those qualities you appreciate within your spouse. Remind yourself of the good traits your spouse brings to any problem or challenge.

4. Focus on resolving the overdraft problem like the example above or whatever pressing matter is at hand. You're in a much better position to do that now because your focus isn't all wrapped up in berating your spouse for making you feel bad. Express your displeasure in rational terms, "I'm frustrated when our account is overdrawn," and move on to problem solving, "Let's see if together we can come up with a plan to keep our finances in order."

Once you're in problem-solving mode, you can readily shift your focus to where you want it to be—on being kind and loving.

The ability to concentrate our energies is a wonderful and powerful gift. Choose where you put your focus wisely, and it will serve you well.

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