

How Full is Mom's Glass?

By Debi Silber, MS, RD, WHC The Mojo Coach®

Tell me who you spend your time with and I'll tell you how you feel. Sounds impossible? It's really not. You see, we often take on the feelings, behaviors and attitudes of those we spend time with.

For example, let's say you have a friend, spouse or coworker who's always complaining. She's speaks negatively about her body, her job, her relationships and her life. She looks forward to spending time with you because it gives her an opportunity to vent and find relief. Once she's through, she feels lighter, freer and ready to go on with her day. She enjoys speaking to you because you're a great listener, enabling her to be heard and valued. That works for her but how do you feel? Chances are you feel drained, deflated and uninspired. Although your intention was to be a good friend, once you became involved emotionally in your friends negativity, you were brought right down with her.

Now on the other hand, let's say you have plans to see a friend who is lighthearted, enthusiastic and embraces life with eagerness and zest. Just thinking about this friend brings a smile to your face because you know you'll be having fun and enjoying each other's company. After your time together, you're excited about the rest of your day. You want to capture every moment and see all the beauty that's around you. Your friend may not intentionally have tried to alter your thinking but her positive approach and attitude was infectious.

Which person is better for your health? Studies show that positive thinkers have a 55% lower risk of death from all causes and 23% lower risk of death from heart failure. That's not to say that the more positive person doesn't experience anything unpleasant. In fact, the positive, optimistic person may have experienced more unfortunate situations than the negative, pessimistic person. The result of these experiences however leaves the positive thinker with a greater appreciation, perspective and sense of gratitude. They are grateful for what they see and have because they may have something to compare it to. When they encounter a stressful situation, they look for ways to improve it versus letting it consume them. When a problem arises, they use it as an opportunity to find the most appropriate solution, rather than dwelling or magnifying all that's gone wrong.

The negative person works much differently. They expect negative results and when it happens, it only confirms what they'd originally predicted. They're more comfortable judging, gossiping or criticizing because putting others down offers them some relief from their pain. The negative person maintains the role of "victim" in a script she's written for herself. She feels other's are

responsible for her “lot in life” and often uses it as an excuse to stay exactly where she is.

To make matters worse, it’s only natural to want to make herself feel better. If she doesn’t get to the root of what’s causing her pain, she’ll rely on unhealthy self-soothing behaviors, which only provide temporary relief. For example, let’s take the overcommitted, overstressed, overweight mom.

Because she feels powerless within her life, she feels it is her role to put herself at the bottom of the priority list.

She neglects her own self-care in order to give more to others. She takes on more than she can handle, doesn’t delegate responsibility or ask for help and is clearly burning the candle at both ends. She hasn’t had the time to get enough sleep, listen to music or go on a “date” with her husband in a long time. Because she has no free time, energy or inspiration, she grabs whatever food will give her an immediate burst of energy. She’s gaining weight and feeling terrible about how she looks and feels. Can you see where she’s headed? While this mom would feel much better by having her needs met with some self-love, nurturing and compassion, she’s using food as the only way she knows how to show herself some self-care.

When you were small and you had a bad day, remember when your mom offered you ice cream or your favorite dessert to help you feel better? Although well intentioned, as we grew, we may have continued where our moms left off. Now as adults we look to make ourselves feel better from something external, whether it’s food, clothes, alcohol or cigarettes. Whatever the choice, these self-soothing behaviors are all used to help us feel better.

What we need to understand is that lasting happiness can’t be found from something external...that’s what the pessimist believes, only to be disillusioned when the external reward was fleeting. The optimist thinks very differently. They know that true happiness comes from within. They strive to maintain that positive feeling because it simply feels good... and nothing tastes as sweet as that.



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