

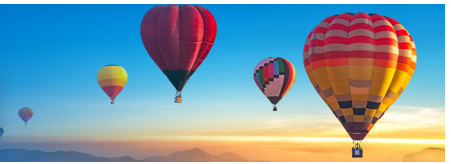


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# The Power of Positive Thinking

By Regina V. Cates

# The Power of Positive Thinking



Your mind thinks, but to love yourself and others, to have great relationships, it is necessary to acknowledge that your mind does not feel.

Remember the character Spock from *Star Trek*? He was pure intellect, even though he was half human. As the epitome of logic, he was non-emotional. He was not connected to his feeling heart, so he was not equipped to have intimate relationships with emotional beings.

Your mind does not care if your thoughts are true and rational or positive or negative — it just thinks. While your mind is not your enemy, it does have its own agenda. Your mind is self-absorbed; it does not have your back, nor does it even really care about what is in your best interest.

You have to care about what you think, because your thoughts create your behavior. Your behavior creates your life.

Impatient thoughts create impatient behavior. Patient thoughts create patient behavior. Jealous thoughts create jealous behavior. Kind thoughts create kind behavior. Revengeful thoughts create revengeful behavior. Peaceful thoughts create peaceful behavior. It then makes sense that to create your best life, you must stay connected to what you are thinking and why, so you can change jealousy to kindness, revenge to peace, and impatience to patience.

When you are aware of what you are thinking, you can be mindful of how best to respond to situations and people. If you are not cognizant that your thoughts are driving your behavior, you cannot create the actions that will produce your best life. Unaware of the thoughts that direct your actions, you remain a slave to a judgmental and self-centered mind with its own agenda.

Your best life can only be created through purposeful, positive action. To act positively requires thinking positively. Just because you think positively does not mean your head is buried in the sand. You are still aware of all that goes on in the world that is considered negative. But being aware of your mind's tendency to latch onto the negative will empower you to change your thinking to positive, which in turn will help you create your best life.

Below are four truths I learned about the power of positive thinking. These will help you see how

to move from being negative to being positive, by accepting that:

**Life Can be Dramatic,  
But Comedy is Much More Fun**

**Being The Victor Over Life's  
Circumstances is a Choice**

**Yes, Everything is Easier Said  
Than Done**

**If We Want Positive,  
We Must Stay Present**

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**Life Can be Dramatic,  
But Comedy is Much More Fun**

Have you noticed that a life filled with drama is just not that entertaining? Well, it just isn't. Yes, life is going to suck at times. Life is going to provide lots of drama. There is much that is negative going on in the world. But when we focus only on the negative, the drama-rama of life, we find ourselves in the middle of a bleak existence where we feel powerless, depressed, and victimized. And we wonder why. It's because of what we're letting in to influence us.

There is a saying, "We are what we eat." What we feed our body can nurture us. Or, eating without awareness can set us up for illness, excess weight gain, and stress. The same is true for what we feed our mind and heart.

Someone I know became addicted to television court dramas—so much so that she experienced frequent panic attacks and no longer found value in her daily life. Her relationships suffered, and she gained a tremendous amount of weight due to eating while glued to the television as the endless spectacle unfolded daily.

We have to keep in the forefront of our consciousness that what we concentrate on, we create. Don't you know people who are constantly negative? I do. You can say something completely positive, like, "What a beautiful day. Just listen to the little birdies happily singing. And doesn't the sun feel warm?" And there is someone who will immediately focus on the birds pooping on him or the sun being too bright for her, or find some other reason to throw water all over your positivity.

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Yes, misery certainly does love company, but the problem is, people don't want to keep miserable people company. It's not a happy activity. It does not promote well-being and feelings of hope, confidence, and powerfulness. Miserable, negative people suck the life out of those around them.

What we allow in does influence our mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Just like Earth is constantly being hit by cosmic radiation, you and I are constantly being hit, too, by endless advertisements, news programs, commentary, billboards, radio shows, pessimistic people, and websites designed to capture our attention and influence us. Much of our exposure is negative or opinionated, condones reckless behavior, or promotes the pursuit of meaningless goals.

Subtly and overtly, we are struck with untrue messages, such as:

- *Sex is love.* No, sex is not love. There is no love in the porn industry. Greed, abuse, denigration of women, and so much more negative behavior, all of which is never love. That does not stop advertisers from bombarding us with the notion that sex is love.
- *Eat fast food and look as beautiful as these actors.* Advertisers show us over and over the blatant misrepresentation that people who regularly eat fast food look exactly like the models and actors starring in the commercials. The actors are skinny pictures of perfect health and happiness. They are happy because they got a nice paycheck for shooting the commercial, but it is absolutely not true that they frequently eat fast food. Living in Los Angeles, California, and being exposed to the inner workings of the entertainment industry (yes, it is an industry), I can guarantee you none of the paid actors eat fast food on a regular basis. They share a lettuce leaf and a carrot while drinking a gallon of water in between working out at the gym, running, stretching, weight lifting, and waiting tables at organic, vegan, gluten-free, sugar-free, and starch-free restaurants.
- *Treat others badly if you want to be successful.* This untrue message proposes that treating people badly is necessary for success—another lie perpetuated by irresponsible television, movies, and media. The most successful people are those who understand that they do not become successful alone. They care for those who help

on their journey. Truly successful people are kind, compassionate, and supportive of others.

We are constantly being impacted by a steady stream of negative news and opinionated commentary. With the current news trend of having commentators reduce complex global issues to cynical, dualistic arguments, it is easy to develop an apathetic attitude, or feel fearful of a gloomy world. There is a difference between responsibly staying informed and allowing ourselves to be swallowed up by negativity.

Murder trials, civil suits, conflict, and other examples of corrupt and negative behavior have existed for centuries. What has not existed until the past several decades is our being constantly exposed, in graphic detail, to the horrible actions of the immoral and unconscious.

Seriously, what is so entertaining about watching people treat each other badly? How does negativity possibly support us in establishing mutually rewarding relationships? How does being constantly exposed to violence, sex, and financial and ethical misconduct contribute to our happiness, peace, and personal responsibility? How does being assaulted by steady pessimism allow us to create optimistic lives? How does continuously subjecting ourselves to violent video games promote peace, empathy, and understanding? How does reliance on the opinion of others allow us to make informed decisions based on fact? How does listening to messages of blame, fear, hate, and divisiveness aid in our arriving at win-win solutions for the challenges we face as a human family?

How unentertaining. We have to shower to get rid of the negativity of all the DRAMA.

We may view the onslaught of drama and negativity with a cavalier attitude, thinking *I can just tune it out, or I am not influenced by it, or It's just a movie* (or television show). Yet scientific research points to the fact that messages and experiences actually change our brain, both positively and negatively.

In *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Canadian psychiatrist Dr. Norman Doidge advises that we carefully select what we listen to and the experiences we participate in, because our brains are vulnerable to outside influences.

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We become addicted to porn because repeated exposure rewires our brain. We become addicted to violence because repeated exposure rewires our brain. We become addicted to negativity because repeated exposure rewires our brain. Put negative in and negative is going to come out. Our focus cannot be on the negative drama in life while expecting to create a life of joy, fulfillment, and peace.

Creating the positive life we want does not mean turning our back on what is happening in the world. Absolutely, we must stay informed and plugged in. We need to remain empathetic to the trials and challenges of our fellow human beings. But remaining aware of and immersing ourselves in a sea of constant negativity are two very different things.

It is our heart-responsibility to pay attention to what we expose ourselves to. We have to stay aware of what we're letting in so we do not let ourselves be influenced by negative, unrealistic, and untrue ideas of what we should be, what our lives should look like, and what should make us happy.

We can start by questioning how the messages we are exposed to impact our worldview. Pay close attention to what is emotionally intrusive and what makes you physically uncomfortable. Notice your stress level when you are exposed to negative editorial commentary or are listening to loud, violent, or denigrating music, television, or video games.

Yes, life can be dramatic at times. And life is also filled with comedy, adventure, and fantastic action. We are surrounded by so much good. To stay plugged into the positive, into the great and wonderful things going on in the world, pay close attention to what you allow into your mind and heart as entertainment. Search out programming that inspires your intellect and supports the positive values you see in yourself, your children, and our society. Give television and movie decision makers the incentive to develop positive, inspirational, and intelligent programming by turning off anything that insults your intellect or offends your values.

Seek impeccable reporting from news organizations you consult. Research the facts regarding current issues, rather than accepting editorial opinion and hearsay as truth. The time has come to use your brain. And no matter what you do, DON'T engage with trolls. Talk about drowning in negativity.

Don't ever forget that advertisers are selling you something. They will use fear, lies, sex, and all sorts of things to intimidate or seduce you into purchasing what they are selling. Scrutinize the organizations you entrust to foster your spirituality. Have the courage to question and move away from any organization or doctrine that perpetuates abuse, control, fear, or negativity. Separate yourself from and stop supporting anybody whose personal agenda incites hate, negativity, blame, or ridicule.

Remember, a little bit of drama comes with being alive, but a life filled with drama will never be that entertaining.

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## Being The Victor Over Life's Circumstances Is A Choice

I freely admit to being a recovered victim. Yes, there have been many times when I felt like a victim. I've thrown huge pity parties, complete with balloons, cake, and party favors. Life sucked lots of times. I've felt used, abused, and without power to change my circumstances. There have even been moments when it seemed the world was conspiring against me.

I want to talk with you about choosing to be the victor over the challenges you face, rather than feeling like a powerless victim. One of the facts of life is that we tend to feel like a victim because we believe other people should behave differently than they do or did. We feel like a victim because there should be justice, and the bad people should all of a sudden have a spiritual "aha" and make amends for treating us badly. The two people who molested me, a babysitter and a physician, never once woke up to how their abuse impacted me or any of the other women they violated.

There was no spiritual awakening on their part. However, I had a huge awakening. I realized there is a big difference between being victimized and being a victim.

I was victimized by the babysitter and physician. I was a teenager without power to even say no. The babysitter threatened me with physical violence if I told anyone. The physician had a reputation for molesting all of his patients. Today he would be removed from practicing medicine and possibly jailed, but back then he was secure in his position, despite his horrible reputation.

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These are two of many instances in life when I fell victim to circumstances beyond my control. I was without power to stop the abuse or protect myself.

Because of these incidents, I felt like a victim. I carried around a huge emotional suitcase filled with all of the things other people had done or said to me that caused feelings of being helpless and hopeless.

With the huge “aha” that there is a difference between being victimized and feeling like a victim, I became aware that feeling like a victim of circumstances beyond my control is not a position of power. I am proud to say that for many years now I have not been a victim or thrown even one pity party. I no longer allow myself to suffer at the hand of anyone or anything.

That does not mean I am not occasionally used or abused or victimized. There are rare times when the wrong people enter my life and fool me. At those times when I am victimized through the dishonest or unconscious actions of others, I am reminded I cannot control or change anyone but me. I have gone down the well-worn path of attempting to rationalize with irrational people. I have made numerous attempts to bring sense to situations and to people whose anger blinds them to reality. I have patiently and clearly communicated to people how their actions negatively impact others, only to have my words fall on deaf ears and a closed heart.

The difficulty is that people who have no problem cheating, stealing, projecting their stuff onto others, or using people don't see anything wrong with their behavior. They are too busy pointing the finger of blame outward. They are blinded by the rationalizations of their mind to see truth or even look for it. How can you open the eyes of someone who does not want to see the truth of how their negative behavior impacts others? It is not possible.

I remember taking my car to be repaired by a large and still popular chain of stores. They have since changed their policy, but back then, their auto repair department paid commission to their mechanics on parts sold and work done. I walked in for an oil change, and all of a sudden the basketball rolling around in my trunk became their reason for a complete brake repair job with new rotors.

The sad part about this scam is that I'd just had new brakes installed and the rotors turned, less

than a month before. This mega chain store's auto department did not call to get my permission to do the work. They just charged me for it and attempted to get away with it. If they had even looked at the brakes they would have seen the brand-new work.

I was certainly not the only person (woman, most likely, back then) to get suckered into that really bad policy that reinforced dishonest behavior among unscrupulous mechanics and store employees. Bad people think nothing of doing bad things. Good people often fall prey and are victimized. But from my response, they could see I was not going to be a victim. I was the victor as I presented receipts for the recent repairs and demanded a refund, with the threat of reporting them, which I did. There were enough of us who did report the problem that a class action suit ended the commission policy among auto repair facilities.

We cannot always prevent being taken advantage of by people who think they can get away with it. And sometimes we get used by people who have good intentions but are just so disorganized they do not follow through or communicate clearly.

Each of us has to set and uphold a personal standard of behavior. Then we have to be our own gatekeeper to demand the highest level of behavior from ourselves. Not everyone sets a standard. Not everyone cares about keeping his or her word, or communicating clearly, or assuming responsibility for projecting stuff onto others.

Not everyone appreciates that negative behavior always returns in the form of negative consequences. It is inevitable and will indeed happen eventually. Payback is hell for those who seek to use, abuse, and victimize others or who assume no responsibility for their actions. Those folks do not have to get a second or third chance. We may get fooled once and forgive. But we don't have to fall for it again.

It is in our best interest to continue to look for the best in people. But when people show us who they really are through the behavior they put out that negatively impacts us or others, we do not allow their actions to make us suffer or feel targeted, duped, or as if we are a victim. Feeling like someone is using you is a sure sign you need to set some healthy and strong boundaries.

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Even though I may fall prey to unscrupulous folks with negative agendas, I am no longer a victim, because being a victim is the attitude of someone who feels he or she is powerless. I am far from powerless, because I'm an adult who is now capable of taking care of myself. Even if that means setting a permanent boundary with people by removing them from my life. I don't care if they are family or friends. That loyalty stopped when they made the decision to abuse, use, or mistreat me after I pointed out how their actions negatively impacted me.

I have forgiven people for treating me badly, once. Today I still forgive, but I do not allow them the opportunity of making me feel like a victim again. Refusing to feel like a victim, even when I am victimized, allows me to move on with a solid determination to stay aligned with the behavioral standards I set for myself. One of the behaviors is not allowing other people power over me by my feeling like a victim.

The "aha" that you are capable of choosing to be the victor over situations is a pure rush of enthusiastic, adrenalin-packed self-love. It is intensely powerful to accept that although we want to share our lives with people, we DON'T need to keep people around who use, abuse, or mistreat us. We don't have to go to the physician who does not listen to us, or who refuses to acknowledge our input, or who arrogantly looks down on us. We choose to give our loyalty to and invest our confidence in people who consistently treat us with respect, kindness, and professionalism.

You may be victimized in life, but you do not have to be a victim. Choosing to be the victor over life's challenges is the pro-active position. I guarantee you nothing feels better or more powerful than taking charge of yourself to create the life you truly want to have. Nothing feels more powerful than coming to your own rescue. Nothing feels more satisfying than choosing to be the victor over your life circumstances and do your best to not be victimized a second time.

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## Yes, Everything Is Easier Said Than Done

Have you seen the commercial on television with a huge red EASY button? Something horrible happens and with just one push of that button, life

magically transforms from disastrous to idyllic. Have you ever wanted your own big red button? When life gets challenging, a relationship goes south, or you need a huge pile of money, you just whip out that shiny button and BAM, all of life's troubles fade like magic.

I want to let you in on an indisputable fact of life — that's right, this law is not debatable. There is no EASY button to life. Maybe we need a brief moment of silence to honor the death of a myth we've held for way too long.

Sorry if I've burst your bubble, but YES, it is true that everything is easier said than done. Words are easy to say, while action, on the other hand, is often a huge pain in the butt.

I sat around for 20 years telling myself and other people I was going to quit smoking. It was so easy to say, but difficult to actually do. But I did it.

For over five years I told myself I had to lose the extra 50 pounds I packed on by letting fast-food restaurants be my personal chef and denial be my conscience. It took two years of blood, sweat, and countless tears to reclaim my body. And it still takes hard work every day to make sure I keep the weight off. But I do it.

Daily I'd pray for a miracle to win the lottery and PRESTO, all of my self-induced financial problems would be solved. It took over 10 years of willpower, determination, and dealing with excuses for why I surrounded myself with things rather than heal the holes within my heart. But I got to the core of why I felt unworthy and finally got out from underneath the weight of financial irresponsibility.

Everything I've accomplished in life is because I've taken action. I got myself up. I got myself out. I got myself busy. I did not let myself stop. I remained determined. I took care of business, the first order of which was to smash that darn easy-button myth.

No, life does not have an easy button. Yes, everything is easier said than done. BUT nothing gets done unless we stop talking and start doing.

The exciting and energizing truth is that while action does take effort, that effort is always positive and we're always rewarded. We feel fantastic to be moving in the direction we want to go. We feel powerful to be taking charge of ourselves. We feel supported being our own

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biggest fan and most ardent cheerleader. We're proud to be kicking some bad behavior booty. Action is positive. Movement is positive. Persistence is positive. Positive action creates self-love, respect, and worth.

Seriously, let's be honest! How positive is it to sit around telling ourselves *it is easier said than done*, or *I've tried before and failed*, or *I just can't do it*? What's positive or self-loving about *it's too hard*, *I don't have time*, or *how I behave is part of my culture and beyond my control*? Why in the world do we allow ourselves to even think these things? I don't know the answer for you, but I do know negative, limiting thoughts are never helpful, motivating, or even true.

One day it hit me that self-love is all about support, determination, and willpower. Telling myself it was easier said than done was a cop-out. It was self-sabotaging to tell myself how hard something was going to be. Focusing on how hard a task would be gave me some sort of excuse to not get up and get moving toward the goal of making me a better person. "Easier said than done" may be a logical deduction, but it is also being a victim of apathy. "I've tried before and failed" is being a victim of indifference. "I just can't do it" is being a victim of a lack of concern for our own well-being.

Why are we allowing ourselves to be victimized? Did mom and dad tell us we were losers not capable of accomplishing anything? Did some jerk in high school or junior high tell us we'll never amount to anything? Did an elementary school teacher tell us we're stupid and destined to live a small life? Who knows where we get the feelings of not being able to do what we must in order to have what we want.

Who cares who started the feelings of unworthiness and powerlessness? Why spend time dwelling on the limitations other people tried to place on us? I want to assure you from personal experience that determining where the negative, limiting self-talk originated is NOT important. If one day you have a great "aha" memory of Uncle Ralph saying you'd always be "good for 'nothing,'" then great, you found the unreliable source of junk talk. If it comes up, fine, but we don't have to go back and uncover every hurtful thing ever said and done to us. No, the goal is to move past believing such lies about ourselves.

To attain that goal only requires one thing of us. We get to the heart of the matter by honestly answering one simple question: Why in the world are we continuing to tell ourselves these sorts of limiting, fearful, and self-loathing things?

Seriously, what are we thinking? Oh, that's right, we're not thinking. Not about the impact our negative thoughts have on our behavior. Our mind thinks, but you and I (heart/soul) have to constantly evaluate those thoughts. Our mind does not have our best interest at heart. Our mind houses fear and all sorts of rationalizations about why it is easier said than done.

The instant we tell ourselves it is easier said than done, we need to ask ourselves, *Do I really feel that this line of thinking is helpful, supportive, or loving? Honestly, do I think it is okay to tell friends things like this? Who wants a friend who says, "Well, Janice, you know it is easier said than done." Which really means, "Janice, go ahead and accept that you're a failure. Why even try? You're not worth the effort."*

No one would ever say those kinds of things to a friend. Who would want a friend who tells us negative things like that? So why do we think it is okay to say those kinds of limiting, negative things to ourselves? Even if someone told us restrictive, judgmental, and unkind things about ourselves, why are we still believing them?

Feeling unworthy, or thinking we are unable to take the actions necessary to change ourselves and our lives, does not help us in any way. Stopping smoking, getting a new job, and leaving a relationship that was destined to fail always seemed difficult to me, until I made the decision to stop talking and start doing.

Taking action despite limiting thoughts allowed me to prove to myself I was not weak at all, and what I wanted to accomplish was not too hard, and persistence would lead to success.

Do you realize why superheroes are called action heroes? Because there is no such thing as a "hope" hero! Wonder Woman and Batman don't sit around saying, "Well it's just so much easier said than done." NO! Superheroes have already unraveled that excuse. A superhero knows talk is easier than action. But every superhero also knows each success we achieve in life is the result of our being emotionally invested in the outcome, to the point

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that we make ourselves take the consistent actions necessary to create what we want.

For 22 years I wanted to quit smoking. My plans were good. Yet hoping to accomplish something did not actually make it happen. After passing up a cigarette or two, soon I'd make an excuse to have just one. Then I would beat myself up for once again not being strong enough not to smoke. Excusing my lack of commitment, I would tell myself I was not perfect, I was only human, with faults, and allowed to make mistakes.

Yes, it was easier talking about not smoking than it was to actually stop smoking. To make myself take the actions necessary to quit, I had to stop listening to the excuses my mind made up. I had to replace negative *It's too hard* or *I just can't* thoughts with affirmations that supported me in achieving the goals I set for myself.

"I am losing weight" supported me in being more mindful about eating with awareness and passing up the elevator in favor of the stairs. "I am saving money" prompted me to stop before purchasing yet another pair of jeans in favor of achieving the goal of having money left over at the end of each month. "I am a nonsmoker" really did help consciously break the habit by allowing me to visualize myself without cigarettes.

You CAN accomplish anything you want to. You CAN be your own best friend, biggest fan, and strongest supporter. You CAN stop caring what other people think you can and cannot do. You CAN get busy being the change you want to see in your own life. Be your own superhero and accept that YES, it's easier said than done, but only by doing, do things actually get done.

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## If We Want Positive, We Must Stay Present

Please take a deep breath. Breathe in as deeply as you can. Now hold it for a count of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Release. Breathe in again, a bit deeper this time. Now hold it for a count of 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Release. And one more time. Breathe in even deeper and hold it for 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Release and breathe normally. You may feel a little lightheaded from all the oxygen getting to your brain. But that is a very good thing.

When you were concentrating on breathing deeply, you were present with what was most important in the moment — listening to my voice and breathing deeply. Your mind was focused on your breathing, my counting, and you releasing the air. Maybe the third time your mind wandered a bit to tell you holding your breath that long was hard. But for the most part, I imagine your mind was obediently doing what you wanted to do in the moment: breathe deeply.

Your mind is not the master of you. You, the heart/soul that you are, are intended to be your mind's master. That is, your mind works for you, not the other way around. This is an important distinction to make, because staying present in the moment depends on how well you become the master of your mind and where it tends to wander. If your mind is not present with what is happening right here, right now, then you are not living life in the present moment — the only time life is real.

The past is no longer a real moment in time we can influence or change. The past holds only memories of our life as it was. Returning to fond memories brings us great joy, but the past officially ended the instant we stepped from then into now.

We cannot go back in time to change the choices we made. Reflecting on the past and our previous choices is the way we learn. Allowing our mind to dwell on what we think should have, would have, or could have been takes our attention away from the present. Only in the present is it possible to apply what we learned from the past and create a better outcome for the moment that is now.

The same is true of the future. Regardless of how badly we may want the future to come, we cannot rush ahead and live in a time that does not yet exist. The future is not real; it is only the next moment's present, over and over, infinitely.

Permitting our mind to race ahead and attach itself to worries of what may happen disconnects us from the present, the only time possible to purposefully get ready for a future event. Living a fulfilled life requires us to patiently surrender to the truth: Life is real only now.

You and I have a conscious choice to make. We can live disconnected from the present while convincing ourselves we are actually plugged in, or we can slow down, remain patient, and focus our attention



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on immersing ourselves in the moment at hand. One truth is that there is something wonderful hidden in every moment of life. Another is that our contentment comes from slowing down to be aware of it.

Each moment your mind is flooded with thought. You are constantly processing information. You are not without power over your mind and the thoughts it creates. You are not your thoughts. You are the conscious, present heart-self that is responsible for remaining aware of what you think.

For example, whether you're indoors or outdoors, take a moment to look around. Notice the items that surround you. Let's say you're in your living room, and you notice that a throw pillow is out of place. You think to yourself, *That pillow should be over here. How did it get there? I did not move it. Who moved the pillow?*

Your mind's tendency is to attach itself to the pillow or other objects around you. In an instant, you are taken away from looking around to having your mind grab control of your focus. The mind naturally wants to evaluate the pillow, judge its improper placement, and possibly notice a stain on it. This is the mind's constant chatter.

When this happens, you are no longer in charge of what you think about. Your mind has wandered, evaluated, judged, and kept you from viewing the pillow for what it is — a pillow. The mind does this automatically until you become aware of it. When you notice your mind starting to shift your attention to seeing something as simple as the pillow out of place, reel it back.

Imagine a rod and reel symbolizing awareness over your attention. Become an expert mind-angler. Each time you notice your mind wandering from what you want or need to focus on (like reading this with presence and comprehension), hook your attention and reel your mind back.

You are the only one who realizes the thoughts you make up. You are capable of stopping your mind from wandering from what you want or need to focus on. You have power to return your thoughts from the past or future to the present. You have control to stop the negative and unproductive conversations of your runaway mind. You have the ability to quiet your mind.

We cannot create good relationships with others if we are not present with them. We can be physically present but emotionally disconnected, distracted with other things. People know when we are not listening to them. They know when we are distracted. If we allow our mind to go to the past or fly off to the future, we are not emotionally present.

Our relationships are the most important and fulfilling aspect of the lives we create. A key ingredient in deep relationships is productive communication. Clear, stress-free, honest sharing and receiving of information builds trust and mutual respect and establishes support and intimacy. Learning to speak as we want to be spoken to and listen as we want to be heard is important, because remaining aware of our communication is one way we keep ourselves present in the now.

Satisfaction and joy come from creating deep, lasting relationships with ourselves and others. Accomplishing this requires developing the peaceful, purposeful presence that comes from controlling what we allow in and what we allow to distract us from what is happening in the moment. You and I can develop the patience and self-control necessary to manage technology and distractions.

We turn off the cell phone when sitting across the table from family and friends and immerse ourselves fully in the conversation at hand. When the people in our lives want to share how their day was, we choose to turn off the television. We place more value on listening attentively and fully acknowledging their joy and excitement with life.

Life is now, this moment. I cannot tell you how much my life has improved just by keeping myself present. Work on keeping your mind focused on what is happening in the now moment. Begin with the conversations you have. As you speak, hear your words in your head and in your heart. When listening to others, hear their words in your head and in your heart. Allow someone to finish speaking before you jump in, so you do not interrupt them or make them feel crowded or cut off. Listen to others with a quiet mind, without thinking about a response. Your relationships will immediately improve when you stay emotionally present in the now.

Regina