

Penny Abshire

More
Food

4

Thought

Vol. 2

Nourishment for the
Positive Thinker!

Food 4 Thought II

More Nourishment for the Positive Thinker

By

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December 8th, 2009 Twinkling Lights

As my hubby and I were driving home the other night, I was struck by how much nicer the homes (and other structures) look when they are adorned with Christmas lights. Even the most modest dwellings or run-down buildings by day are magically transformed into works of art at night by the addition of just a few colored lights. The warm glow illuminates the doorways and beckons those passing by to *“Come on in, you’re welcome.”* Warmth seems to radiate from the lights and fills me with a child-like wonder.

I was also struck by this thought. How many of us look as good in the daylight as we do at night? Now wait! Before you think I’m talking about physical appearance, let me assure you, I am not. I’m referring to the “real” or everyday us as compared to the “enhanced” or “dressed up” us. Do we (like our homes) reflect warmth and hospitality every day, or only during special times of the year when we bring out all of our fine things to make a good impression on others? It is something upon which to reflect.

Some of the things I do during the holiday season that I do less frequently the rest of the year include:

- Making an effort to speak kindly to busy sales clerks and exercising patience when waiting in line.
- Giving real, concentrated thought to what I could do to make someone else really happy.
- Contacting friends I haven’t spoken to in a long time.
- Or, offering a wish for “Happy Holidays” or “Merry Christmas” to complete strangers.

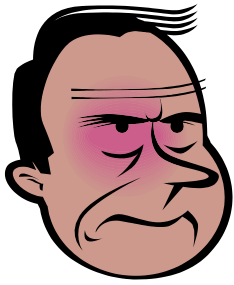
Then January comes and, well . . . I don’t stop all together, but that bit of extra effort certainly disappears. The holidays are over, after all. I can put away the decorations and my thoughts of peace and well-wishes can be packed away for yet another year.

So this coming year, I’ve made a decision. I plan to keep that festive spirit alive for a bit longer – all year, if I can!

I want to treat others with more respect (yes, even including *those* kind of drivers on the freeway. . .), and to think more about the real me - the one without the twinkling lights – the one who acts the same way every day without any special reason – or season. I will wear my best “decorations” every day: honesty, gratitude, generosity, thoughtfulness, understanding, thanksgiving, love, and kindness to everyone will be my accessories. I plan to share the warmth of my heart with everyone – everywhere I go.

That’s my plan. What’s yours?

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December 2nd, 2009

It Is What you Make It!

Wow! I just have to share this with you! As I was going through posts on Facebook and others today, I couldn't help but notice that an alarming number of the status updates started with statements like,

"Ugh, it's Monday!" or,

"I know today is going to last FOREVER!", or

"I hate the first day back after a holiday - nothing ever goes right!"

Now mind you, a lot of these folks are VO people. It made me so sad to read how they were literally PROGRAMING themselves to have a terrible, awful, very bad day. And I'm absolutely certain each of them did.

We must remember that our body hears every, single word we say - and then acts on it. If you are determined to have a lousy, tiring, disappointing day, it is guaranteed you will. Most people will deny that they do this, but we've all done it and we know it's true.

Here's a very simple way to have a better Monday, any day, interview, audition, IRS audit . . . just by changing the way you think and what you say to yourself.

Before you fall asleep, really imagine your next day. See it in your mind's eye. Say to yourself,

"I am going to have an amazing day tomorrow! Everything is going to go right for me. The traffic will be a breeze! I will be sharp and focused and everything I try will work. Every audition will feel great and I'll hear from several producers that want to hire me." (Or whatever scenario works for you).

But here's the most important thing. Let your imagination telegraph to your body how it will feel to have that kind of day and then let your body FEEL it as you lay there in bed. Call it your Perfect Day, if you will. Does the thought of it make you smile? Are you excited to see how the day pans out?

Omigosh, friends! This works SO well! Even if you are dreading an event the next day (maybe you have to talk to a client you suspect is unhappy with your work or you have an interview for a job you're not too sure of), if you let your body believe that all is well – it will be.

Oh, heck – just try it! Don't let yourself be one of those "I Hate Monday" people. YOU are in control of your thoughts and your destiny – no one else.

So TAKE CHARGE! Only you can make it a "good" or "bad" day!

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November 26th, 2009

Happy Thanksgiving

I am so grateful today for all of you.

Have you noticed we are close to **600** strong? Wow! I never imagined when I started this "little" group that we would end up being one of the most active and largest groups on the VU site.

You have brought so much joy to my life in the past months. I love getting up in the morning and checking Positive Thinkers to see what's come in overnight or who has just joined. Every, single, day it's a gift I truly cherish. I have learned so much from you and been so

moved by your personal stories. As I read your encouraging words to others the group, I am often moved to tears. You are such precious, giving people.

I thank you for joining me and for your continued contributions to our community. But most of all, **I thank you for being my friends. I am so blessed.**

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving (for my US friends) and for those around the world, have an exceptional day!

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November 18th, 2009

Get out the blankets – it's getting cold!

There are some advantages to getting old – yes, there really are. From someone who is in the “*Senior*” group, I find that the years past have taught me so many great lessons. For a younger person (without the benefit of seeing how things pan out as the years go by) it's easy to get lost in the everyday disappointments and mistakes that we make. Here's the way a “seasoned” woman chooses to look at her mistakes and regrets.

When I was little, I lived in a community where quilting was still something ladies did when they got together. I remember watching my mother and grandmother sitting around a large quilting frame creating some of the most amazing works of art I've ever seen. But the first step (before they started to quilt) was to create the squares that would come together in the finished product. I was always enthralled with how those large stacks of squares eventually made such a beautiful, comforting, warm quilt. And I could hardly wait to see it completed.

I look at my life like one of those elegantly designed quilts. Some of the squares are absolutely beautiful (my birth, learning to play the piano, dancing lessons, becoming a cheerleader, finding the love of my life, our wedding, the birth of our children, our grandchildren, my dear friends, discovering voice over, the list goes on and on and on.) But there are other squares that aren't quite so pretty, happy or positive. I won't share them with you, but we all have them. They represent disappointment, mistakes, sorrows, loss, etc. They are lots of things I'd like to take back if only I could.

But here's where the maturity thing comes in . . . I know now that ALL the squares are necessary. Every, single one. Without all the squares (both the happy ones and the sad ones) my quilt is incomplete and would never hold together.

Often the things that challenge us the most turn out to be the most valuable squares of all. When I look back now I can see clearly that even the mistakes, disappointments and regrets were absolutely necessary to bring me to where I am now. And I really like where I am now.

So, just give it some thought this week. Even though it's difficult to embrace a mistake or sorrow when it happens, know that even the square (or situation) you are currently *working* on is helping you craft a beautiful, warm, blanket for your life - complete in every way – that will be an amazing comfort to you as you grow older. And that's something we're all going to do!

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November 17th, 2009

Little Things

"Everything that's really worthwhile in life comes to us free - our minds, our souls, our bodies, our hopes, our dreams, our intelligence, our love of family and friends and country. All of these priceless possessions are free."

~Earl Nightingale

Think about it. You can lose all of your money and start over. If your house burns down, you can rebuild it. But things that cost you nothing, you can never replace.

One of the most important keys to self-motivation is to clearly identify your core values in life. You must decide what matters most. Why the need to identify your values? Many people think, "I know what's important; I don't need a list to remind me." What they don't fully understand, however, is that those core values will often serve as critical guides for making important decisions. When they're in doubt, your core values will cut through the fog like a beacon in the night.

We all know there are many distractions along the road of life that will try to pull us away from our values. Sometimes we are forced to make difficult choices. But a good rule of thumb is that when you have to sacrifice material possessions for one of those "free things" that life has given you...you've made the right choice.

This is one of 50 short chapters in the book *Charging the Human Battery...50 Ways to Motivate Yourself*, by Mac Anderson, founder of [Simple Truths](#). I highly recommend it!

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November 3rd, 2009

Every Day Matters

From professional speaker, Zig
Zigler:

"I was asked by an audience member - Why do you teach motivation to your audiences? It never lasts for long!

I answered: Neither does bathing - that's why I recommend it on a daily basis!"

We do need motivation every single day! That's one of the reasons I started Positive Thinkers UNITE. At first, I thought I was creating it for others - but I soon

Understood! I learn much more than I ever teach - from you, my friends.

It's so easy to lose the motivation to accomplish our goals - especially when we feel like we're struggling all by ourselves. We NEED each other.

So, remember two things:

- 1. Bathe every day.**
- 2. Read, listen, write or do something else to motivate yourself (or others) to accomplish your dreams - every day!**

You really aren't in this alone, I promise. Let your friends help you - as you help them.

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October 27th, 2009

It's a Funny Thing!

*"Humor is the great thing, the saving thing.
The minute it crops up, all our irritations and
resentments slip away, and a sunny spirit takes their place."*

- Mark Twain

I've always believed that laughter was the best medicine - certainly has been in my life. I remember my mom teaching me one day that it was pretty much impossible for me to stay mad if I was laughing. It worked then and it still works!

So, what do you do -- when you need to cheer up?

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October 20th, 2009

Signs, signs! Everywhere are signs!

It occurred to me the other day that we have a lot of signs in our lives and we follow their instructions without question.

Stop; Walk; Yield; Speed Limit; Do Not Enter; Merge; Line Forms Here; Lane Closed; No Admittance; No Dogs Allowed; Left Turn Only; No Stopping; Open; Closed; Express Lane - 5 items or Less; Men Only; Women Only; No Loitering; Enter; Exit; Do Not Cross Double Lines; Do Not Walk.

These signs keep me on the correct path – and generally keep me from getting into trouble.

But I got to wondering that if I could replace a lot of these signs in my life, which words (or commands) would I replace them with?

These are the ones I'd like to read, and

follow, during my days on this planet.

Love; Ask; Discover; Be Brave; Soar; Fly High; Embrace; Love; Kiss; Pray; Explore; Accomplish; Comfort; Sing; Smile; Celebrate; Enjoy; Share; Forgive; Encourage; Find Peace; Feel; Engage; Talk; Be a Friend; Understand; Experience; Skip; Dance in the Rain; Try; Laugh; and my favorite: Giggle!

I'd love to follow these words as obediently as I do the first set of signs. Since we have the choice to decide the signs we follow - what signs do you choose to decorate the highway of your life?

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October 6th, 2009

My Perfect Life

This is an excerpt from: Living a Five Star Life, by Betty Mahalik

In this day and age, we are surrounded by messages that virtually scream, "Your life would be perfect if..."

My life would be perfect if I had a different job, a different house,

car, nose, spouse, bank account (fill in the blank). Or my life would be perfect if I could be like some celebrity whose life appears so well-ordered and perfect-o. This week I encourage you to stop playing "my life would be perfect if," and start playing "my perfect life." What's the difference? Three things: being in the present, an attitude of gratitude, taking action with what's available now.

When we're caught up in the "my life would be perfect if" trap, we've lost touch with the present. And the moment we detach from the present, we can no longer practice gratitude. Think about it: it's difficult to be grateful for what you don't have...and what you don't have is always somewhere out in *future-ville*.

Look around you right now. Think of 10 things you're grateful for. Do you have a roof over your head and food to eat? I'm guessing the answer is yes. Do you have at least a few good friends or close relationships? Then appreciate them too, right now. Keep going, and practice being in the present and being grateful for what is here and now at least a couple times a day.

You're also probably sitting there thinking "yes but." Yes, but I want more money, a better relationship, more time to travel, to be thinner, happier or whatever. It's one of the great mysteries I'll never figure out. The minute you stop focusing on what you lack, start focusing on what you've already got, and add the "magic" ingredient of action, you actually begin to attract more of what you want. It's an amazing formula for really living your perfect life!

Let's say you want to lose weight or get in better shape, but you don't have an hour a day to spend exercising at the gym. Therefore, you've pretty well resigned yourself to not losing weight or getting in shape. What if you had five minutes though...just about everyone can find five minutes to exercise, stretch, walk around the block or walk the dog. Would you be willing to be grateful for five minutes and make the best possible use of it? Therein lies the beginning of your perfect life!

A simple formula may help you remember how to apply this principle:

- The present
- + an attitude of gratitude
- + positive action
- = my perfect life.

Try it for a day.

Each time you start dreaming about how perfect your life would be if...come back to this moment, give thanks for what is, and do one thing to perfect what you have and who you are right now. There's a saying that "when the student is ready, the teacher appears." If you're ready to start perfecting your life, your teachers are all around you.

What are you waiting for?

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October 13th, 2009

Dreams vs. Reality

"Don't be afraid of the space between your dreams and reality. If you can dream it, you can make it so." ~ Belva Davis

Do you ever find yourself feeling discouraged because your VO career hasn't yet "taken off?" Are you doing what seems like tons of auditions and you're not getting booked? Did you think this was going to be a lot easier? Are you questioning your decision to be a voice actor?

Just so you know, EVERY, single one of us has felt that way and one time or another in our careers. That's right – even the *big boys/girls* have had their share of insecurities and doubts. If they had listened to those negative voices when they were screaming in their ears. . . well, they wouldn't be the *big boys/girls* now, would they? They would have quit – and what a shame they would have been for all of us.

It's absolutely normal to have doubts – but don't allow them to keep you from your dreams – even if it seems like it's taking a very long time. Tell the voices,

"Thank you for sharing. Now SHUT UP! I'm doing it anyway!"

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September 13th, 2009

Maybe There is Something to Horoscopes



This following is my birthday horoscope today

VIRGO: *No matter how determined you are now to walk your talk, distractions can pull you off your carefully considered course. Every fork in the road is exciting because each path that leads in an unknown direction touches your soul and calls your name.*

Nevertheless, it's crucial for you to keep reminding yourself that you are on a mission. You won't reach your desired destination if you explore every good idea on the way.

It certainly described me to a "T"! And it got me to thinking – *(I know, that's a dangerous thing).*

I wonder how many times I am pulled away from my stated goals because another one comes along and it is SO interesting I just have to explore it. Actually, it happens to me ALL THE TIME. And sometimes it can be frustrating at the end of day when I haven't accomplished all the things on my list.

Because I am (as most of you are) a "creative" it's part of my makeup. If it were not, I'd probably be a banker or an accountant. I certainly wouldn't be an actor! We "creatives" are always looking for new ways to do something, or talking to others and being creative together as we toss around ideas, or looking at something they we may have seen before, but this time in a new and interesting way. It's who we are. You know what I mean.

So, I think that even though I will continue to make a stack of "things to do" lists and try my best to achieve my ultimate goals, I'm still going to continue enjoying the distractions along the way. After all, isn't it the dramatic, delicious, discoveries that make life interesting?

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September 8th, 2009

Just decide – already!



"The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: Decide what it is you want." Ben Stein

Now, that sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? Just decide what you want.

In my life, however, I have found it quite difficult at times to focus in my real desires.

For instance:

Do I want success – or do I really want the money I'll receive as a result of my success?

Do I want happiness – or do I want the happiness of others at my expense?

Do I want a healthy body – or do I just want the attention I'll get as a result of losing weight?

Do I want to help others – or am I really looking for acceptance from others whom I help?

All of those are valid and are just part of being human. There is no right or wrong. Where the lesson comes in is actually looking at the REAL desire behind the words. If you can do this, then you can be far more motivated in your actions.

If success means money to you, you don't have to deny it. It's a valid motivation. It certainly doesn't make you a "bad" person because you'd like a healthy bank account.

If happiness means being a "doormat" or giving up what makes you happy so that others can be happy – you may want examine why that is important to you and how you might change that pattern.

If having a healthy body is only motivated by the attention you'll receive, the real desire is attention. Then you need to ask yourself why that is important to you.

If your only motivation for helping others is so they will like you - then it's acceptance you crave. But if you do it because it gives you joy, their acceptance isn't all that critical.

It's just something to think about folks.

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September 1st, 2009

Words of Wisdom

I hope you enjoy these sage words of wisdom. They certainly spoke to me! I also hope you are having a great Labor Day Weekend!



Written By Regina Brett, 90 years old, of The Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio.

"To celebrate growing older, I once wrote the 45 lessons life taught me. It is the most-requested column I've ever written. My odometer rolled over to 90 in August, so here is the column once more:

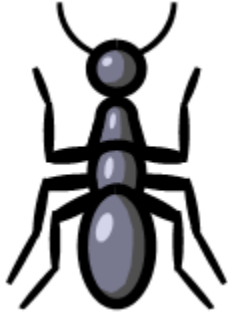
- 1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.*
- 2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.*
- 3. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.*
- 4. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends and parents will. Stay in touch.*
- 5. Pay off your credit cards every month.*
- 6. You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree.*
- 7. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.*
- 8. It's OK to get angry with God. He can take it.*
- 9. Save for retirement starting with your first paycheck.*
- 10. When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.*
- 11. Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.*
- 12. It's OK to let your children see you cry.*
- 13. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.*
- 14. If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.*
- 15. Everything can change in the blink of an eye. But don't worry; God never blinks.*
- 16. Take a deep breath. It calms the mind.*
- 17. Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful.*
- 18. Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.*
- 19. It is never too late to have a happy childhood. But the second one is up to you and no one else.*
- 20. When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.*
- 21. Burn the candles, use the nice sheets, wear the fancy lingerie. Don't save it for a special occasion. Today is special.*
- 22. Over-prepare, then go with the flow.*
- 23. Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple.*
- 24. The most important sex organ is the brain.*

25. *No one is in charge of your happiness but you.*
26. *Frame every so-called disaster with these words 'In five years, will this matter?'*
27. *Always choose life.*
28. *Forgive everyone for everything.*
29. *What other people think of you is none of your business.*
30. *Time heals almost everything. Give time - time.*
31. *However good or bad a situation is, it will change.*
32. *Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.*
33. *Believe in miracles.*
34. *God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do.*
35. *Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of it now.*
36. *Growing old beats the alternative -- dying young.*
37. *Your children get only one childhood.*
38. *All that truly matters in the end is that you loved.*
39. *Get outside every day. Miracles are waiting everywhere.*
40. *If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.*
41. *Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need.*
42. *The best is yet to come.*
43. *No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.*
44. *Yield.*
45. *Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift."*

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August 27th, 2009

ANTS!



Are ANTS bugging you? Does it feel like they're taking over your life?

I'm not referring to pesky critters that ruin picnics and routinely invade our homes. No! These are even worse!

They are **Automatic Negative Thoughts**

ANTS are the thoughts that immediately pop into your brain whenever you want to try something new, take a chance, go on an adventure, talk to a stranger, ask for directions, demand a refund, ask for advice or ask a question, ask for more money, or ask for the job, etc. It happens whenever you step out of your comfort zone in any way and the list can be endless! It's anytime you make an unconscious decision to let a negative thought win out over a positive one.

So how do we get rid of the ANTS in our minds? The same way you get rid of those nasty little insects in your house! SPRAY!

You can spray them with P P T! Powerful Positive Thoughts!

When the first thought in your head is something like, "Oh! I can't ask that question! The producer will think I'm stupid!" Then the ANT is winning!

Try this thought instead: "I am a professional and professionals ask questions. Only amateurs assume they know everything!"

"I'd really like to submit this audition, but why should I even try? Someone else will get it anyway." There's that ANT again!

Try: "Every audition I submit brings me closer to the producer who's looking for me!"

"I can't ask for union scale for this VO job! I'm just a beginner!" BIG ANT!

Try: "No one knows that I am a beginner unless I tell them! I know I can do a great job on this project and I should receive appropriate pay."

If every time you want to try something new you hear negative thoughts first, it's evidence that you've programmed your brain to react in this manner. Even if you had (or have) someone very negative in your life, it's still your brain that's doing the programming, so take responsibility! You and you alone are in control of your thoughts. If you've programmed your mind to immediately embrace the negative thought in a situation, you can certainly RE-program it to follow another, more productive path. It's really ALL about programming and only YOU can do it!

If you're thinking about attending VOICE 2010, don't let the ANTS keep you away. Oh, they'll try, with negative thoughts like, "You can't afford it!", or "Everyone there will be more accomplished or more successful than you!", or "You're a poser! You're not good enough to hob-knob with the pros!" You may have to spray them pretty aggressively with PPT, but with some concentrated effort you can eradicate these little "buggers" and make your way to one of the best experiences you'll have in your VO career.

There are NO limitations except those you place on yourself!

Comment by Connie Mustang

Spraying will help but so will squashing the little buggers as soon as you notice them. If that first A.N.T. never returns to the nest, and you've cleaned up any evidence of his trail, the next A.N.T. will have difficulty finding its way into your mind.

Take it from someone who has experienced the term "bug in your ear" literally. An ant (the real kind) had crawled into my ear while I was sleeping, and made so much noise that I woke up because I heard it milling around in there. Of course, I didn't know it was an ant which made it 10 times worse as I imagined all the things this "whatever it was" was doing in my ear. And I could feel it too, which really creeped me out. (When you live in the foothills, there's no telling what crawls in through the screened windows.)

Back to the point, like the ant in my ear, your pessimistic thoughts will amplify whatever negative thoughts you already have, you will then focus on how stupid you may look if you need to ask for help. You decide to ignore it, thinking it will eventually go away but your skin will continue to crawl knowing that A.N.T. is still there eating you up inside. I say, take the positive approach, grab a swab, a tissue, your courage and rip that A.N.T. from your mind. Then really show him who's boss and not only spray him with PPT (Powerful Positive Thoughts) but squash him good, so any thoughts to return will be terminated.

You are not an anthill, you are a mantis. And you ARE stronger than those annoying A.N.T.s!

As for the ant in my ear I know being proactive helped. I showed him the light, by putting my ear up to my bed lamp to show him the way out (I felt stupid doing it but...), as I felt it scurry towards the light, I ran to the sink and flushed him out of my mind forever. True story.

Squash your A.N.T.s, your mind will thank you.

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August 20th, 2009

I've got a question for ya!



The following is a question posed to the group and some of their answers:

“Is it true that you have to see it to believe it, or rather, do you have to believe it before you can see it?”

Comment by Ken Maxon

OK, I'll be the first to be thought of as a nut case. I'm a firm believer in believing. When there is a tree, I believe it is there because we believe it is there. If we were all to agree it wasn't, it would no longer be there if we all truly believed it. $E=MC^2$. Matter and energy are parts of the same equation and are interchangeable if we know how to do it.

Comment by Rachel Fulginiti

I firmly believe in believing it first! The material world always takes a while to catch up with our inner vision!

"Walk and the net will appear"... I believe in my dreams and the dreams of others... together we can manifest the reality we envision~ or something even greater that we have not even imagined!

Thank you for this page Penny. Thanks for the inspiration! I just had time to read your full story and it touched my heart. Have a beautiful day. We are all so blessed!

Comment by Tom Sheffield

Believing is so much more than just seeing or just believing. The emotional and "feelings" play a huge role in believing. Believing in yourself and what you can do keeps us all alive and drives us to greatness. Believing good things come to those that are thoughtful and caring, others may see your action, who cares if they do, but doing it makes you feel GREAT!

Speaking of greatness. God has a true angel on earth which we all are honored to know. That is Penny. She has really motivated me to a higher plateau in a very short time. It started when she invited me to join this fantastic group and only blossomed from there. I had only talked with her via email until today. When we talked, it was like we had known each other for years.

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August 11th, 2009

My Beloved Computer

This is a short poem recently sent to me by a good friend. I thought you might enjoy it to start your week.

*Every single evening
As I'm lying here in bed,
This tiny little prayer
Keeps running through my head:*

*God bless all my family
Wherever they may be,
Keep them warm
And safe from harm
For they're so dear to me.*

*And God, there is one more thing
I wish that you could do;
Hope you don't mind me asking,*

Please bless my computer too.

*Now I know that it's unusual
To bless a motherboard,
But listen just a second
While I explain it to you, Lord.*

*You see, that little metal box
holds more than odds and ends;
Inside those small compartments
Rest so many of my friends.*

*I know so much about them
By the kindness that they give,
And this little scrap of metal
Takes me in to where they live.*

*By faith is how I know them
much the same as I know you.
We share in what life brings us
And from that our friendships grew.*

*Please take an extra minute
From your duties up above,
To bless those in my address book
That's filled with so much love.*

*Wherever else this prayer may reach
To each and every friend,
Bless each e-mail in-box
And each person who hits 'send'.*

*When you update your Heavenly list
On your own Great CD-ROM,
Bless everyone who says this prayer
Sent up to GOD.Com*

I know I am grateful for my computer – it's that hard drive does keep me in touch with all of you!

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August 4th, 2009

Weird News

TAXI PATRONS ALLOWED TO DECIDE THEIR FARE



ESSEX, Vt. - When Eric Hagen started "Recession Tide Taxi" in Essex, Vt., he took more questions than fares.

Everyone wanted to know if the sign reading "Pay What You Want!" on the back of his taxi was for real. It is, and Hagen says he hasn't been short-changed yet. Most of his transactions are in cash. But he's also gotten a CD from a musician and a \$10 supermarket card.

I chose to share this story with you for a couple of reasons. First, when I read it I thought, "Wow, wouldn't it be great if that actually worked?" And second I realized that in our economy it would probably only work on a small scale. You'd have to have a great deal of confidence to market your product or service in this way! Can you imagine doing this with VO work?

Anyway folks, I just wanted to share the story with you. It kind of tickled me when I read it. I can just imagine the looks on people's faces when they got in that cab - can't you?

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July 28th, 2009

Oreos, anyone?

As a voice acting coach and producer, I am often asked to give evaluations of another actor's work. This comes mostly in the form of demo evaluations. As actors, we all like the validation of having someone else in the business tell us we've done well, or that we need to make some changes.

When I first started in the VO business, it took me about a year and one-half to feel I was “ready” to record my commercial demo. I worked very, very hard to find the right scripts, rehearse and to get the money together, and find the best person to produce my most valuable marketing piece. After the demo was produced and I had about 2 dozen cassette tapes (yes, tapes...), I knew it was important to get feedback from some of the people I admired and who had been doing voiceover for many years. So, I started sending them out and asking for an evaluation. I received many and learned an enormous amount from them. I got lots of glowing responses with very positive comments and really good suggestions for improvements but there was this *one*... I needn't go into details, but suffice to say it wasn't very kind.

Which one do you think I will *always* remember?

It takes 11 positive statements to erase just one negative one. Negative remarks stay with us a long time, whether or not we deserve or agree with them.

A student of mine, and possibly the most talented voice actor I've had the pleasure to coach, was well on his way to being a star in this industry. He was doing everything right; he was taking classes, getting good feedback and had produced his commercial demo. It was a very strong demo and was getting him work in the Los Angeles market. Then he took a class in L.A. during which the coach told him (in essence) that he had no talent, his demo was awful, he was a loser and he should just quit right now before he embarrassed himself further. I wish this story had a happy ending, but it does not. He took to heart what this one coach said to him. It made no difference that many, many others (including James and me) had given him positive feedback and encouragement. He sold his equipment, threw away his demos and to my knowledge has never voiced again. Now THAT is a real shame!

I am a strong proponent of being honest when evaluating someone's demo and I am ALWAYS HONEST when I do. After all, that's what they're looking for. Even if you aren't a VO coach, you will probably be asked to do the same someday. So, I'd like to share my philosophy of demo evaluation - the way to be honest AND kind without completely discouraging an aspiring voice actor.

First of all, I choose to use the “cookie method.” This is something I learned when doing evaluations of speeches in my Toastmasters club. Think of your evaluation as an Oreo cookie.

There are three parts to the cookie; the top wafer, the creamy center and the bottom wafer.

The top wafer is what you say first – the most critically important statement you’ll make. Make it something positive, and they will continue to listen. If it’s something negative they will focus only on it and will never hear the ways in which you can help them improve. I believe there is always something good (and honest) to be said. Even if it’s, “You have a wonderful voice” or, “Very nice” or, “I loved the spot about the ice cream – very clever!” Now you have given them an honest compliment. Now that you have their attention, it’s time to move to the creamy center of the cookie – the best part. This will be what they are really looking for – a demo evaluation that will give them the feedback and suggestions they need.

Believe me when I tell you that not all demos I get are good demos. Some have very weak deliveries, some are badly recorded, some are... well, just bad. Mostly this is because their demo was produced before they were ready to have a demo. His or her skills are just not up to a competitive level. But I will never focus on their weaknesses – I will simply give them suggestions for improvement. And here’s the most important part of the creamy center: I can tell someone they have a demo that isn’t marketable, but do it with kindness and with hope for either correcting the weaknesses or encouragement to focus on more training and try again.

This brings me to the bottom wafer of our cookie – encouragement and appreciation. They worked hard to get this demo produced and they spent a lot of money. I finish my critique with encouragement and praise. It can be as simple as, “This is an excellent first effort!” Even if the demo is not marketable in its present form, it doesn’t mean that one or two of the strongest spots may not be resurrected in a new demo down the road. In this industry, it is unwise to think we will only need ONE demo forever! Our abilities improve, we have new material for a demo, or the trends in the marketplace change. We must change with them.

Your first demo is definitely a learning experience! I go back and listen to mine and absolutely cringe! Even though it was very well produced, my skills were not what they should have been at that time. Future demos, of course, were much better. The last thing an aspiring actor needs to hear is that you think they completely wasted their money and that they have no talent (even if you may believe it at the time). I’ve had the experience of critiquing a “first demo” and then a couple of years later been asked to critique the same actor’s new demo and WOW! What an improvement! How unfair it would have been of me to tell him he “didn’t have what it takes!” He just needed more time and more training.

If, all those years ago, I had listened to that one very unkind critique of my first demo – if I had let that negativity keep me from continuing with my dream – how unfortunate it would have been for me.

My best advice when you are asked to critique someone’s demo, is three-fold. Use the “cookie method,” be honest and be kind. It really is possible to do all three. Don’t let your unkind or negative remarks be the ones they will remember forever. It all goes back to the Golden Rule. Give them the same kindness you would like to receive.

Yes, be honest. But also, be kind.

Comment by Daniel Wallace

We actors are a sensitive lot. We have to be. We must be in the moment, be attuned to our feelings to bring the characters to life. That sensitivity can be a double-edged sword. Being sensitive in a performance can make it brilliant. But, being sensitive to criticism can destroy us. OR can make us better than we ever thought we could be.

As one who received an "Oreo" from Penny and James a couple of years back, can tell you that I didn't like being told that there was nothing on my demo that was marketable. The way that I was told was palatable but to the point. Honest but not discouraging.

I listened to that demo a year or so after the fact, not only were they right but they were being very kind. It was really, really not marketable.

I am happy to be sensitive to the moment, to the character- to what needs to be changed. I am happy to not be so sensitive as to listen to criticism. One can't grow without listening to the truth. I will not however listen to someone abusive. They are coming from a place of self serving ego. Thank you, Penny and James, for your kind honesty.

Comment by Ken Maxon

Wasn't that the premise of the movie years ago? "Build it and they will come". To expand on that thought and publicly thank Penny, I too received an Oreo, which I'll paraphrase (hopefully, she will appreciate the humor and see the tie in as well). I was told I have a great voice but I'm the Kevin Costner of voiceovers right now. Everything sounds like me, I'm lacking in acting ability. (My apologies to Kevin, his movies are great, I own several of them, but it's definitely always Kevin in the role, LOL) I'm working on the acting, but until I have that down a bit more, I've settled into a niche of recording self help projects, which luckily for me, really only require me to sound like an expert at whatever I'm talking about. Still acting, but not so much as trying to actually be someone else, just expanding from my former career in management where I did have to sound confident and like I knew what I was talking about. :)

Comment by Ian "Lofty" Fulton

Penny what a great piece, thank you so much. Even for those of us who have been doing this for a while, we are still prone to latching on to that one negative comment and allow it to become the foundation of our belief in our ability. Like yourself, had I listened to the naysayers my freelance career would not be 18 years old.

Another great analogy that a friend of mine often uses, is this, "opinion is like a game of poker, your opinion of somebody else's hand, depends on what your holding and where you sitting at the table."

Even my own most recent "trailer demo" has garnered opinions that span the entire spectrum. Until reading this I was holding onto the negative ones and foregoing all the positives. Thanks for the "Oreo":-)

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July, 21st, 2009

Positive Aging

Here's a little something I received recently from a friend. For those of us who are on the "other side of the hill" the message will ring very true. And if you're one of the young ones in our group, well. . . you might just like it too.

Old Age, I've decided, is a gift.

I am now, probably for the first time in my life, the person I have always wanted to be.

But, I'm not talking about body!

I sometimes despair over my body, the wrinkles, the baggy eyes, and the sagging butt. And often I am taken aback by that old person who lives in my mirror (and looks like my

mother), but I don't agonize over those things for long.

I would never trade my amazing friends, my wonderful life, or my loving family for less gray hair or a flatter belly. As I've aged, I've become more kind to myself, and less critical of myself. I've become my own friend.

I don't chide myself for eating that extra cookie, or for not making my bed, or for buying that silly cement gecko that I didn't need, but looks so great on my patio. I am entitled to a treat, to be messy, to be extravagant.

I have seen too many dear friends leave this world too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging. Whose business is it if I choose to read or play on the computer until 4 AM and sleep until noon?

I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 60 & 70's, and if I, at the same time, wish to weep over a lost love... I will.

I will walk the beach in a swim suit that is stretched over a bulging body, and will dive into the waves with abandon if I choose to, despite the pitying glances from the jet set. They, too, will get old.

I know I am sometimes forgetful - but there again, some of life that is just as well forgotten. And I eventually remember the important things.

Sure, over the years my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break when you lose a loved one, or when a child suffers, or even when somebody's beloved pet gets hit by a car? But broken hearts are what give us strength and understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is pristine and sterile and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turning gray and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into deep grooves on my face. So many have never laughed, and so many have died before their hair could turn silver.

*As you get older, **it is easier to be positive**. You care less about what other people think. I don't question myself anymore. I've even earned the right to be wrong.*

So, to answer your question, I like being old. It has set me free. I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here, I will not waste time lamenting what could have been, or worrying about what will be.

*And I shall eat dessert every single day... **if I feel like it**.*

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July 7th, 2009

7 Tips for a Prosperous Summer
Sent to me by my good friend Carolyn
Gross www.creativelifesolutions.com

1) CLEAN OUT YOUR CLOSETS AND DONATE TO THOSE IN NEED

Give away your extras, re-design yourself and your life.

2) PRACTICE PROSPERITY CONSCIOUSNESS DAILY

Don't buy cheap unless you want to feel cheap.

3) KEEP YOUR MIND SET ON POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Don't make up excuses about why you can't accomplish or receive

4) YOU HAVE TO GIVE TO RECEIVE

Donate and Tithe. Make sure to give your money (and your time) to those who stimulate and lift you up!!!

5) DON'T BURN BRIDGES....MEND THEM

If you have something to resolve with someone, call them - today.

6) HAPPINESS BREEDS SUCCESS

Bring a smile to any trial and see what good you can find.

7) SAY PROSPERITY AFFIRMATIONS DAILY

- a) Work and money flows to me easily and effortlessly
- b) I willingly cooperate with people and situations and am always fairly treated and paid
- c) I am open and ready to receive blessings
- d) I'm not striving, I'm thriving!

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June 23rd, 2009

8 Toxic Personalities to Avoid



by [Brett Blumenthal](#)

(This is a very well-written piece I found recently on a Yahoo blog. Thought you'd all appreciate its wisdom)

Although we like to think that the people in our lives are well-adjusted, happy, healthy minded individuals, we sometimes realize that it just isn't so.

Personally, I've had moments where I'll be skipping through my day, happy as can be, thinking life is grand and BAM, I'll be blindsided by someone who manages to knock the happy wind out of my sails. Sometimes it is easy to write it off and other times, not so much.

Maybe you are a positive person, but when you are around a certain individual, you feel negative. Or, maybe you have an idealistic view of the world and when you are with certain people, you are made to feel silly, unrealistic or delusional. Or, maybe you pride yourself in being completely independent and in control of your life, but when you are around a certain family member, you regress into a state of childhood.

Some of these situations, and yes, these people, can have a tremendously negative impact on our lives. And, although we are all human and have our 'issues,' some 'issues' are quite frankly, toxic. They are toxic to our happiness. They are toxic to our mental outlook. They are toxic to our self-esteem. And they are toxic to our lives. They can suck the life out of us and even shorten our lifespan.

Here are the worst of the toxic personalities out there and how to spot them:

1. **Manipulative Mary:** These individuals are experts at manipulation tactics. Is a matter of fact, you may not even realize you have been manipulated until it is too late. These individuals figure out what your 'buttons' are, and push them to get what they want.

- **Why they are toxic:** These people have a way of eating away at your belief system and self-esteem. They find ways to make you do things that you don't necessarily want to do and before you know it, you lose your sense of identity, your personal priorities and your ability to see the reality of the situation. The world all of a sudden becomes centered around their needs and their priorities.

2. **Narcissistic Nancy:** These people have an extreme sense of self-importance and believe that the world revolves around them. They are often not as sly as the Manipulative Marys of the world, but instead, tend to be a bit overt about getting their needs met. You often want to say to them "It isn't always about you."

- **Why they are toxic:** They are solely focused on their needs, leaving your needs in the dust. You are left disappointed and unfulfilled. Further, they zap your energy by getting you to focus so much on them, that you have nothing left for yourself.

3. **Debbie Downers:** These people can't appreciate the positive in life. If you tell them that it is a beautiful day, they will tell you about the impending dreary forecast. If you tell them you aced a mid-term, they'll tell you about how difficult the final is going to be.

- Why they are toxic: They take the joy out of everything. Your rosy outlook on life continues to get squashed with negativity. Before you know it, their negativity consumes you and you start looking at things with gray colored glasses yourself.

4. **Judgmental Jims:** When you see things as cute and quirky, they see things as strange and unattractive. If you find people's unique perspectives refreshing, they find them 'wrong'. If you like someone's eclectic taste, they find it 'disturbing' or 'bad'.

- Why they are toxic: Judgmental people are much like Debbie Downers. In a world where freedom rings, judgment is sooo over. If the world was a homogeneous place, life would be pretty boring. Spending a lot of time with these types can inadvertently convert you into a judgmental person as well.

5. **Dream Killing Keiths:** Every time you have an idea, these people tell you why you can't do it. As you achieve, they try to pull you down. As you dream, they are the first to tell you it is impossible.

- Why they are toxic: These people are stuck in what is instead of what could be. Further, these individuals eat away at your self-esteem and your belief in yourself. Progress and change can only occur from doing new things and innovating, dreaming the impossible and reaching for the stars.

6. **Insincere Ilene's:** You never quite feel that these people are being sincere. You tell a funny story, they give you a polite laugh. You feel depressed and sad and they give you a 'there, there' type response. You tell them you are excited about something and you get a very ho-hum response.

- Why they are toxic: People who aren't sincere or genuine build relationships on superficial criteria. This breeds shallow, meaningless relationships. When you are really in need of a friend, they won't be there. When you really need constructive criticism, they would rather tell you that you are great the way you are. When you need support, they would rather see you fail or make a fool of yourself.

7. **Disrespectful Dannys:** These people will say or do things at the most inappropriate times and in the most inappropriate ways. In essence, they are more subtle, grown up bullies. Maybe this person is a friend who you confided in and uses your secret against you. Maybe it is a family member who puts their busy-body nose into your affairs when it is none of their business. Or maybe, it is a colleague who says demeaning things to you.

- Why they are toxic: These people have no sense of boundaries and don't respect your feelings or, for that matter, your privacy. These people will cause you to feel frustrated and disrespected.

8. **Never Enough Nellies:** You can never give enough to these people to make them happy. They take you for granted and have unrealistic expectations of you. They find ways to continually fault you and never take responsibility for anything themselves.

- Why they are toxic: You will spend so much time trying to please them, that you will end up losing yourself in the process. They will require all of your time and energy, leaving you worn out and your own needs sacrificed.

All of these personalities have several things in common. 1) the more these people get away with their behavior, the more they will continue. 2) Unfortunately, most of these people don't see that what they do is wrong and as a result, talking to them about it will fall on deaf ears, leaving you wondering if you are the crazy one. 3) Most of these people get worse with age, making their impact on you stronger with time.

Frankly, life is too short to spend your time dealing with toxicity. If you can, avoid spending much time with people who are indicative of these behaviors and you'll feel a lot happier.

Have you encountered these personalities? What have you done? Any personalities you would add?

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June 9th, 2009

Take a Break!

When was the last time you went to a movie in the middle of a work week, in the middle of day, for no other reason than you wanted to?

Now, if you work for someone else – doing something like this could cause some problems. But if you are self-employed, it might be something to consider.

Today (Thursday) at 11:55 a.m. I forwarded our phones to the answering service and Jim and I left the VoiceActing Academy and went to the movies. We saw *Star Trek*. Now, I'd seen it the week before with my hubby, but being the self-professed "Trekkie" that I am, I was all for seeing it again. We bought popcorn and drinks and even a package of candy and settled back in our seats to enjoy pure entertainment for the next 2 hours. It was wonderful.

Did we have work to do back at the office? Of course. Did we feel guilty about sneaking away to enjoy a few hours of entertainment in the middle of the day? Not one little bit!

As entrepreneurs, we sometimes feel we are obligated to work on our business 24/7. I know that very often I'll work all day here at the studio and then most of the evening I'll work on my laptop while I'm watching TV with my husband (which he hates, I might add). But there's just SO much work to do!!

So, here's a suggestion for you.

TAKE A COUPLE OF HOURS OFF.

Just pick something you'd really like to do for a couple of hours – put the answering machine on and DO IT! It might be a movie, or a manicure, or a massage, or playing with your kids in the park, hitting a bucket of golf balls, or going for a long walk. Just make it something you will really enjoy. Put it on your calendar and plan a day for it. This "movie day" has been on our calendar for the last week and I had it to look forward to for all that time.

You'll find that when you return from whatever you've decided to do you will feel re-charged and in a much better frame of mind. I promise you that your business will not dissolve if you leave for a couple of hours.

Today I am very grateful we went to see *Star Trek*. Not only did I get to experience a movie I really like with a good friend, relax and leave my work behind for a while – but the popcorn was really yummy!

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May 27th, 2009

The Voice Employment Office

Since the "Voices in our Heads" tend to be negative - let's give them something to do!

Arrgh! How can I get these voices to shut up??



Some days it seems those voices in your head gnaw at you constantly with wonderful little insights like, “*Why did you make that mistake, you idiot? What’s wrong with you?*” Or, “*Don’t even try that audition, they won’t like you anyway – you really aren’t that good - you don’t want to embarrass yourself, do you?*” Or, the ever-popular, “*You are never going to make it in this business; there are too many other people out there who are better than you!*”

Sound familiar? It should. We all have these voices in our heads. One of the things that help us achieve success is how we deal with them. I’ve found over the years that if I try to ignore the negative voices, they just get louder – screaming in fact - for attention! So I have developed a couple of techniques to give them the attention they crave and keep them under control.

#1

Acknowledge they exist and are very real to you. They are real and they’ve been hurting you for years! When they offer their opinions, calmly tell them, “Thank you for sharing . . . now GO AWAY, I’m doing it anyway!” I often do this out loud, but I wouldn’t suggest it in a public place....

(Or as one of my British friends put it, “You should wave as they walk by, but don’t invite them in for tea!”)

Two things will happen when you do this. Because they are now being acknowledged (given a place on the stage so to speak), they will become quieter with their negative input and will eventually stop all together.

#2

Give them jobs! I was recently asked by a student how to get rid of the voices or at least quiet them to some degree. I asked him, “Why not just give them each a job? If they have something constructive to do, then they will have neither the time nor the inclination to abuse you.”

Think about your own, personal voices for a moment knowing that we each have similar voices that speak to us. They are sometimes referred to as “The Committee.” For example:

1. The **JUDGE** who cheerfully points out every single mistake and reinforces our insecurities at every turn. He takes great delight in this power.
2. The **MOM**. She only wants to protect us and she tells us it’s okay not to try. She soothes us and gives us permission to “just be safe, dear” and by doing so, nurtures us away far from the path of success.

3. The **DRILL SERGEANT**. He tells us we are good for nothing – basically a waste of skin! And he does so with extremely abusive and hurtful language designed specially to cause the greatest degree of pain.

4. The **CRITIC**. He points out what we've done incorrectly but (unlike the Judge) he encourages us to try again. (I love my critic – she keeps me going in the right direction)

5. The **CHILD**. He's just plain scared. He can't take the first step and is practically paralyzed with fear. This voice generally represents a traumatic event that may have happened in your childhood. Or your child may be one that just wants to play all the time instead of doing the necessary work.

There are many other "voices", but these are the some of the most dominate voices in my head. Yours may be similar or completely different. There are others like; the cheerleader, the prankster, the bully, the teacher, etc. Who populates your "Committee?"

When you are developing characters for your scripts, think of how you can use each of these voices. What does your "Judge" sound like? What does his look like? What is his attitude? What is his vocal placement? How does he hold his body when he's passing out his judgments? After you have a feel for him then start thinking about where he might fit in your stable of characters. He might play the role of a politician, a professor, a banker, a doctor, or attorney, even a police officer.

What does your "Mom" sound like? Is she young or old? Does she have high energy or is she very quiet and shy? How does she hold her body when she is taking care of you or protecting you? Is she an upbeat young mom who is telling an audience about peanut butter? Is she genuinely concerned about her child and his safety? Is she a lonely spinster whose only children are her cats? Would she do anything to protect them?

How about the "Drill Sergeant?" Maybe he or she is an abusive boss or parent, the chairman of the board, the bully who used to beat up on you on the playground, the head master of your school, your mother-in-law.....?

Your "Critic" could be a counselor or therapist, a teacher, a religious leader, or a caring and trusted friend. It's probably someone whose opinion you value greatly.

And the "Child?" She may be scared, but she loves to play! If you can capture your inner child, and give her full permission to play - WOW! You have a plethora of characters to choose from!

Get the idea? If the voices are there any way (and they surely are), why not use them to help you create wonderful, believable characters for your voice work? If you are (or are going to be) an accomplished voice actor, you must learn the importance of having rich characters from which to choose when you approach any script. Using this method, you won't have to imagine the characters – you already have an entire cast of them living between your ears!

No one on this planet knows your voices better than you do. So, take some positive action – **TAKE CONTROL** of your voices!! They'll be thankful for the "work" and (ultimately) so will you - for the work they bring you!

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May 10th, 2009

The Glad Game

HAPPY MOTHERS DAY, ladies! Here's a little story about a very wise mother that I'm sure you'll enjoy on your special day.

In her wonderful book, *The Wealthy Spirit*, Chellie Campbell describes how, when she was a girl, her mother taught her to play "The Glad Game."

On days when Chellie came home from school complaining about something - a bully on the playground, a harsh teacher, a skinned knee, or difficult homework – Chellie's mom would hug her, kiss away her tears, and then suggest, "OK, enough complaining. Let's play 'The Glad Game.'"

"The Glad Game" is another name for a Gratitude List (or as **my** mother called it - "Counting your Blessings"). "The Glad Game" helps you focus on what's right in your world today, instead of what's wrong. Chellie's mom was a very wise woman, teaching her that no matter what your troubles, there are still plenty of things to be grateful for: a sunny day, good food to eat, a loving family, a house to live in, a family pet to love, a handful of friends to enjoy, and much, much more.

Chellie would follow her mother's suggestion:

"I'm glad I have you as my mom."

"I'm glad the weekend is almost here."

"I'm glad I have some nice clothes to wear to school."

"I'm glad I don't have to share my room with my sister anymore."

"I'm glad I get to watch TV when I finish my homework."

"I'm glad we have pie for dessert."

Playing "The Glad Game" is a terrific way to change your attitude in a hurry. And it's not just for children! We all slip into self-pity once in a while – after all, we're only human. The important thing is to cut the pity-party short and shift into gratitude. An attitude of gratitude will get you much further in life than complaining and self-pity. Try it and see.

This is one of many short chapters in *Learning to Dance in the Rain...The Power of Gratitude* which is available at www.simpletruths.com.

Dancing in the rain isn't something that most of us are born knowing how to do. We learn it. We learn it from others; we learn it from Life. The more we dance, the better we get at it. With practice, dancing in the rain becomes almost automatic. We no longer seek to run from storms...instead, we toss back our heads, throw out our arms, pick up our feet, and DANCE!

If we teach our children nothing else, inspiring them to appreciate all they have (through our example) will enrich their lives immensely.

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April 28th, 2009

A Brighter Tomorrow?

For those of us who are *Star Trek* fans, the arrival of a new movie bearing this name is right up there with Christmas morning joy!



Yes, I do count myself a member of this ever-expanding group. I don't attend conventions or dress like a crew member, but since falling in love with the Starship Enterprise and her crew when the show began in 1966, I've always enjoyed the rich characters and hopeful stories of this franchise. When my husband and I were first dating in high school, it was our TV show of choice and we always had to watch it before we left for our Saturday evenings out.

Our country was in the midst of tumultuous times when the first show was aired. America was at war in a far-away land, we had lost a charismatic young president, and protesters marched in the streets. Civil unrest was tearing at the fabric of our country, the Vietnam War was taking our young men from us and the sexual revolution was in full-swing.

When the new Star Trek arrives in theaters this week, America is again at war in two foreign lands, the nation has just elected a young, charismatic president, and the protesters are in the streets. Leonard Nimoy (Spock) has been quoted as saying, "Star Trek began during a time of great upheaval. There were antiwar demonstrations. There was political turmoil. There was social unrest. The world was a mess. A lot like it is right now."

When the show debuted it was a flop! It was only after syndication reruns that it grew into a cult hit. I have often wondered over the years just why Star Trek is so beloved by so many. But I think I've always known.

Here's what I believe and why I will always be a fan: Star Trek is about hope. It's about the dream of peace in a world that no longer has war or poverty – a place where everyone is counted as equal. This Utopian dream of perfection may seem far-fetched, but for me it's a wonderful, positive, look into the future instead of dreading what might come next.

It also portrayed a crew that genuinely loved and cared for each other. How many times did Kirk or Spock (or any of the others), offer to give up their lives to save one of their comrades or the entire crew? Just about every episode, as I recall.

The shows (first and second generation) always addressed timely political issues. Does anyone remember the episode where two characters – both with painted faces (one side white and one side black) were fighting each other? It was based on the fact that one was white on the right side and the other was white on the left side, without a doubt a comment on the civil unrest our country was going through at the time. Even though I already knew it, it just further demonstrated that judging someone by their skin color was (and is) completely ridiculous!

So, say what you will if you aren't a fan of Star Trek. But for those of us who are, we know why ***We Are, and shall Always be, Fans***. Live long and prosper, my friends.



Especially poignant and interesting comments posted by members on Positive Thinkers UNITE

Comment by Maxine Dunn

Hi Penny! Thank you for this wonderful page... always so uplifting to visit. A little note to Jen if that's okay...

Hi Jen, I SO understand the "hating your job" feeling. I just wanted to encourage you though, to try a different approach. While you're getting your voice-over career started, try blessing your current job. Bless the people, the furniture, the building, the customers...bless your current paycheck and do your work with renewed vigor and a positive outlook.

When you shift your vibration from "hate" to "appreciation," not only will your current job be much more enjoyable, but your efforts in voice-over will benefit as well. The higher (more positive) vibration you have, the more you will attract auspicious opportunities to you, and wonderful new doors will open. If you apply yourself in your current job in the way you'd like to apply yourself in voice-over, you'll be amazed at the results. Best of luck in your career! - Maxine

Comment by John Fowler

They say your decisions will garner you one of two things...If they work out you gain wisdom, if they don't, you gain experience! I've dissected decisions I've made my entire life. Always in hindsight! I've blamed circumstances, the actions of others and life in general for when things didn't work out for me. It's taken me along time to realize I cannot blame others for the choices I made, circumstance for how it unfolded for me or life itself because, as we all know, life is not fair to begin with.

I never wanted to be born into the circumstances I was. No one does...I never thought I would ever wind up being where I am this late in life. But all the things that have brought me here are also the crucible which forged me into the being I am today. Perhaps one day I will share with you all the unbelievable circumstances which have led me to this

place, the who I have become and just how through it all I managed to remain relatively human. That is for another time.

Inspiration, determination, exaltation...whatever gets one soul through the darkness and into the light should never be taken lightly. In the endgame what really matters? As a recovering alcoholic I try to find this answer daily and manage to every time. Enough to keep me sober one day longer. I've been sober now for 13½ years. I got sober for myself. Not to keep a job, save my marriage or keep from alienating my family. I did it for the same reason I picked up a drink in the first place. I chose to! But I realize with my choice came a greater responsibility. Staying on it! I cannot fall off the wagon because, if I do, I know with every fiber of my being I will die under its wheels.

I have never considered myself a "Spiritual" person. But one day coming back from a 12th step meeting (Having had a spiritual awakening etc...) My sponsor Wade asked me "What I ultimately wanted out of life?" while I am sure he was referring to my Family, my job, my sobriety...I told him I was looking forward to my life's eventual end (Oh no don't go "UtOh" it gets interesting). And that I had always been fascinated by the concept of a person's life flashing before their eyes just before they die. I said "If somehow in that last, brief, defining moment of existence I can look back on something of a life worthy of reflection...I would be content!"

He told me that was THE most "Spiritual" thing he had ever heard...

Comment by Tom Sheffield

Personally I have been riding a rollercoaster with trying to stay gainfully employed while going after my "dream". Over the past month things have been really hard and I was not seeing any fruits of my labors on the "day job" as well as with the VO front.

I had to literally have a heart to heart with myself to get things back into perspective and I did that last Friday just looking in the mirror. I headed out to start my day at a new coffee shop across town which a friend recommended and a wonderful thing happened.

My friend had told me about the owner of the shop had a radio show and was very influential in the community. As I sat there having my "daily starter" of coffee, in came the owner. His name is Tom Chenault and I was amazed at what happened next. He took the time to sit down with me over an hour and just chat. We both learned a lot about each other and next thing I knew he was making introductions for me to the local radio and public TV stations in the area. He truly cared about me even though we had just met.

The next morning I decided to get up and attend his broadcast at the coffee shop just to get some more insight into what he actually was about. Next thing I knew, I was on the talk show with him and was getting exposure. Right after the broadcast, I had a gentleman approach me and ask me if I would be interested in doing some Radio commercials and possibly even an Infomercial..

OMG - I never saw that coming but have to contribute it to keeping a positive attitude and realizing again all of the "good things" I am blessed with. Even when things were at their lowest, always find that positive and NEVER let it go.

I have questioned why all of the hardship I have experienced this year happened, one of which took me out of my longstanding career in High Tech. However, all of the change I have done has really made me a happier person and I have been able to do something I love, well actually 2 things, help people and TALK!!!

Keep that positive vibe going and keep the faith, the valleys will pass and all of a sudden you will find yourself at the top of your game, and peak, looking at all of the great things to come.

Comment by Chuck Wedge

I am a longtime believer in Positive Thinking who went back to the dark side of thinking negative things about what I could do for a few years. Now I am back!

At the age of 9 I got extremely sick and was in and out of hospitals for the next 9 years. At 17 the doctors told my parents that they should put me in a long term care facility because I had just broken my back, my intestines had burst, and my prognosis was really bad, they said that I had maybe a year or so. The Make-A-Wish foundation granted me a wish and I chose to take my family to Disney World. Because my family never had alot of money and everything my parents did have was poured into hospital bills we did not get to take family vacations and this was a dream of mine to see my family have fun. I could not ride any of the rides because, at the time I was in a wheelchair and had very weak bones but the trip was a dream! Following that trip I got significantly better each day. Within a year my bones had strengthened, I finally started growing again and was studying at the University and having a very positive experience.

I had a strong drive to make things worthwhile and after college spent 5 years traveling the U.S. doing event management and getting the wonderful opportunity of working fantastic events like the Super Bowl, concerts, and NASCAR events.

Currently I am a Producer at LeapFrog toys and especially love seeing the look on young kids faces when they play with a toy I was responsible for making.

For some reason over the last few years, I had lost the confidence to go after things I dreamt about. Voice acting was one of those things and over the last 9 months I have started pursuing that. I get very nervous about moving in a new direction and letting a great job go eventually but I also remember that I took alot of risks in the past, not all of them turned out the way I imagined but they turned out the way they needed to without my knowing then.

Comment by Rob Actis

I was talking to a good friend of mine today and she is getting pretty bummed about her lack of work. She is looking at doing something else. I sent her this quote, She said it was just what she needed to see. I thought that I would share it here with all of us "Positive Thinkers"

Sometimes we all need that internal boost.

Keep moving

When the path becomes difficult, that's no reason to give up. In fact, it means you're making real progress. The mountain becomes more rugged and steep the closer you get to the summit. Keep going, keep climbing, keep making the effort, and soon you'll find yourself reaching the top.

The challenges you encounter are unquestionable proof that you're making a positive difference. Make use of those challenges, not as an excuse to stop, but rather as a platform from which to push forward.

For the greatest achievements come in response to the greatest challenges. When the going gets rough, you are most certainly in the presence of profound opportunity.

When there is much that must be done, there is enormous value waiting to be created. Step boldly forward and claim that value.

Whatever may come, whatever may seem to block your path, choose to keep moving. There are truly magnificent rewards just on the other side of your persistent efforts.

-- Ralph Marston

Comment by Christine Ivy Schneider

Hi Penny, this is Christine from Yelm WA. My story is as follows: January 2008 I was working as a job coach for developmentally disabled adults. In November I was diagnosed with a neurological disability. It has been a year to the day since I received that diagnosis. I am 52 years old and I did ask God what to do. And I ended up taking a VO workshop just for fun. I was absolutely hooked and knew this was the path God intended for me. I thought this would be perfect for me as I had the acting and puppetry experience and it didn't require a lot of hand and leg activity. Since then I had the privilege to audit a Bob Bergen animation workshop and last Saturday I took another VO workshop from my original instructor from July. At that workshop I was invited to an ongoing VO group from that same instructor. My first goal will be to set up my home studio and my long term goal is to have my first paid job by September 2010. My next steps will be to take classes, listen to podcasts and explore my VO areas of interest; audio books, medical speak (since I have heard it a great deal this past year), narration, commercials and Lord willing religious animation(maybe doing those 150 puppet voices will pay off. I look forward to talking to people and reading their stories as well. Blessings to all.

Comment by Jeffrey Wyman

Thanks for the invite to the forum. I have been in VO for less than 2 months and I too truly believe this is what I am supposed to do. I am a Christian man and a true believer that if we are believers then HE gives us the desires of our heart. That being said, I have been told throughout my 42 years of life that I have a nice voice and should do something with it (as most of us I am sure have all heard). About 6 months ago I was reading the bible and a thought came to me to look into doing something with my voice to earn a living. I logged onto Google and typed something to do with using my voice and BAM....everything you ever needed to know about VO and more. Long story short, I called such a voice, auditioned and signed up for some classes and here I am. My background is financial and business. As I write this I am still licensed financial advisor and Insurance agent but not currently affiliated with any companies as business was slow due to the economy and I was just plain tired of the day to day grind of trying to convince people who are hurting financially to "do the right thing". It just doesn't feel right anymore. So now I am full time into this wonderful world of Voice overs and "terrified that I might not make it" but at such peace anyway. I will listen to and use all the advice I can get. I have been awarded a few jobs on a pay for play site that does not have numbers in the name and through a friend landed a pro-bono cartoon character role in an upcoming Christian kids video that will be distributed across the country and has a longer term goal of going syndicate....other than that pretty quite in the paycheck department but I am confident that with hard work and input from others I will make it! If you or anyone gets a chance, please listen to my demos at www.jwvoicetalent.com and give me an honest opinion on my work. Thanks again for the forum and Blessings to all!

Comment from Derek Chappell

Tonight, my daughter and I worked on a puzzle. I admit that she did a lot more "working" on the puzzle than I did. She has an extreme amount of patience for puzzles that I simply do not possess. She can look at the box to see what the puzzle should look like, then seemingly go right to the piece or pieces she's looking for and put them together. While she's being very efficient, I'm spending way too much time looking for just that 'one' piece that's going to really get me started. Well, you don't have to guess who had more of the puzzle put together by the time we stopped.

Establishing oneself in the very competitive voiceover market is much like putting the pieces of a puzzle together. It takes extreme patience. You look at the completed picture of the puzzle on the box, which is actually a picture of you and your goals and your passion, eventually coming to fruition. Then you look at all of the pieces scattered about the table and wonder how you're ever going to put them all together. It just seems too overwhelming. Where do you even start?

Obviously, you start with the first piece. Then you find the next and the next and the next and before you know it you've got part of the picture coming together. Those pieces represent all of the aspects it takes to be a successful voiceover artist in today's market. There are pieces of training, technique, practice, coaching, characters, equipment, computers, software, soundproofing, demo's, websites, blogs, marketing, agents,

unions, auditions, etc, etc, etc....a lot of pieces scattered all over the table. But, isn't it comforting to know that you actually have all of the pieces that it takes?

If you will be realistic with yourself from the start and know that it is going to take time, patience, and perseverance to complete the puzzle, then as you put it all together, one piece at a time, you will actually start to see the picture on the box take shape right before your eyes. You must remember that it is YOUR puzzle and that no two people use the exact same piece in the exact same order when putting a puzzle together. Set your pace, your strategy, your technique and follow it, piece-by-piece and enjoy the successful feeling of accomplishment along the way. So, have you started putting your pieces together, or are you just staring at the box?

Comment by Jack P. Norris, Jr. (aka Kevin)

I have almost always been a positive thinker, looking for the possibilities rather than the defeats/losses. I am currently exploring several new horizons in my mature life and this is one of them. The local police dept. is running a "Civilian Academy" for the locals. It is very, very interesting so far - another new horizon to expand me to. I was reflecting on my overall life a while back and realized that I have accomplished/done more than a lot folks. So my tag line for me is, "Been there, done that, bought the t-shirt, worn the hat, walked in the shoes, and shook hands with the Reaper more than once." Thanks to all for the encouragement and like PT and Ken and Stefan, I also am looking forward to the rewards of still being useful and "needed."

Comment by Uday Shankar

I threw it away! A good job in the IT space, a good salary, etc. to follow my dreams .For me voice over was a passion . I started five years ago and am slowly finding my feet. I have still have miles to go, but I am happy to be doing the things I love most. The best part is "I have no boss."

I am glad to belong to the world sounds and bytes.

Comment by Barb Miller

It's Good To Be Easily Hoped

In regard to a certain circumstance, someone said to me the other day "don't get your hopes up". That got me to thinking. What an awful thing to say to someone. I am easily hoped and think that having hope is a very good and healthy state of mind to live in. Actually if you don't have hope, you are pretty much hooped on having a positive attitude in life. So don't let anyone rob you from that window of time of hoping that something wonderful might just happen. The worse thing that could happen is that it won't happen and that only means it wasn't meant to happen. Simply turn the page and engage in the next thing that will get your hopes up, because it is just a funnier way to live life.

Comment by Tom Sheffield

Motivation.... I get motivated the most by helping others just because. I think it is partially due to the fact, as my wife says, that I am very approachable. In fact she gets aggravated by the fact people just come up and start talking to me no matter where we are. I don't mind it at all, in fact I love it.

Even though I lost my "day job" over 4 months ago, I have been extremely busy doing things for my daughter's new school. Helping raise money, getting a golf tournament set up, starting the booster club, and most of all meeting new people. It has kept me going and helped me maintain a positive attitude. One of the benefits has been that I now also do all of their announcing and even though I don't get paid for it, I love it and what is even better is the kids, parents and faculty love it.

All of this is extremely nourishing to my soul, I do need to get my motivation directed to what my family needs. That nourishment does not pay the bills or provide food to them and the pups. Getting a "paying" job has climbed to the top of the heap which means the need to refocus.

The good news is I have found something that I can do that helps people and even pays!! It is even something that may be beneficial to all of us Small Business folks. The only bummer is having to study some REALLY boring material and getting a state license.

Sorry to babble on but I really needed it and this group really is a great place to get my mojo aligned as well as spirit.....

Comment by Wesley Hind

Hi! I must admit to a certain awe. You folks are a remarkable pool of talent! As a survivor of the San Francisco scene, I do appreciate the support given all of you to all of you. I agree entirely with Ms. Edwards. I am a student of life and have been battling my own baggage forever and every time I get to be creative or get to witness creativity I feel the baggage of insecurity and self doubt vanish in the pure joy of the moment. I once counted out the yarrow stalks in an ancient Asian ceremony involving the I-Ching, Book of Changes. I asked who I was. Whoa! Heavy! The answer I got was really fascinating. It gave me the hexagram of six unbroken lines which denotes the first one in the book, "The Creative". Ouch! Now I have no excuse to not try and be creative in order to bring laughter, information and wonder to life for anyone who might be listening. i am honored to have a page in this marvelous group.

Comment by Bill Sleeper

I'm "In" in more ways than I can count!

Thanks for the warm invitation and your kind words of reinforcement.

My official dream started in 1995 with my first introductory lecture on the VO industry. I had no idea that was what they called this wonderful exercise. Since then I have dealt with much more than just negative thoughts - the instability of a day job, a family life that wasn't ready to take risks as much as I was. Moving from San Francisco to Portland, Oregon and leaving access to coaches and continued instruction (so I thought).

Speaking of age not being a factor, I cut my first demos this last March and I was amazed to discover how far into the future my career potential is!!! I'll be turning 44 years old this month and my demos sound like I'm 30!!! It'll be 15 years before I can do a decent 'elderly' voice! I'm a rookie only in the business sense; as this is a dream now coming true that has literally been a lifetime in the making. Analyzing copy, rehearsing many alternate takes, finding the message within and performing with my voice is something that comes so naturally, I really hesitate to call it work. I can no longer imagine failure, just building successful relationships and helping projects be the best they can be!!!

I look forward to some wonderful interactions and discussions with you and the other group members. Thanks again for all that you do to support the VO community and onward and upward!

**Onward and upward indeed, my friends!
Here's to a terrific New Year!**

Big Hugs,

Penny

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