



BETWEEN SESSIONS

1 May 2015

This past month I seem to have come across a lot of people who are really battling to get through each day. From the time they wake up, the day ahead just seems horrible. In this newsletter I am going to outline two methods that can be used to help people feeling sad, miserable, defeated, or depressed, to feel better. You can also use these methods even if you feel good, to reach peak performance states. Typically these are what would be called homework or action steps in Coaching and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. If you are feeling so awful that nothing helps, or you don't have the energy to do anything, then get yourself professional medical help.

Your Thoughts

The first method focuses on the thoughts you tell yourself about yourself. If you wake up in the morning and your first thought is, "Good Morning, you idiot person, I wonder how you will mess up again today," you are going to have a lousy day. And don't laugh. You will be surprised at how awful some of the thoughts are that we think about ourselves.

Get seven cards, one for each day of the week. You are going to write a message to yourself in each card. Write something encouraging and positive. If you don't know what to write then ask someone who loves and cares for you what they would write. Then take a sheet of paper and write or type up positive thoughts to focus on for the day. When I work with clients we write specific thoughts and statements which counter their particular automatic negative thoughts which result in them feeling bad or stuck or miserable. We write down better, more positive, and more accurate thoughts to have. We do this in one sitting for all the days of the week. Your page of positive thoughts can be the same for each day of the week or different thoughts for each day of the week. Then put the piece of paper with the positive thoughts folded in the centre of the card and place the card in an envelope. Leave the envelope on your bedside table and when you wake first thing in the morning each day open an envelope for the day and read the message in the card and the positive thoughts before you do anything else. It can also be good to carry the card with you throughout the day should you at any stage feel a bit down or demotivated.

If you are working towards achieving a major goal such as a sports event or business milestone, the card can contain thoughts that will motivate you to reach your goal. You can also write down your vision for your life or areas of your life on the piece of paper in the card.

Your Actions

The second method means doing something - taking action. Taking action is how we move ahead in life, but taking action and ticking off steps accomplished helps us feel a lot better when we are very down. Set some reasonable objectives, given your current state of mind, as actions you can take for the day. Don't make them ridiculously easy or difficult. When you complete them tick them off your list as completed.



Again you are going to take seven pieces of paper or cardboard, one for each day of the week. These you will put on the bedroom cupboard door or somewhere it can be easily seen. On each page draw two columns. The first column is for writing down the activity you will do and the second column is for ticking it off once it is accomplished. If you really think you will battle to do the activity then write down a time for doing it. The activities you write down will depend on where you are in life. If you are very depressed then even very small activities can be tough to do, so write down what you can do, such as, go get milk from the shops, have coffee with a friend, talk to a family member or go for a 30 minute walk. If you are working towards a goal such as running the Comrades (and if you are then I think you are mad!) then your activities might include running training, strength training, meal plan for the day, hydration and rest.

For each day of the week write down an appropriate number and type of activities for the day. At the end of the day tick off each of the activities once they are done. You must actually check the list and tick off the activities. If you are depressed then tick off each activity as you complete it. At the end of each day give yourself credit for completing your actions. At the end of the seventh day give yourself a reward for doing your actions.

If you don't do your actions for whatever reason, don't throw in the towel and don't start berating yourself mercilessly. Just start again the next day. If you know why you didn't take the action then fix the problem. If it is impossible to take any action at all you could be seriously depressed or have other health problems, so seek help. If you follow this plan for a few weeks it can start to become a habit. And it is a habit that can see you move from being unhappy, to being well, to being brilliant. Many people who are very successful in their life do actions like these automatically. They act like this every day without even thinking about what they do.

Have a happy and successful May