



**PENNY HOLBURN COACHING**

*It's about You and Results*

## When being negative can be vital for your emotional health

1 April 2017

"I am so sorry for being so negative", she said. That was after discussing how she had lost a loved family member. In fact she had every reason to be upset. To be happy in such a situation would just be weird. To experience a painful loss and walk around with a cheesy grin on your face is just so wrong.

We live in a world where being positive is seen as the way to be. In fact people can sometimes find themselves being chastised for expressing sadness, disappointment or anger. Except that constant positivity is not possible nor realistic. Nor is it even desirable.

### *Emotional health means being able to talk about how you feel*

One of the most emotionally healthy things you can do is to talk about how you feel, including the negative emotions. One of the goals of teaching emotional intelligence is teaching people to recognise, name, and accept their feelings - positive and negative. Once you have done that it becomes possible to deal with emotions in a constructive way. One of the goals of therapy is to learn to recognise, talk about, and accept your feelings - good or bad. By learning to recognise your feelings, own them, and talk about them, you stop yourself from denying your feelings, from suppressing them, and from acting out your feelings - all of which are not healthy ways of dealing with feelings.

We live in a world that has good and bad. Sadness and happiness. You cannot realistically expect everything to be good all the time. A normal healthy person will feel a range of emotions appropriate to the situation. If you are trying to be positive constantly, you are going to be in denial of your feelings. And you cannot heal what you do not feel. Positive thinking and emotions are good. They can and do benefit physical and mental health. But you cannot be that way all the time. It is important to be able to feel negative feelings like sadness and anger in order for you to work through them. What you don't want is to stay in negative states permanently.

### *Negative emotions tell us something is wrong*

Negative emotions, much like physical pain, most probably evolved to aid our survival. Negative emotions are clues that something is wrong - be it with our health, our relationships, our careers, etc. Instead of ignoring, denying, or disowning your negative emotions, start with accepting them. That does not mean go and trash some furniture or swear at your colleagues. That is acting out and

is what happens when we don't deal with our emotions. Recognise and be with the feeling. Don't fight the feeling. Fighting something gives it energy. Sometimes breathing deeply can help. Other times imagining feelings as passing clouds can help. Tell yourself that it is just a feeling. Nothing more.

*Write down or talk about how you feel*

If the emotion is intense you may want to write your feelings down in a journal or talk to someone about it. If you still remain upset you may need to take action. For instance you may need to have an important conversation with a family member. Or you may need to confront a colleague. Or you may need to find another job.

Succeeding in life means learning to live with the good and bad. I often tell clients that an important skill to learn in life is to learn how to get through the bad days rather than fall apart on such days. Learning to accept, live with, and let negative feelings pass is one such way. If you need to take action to fix something that is wrong then do it.