

Hanging on to a Positive Mental Attitude

By Rose Jonas, Ph.D.

Your attitude is one of your best assets, and you must preserve it. You don't want to feel or act depressed. You always want that Positive Mental Attitude so you can see upcoming opportunities and be seen as a potential positive contributor by the people who hold the opportunities. At times, that can feel like swimming upstream. How can you help yourself get the smile of possibility back on your face?

1. *Change your daily to-do list.* You might organize yourself by the hours of the day, or your top priorities as a "1-2-3" list. Choose whichever works best for you. On days when your chops are droopin', try this. At the top of your daily page, write, "I will be proud of myself today if I . . ." and follow that with a list of items that might feel difficult to do but will make you feel great about yourself when accomplished. It could be the priority tasks you have, like making five networking calls or calling last week's interviewer who hasn't yet contacted you. Think of the list as an end-of-the-day happiness-maker. "I did it!" has a powerful impact. Give yourself that gift.

2. *Make yourself happy.* Norman Cousins wrote about it in *The Healing Heart* (wrong title) when he described his recovery from what doctors had told him would be a fatal illness. He found that watching funny movies and taking relaxing walks with his wife gave him a new lease on life. Do something to make yourself happy, whether it's hanging out at Barnes and Noble for a few minutes, buying a Durocher chocolate, or sitting in the sun outside the office building you're glad you no longer call your own. Keep your spirits up.

3. *Be a fishing lure.* You know what happens when you throw a baited line into the lake. First the red and white bob sinks then bobs back up again. You may be having such a bad day your faking-it smile won't cover your true feelings. It may help to just sink into it. Give yourself a prescribed time, say 30 minutes, to explore the feelings, write about them, cry, pace, rage. You will generally notice when you let yourself go that your inner optimist will begin to emerge again, as if saying, "Okay, I'm done. I'm ready to get on with it." You'll feel more ready to face the day.

4. *Meditate or pray.* Take yourself out of yourself and into your belief system. Sit and be quiet and breathe, chant a mantra or comforting saying like, "Be still and know that I am God." Pray to a deity or higher power you believe in. Ask for help and imagine receiving it. Make sure whoever you pray to is benevolent, on your side, and happy to provide support. You don't need any more lightning bolts thrown at you. Even five or ten minutes of this can bring you peace.

You can't control the fact that you're in this lousy circumstance, but you can decide how you feel today. See if these don't help.