

7 Effective Strategies for Conquering Negative People

Have you ever been around a chronically negative person? How does he or she affect your mood in that moment? More than likely you will feel drained of energy or you'll find yourself carrying around your own negative energy. Negative people make us feel angry and challenge our ability to stay positive. Whether your child or spouse has an occasional negative day or you deal with a family member, friend or co-worker that is chronically negative, there are things you can do to remain positive in the face of negativity.

Opposition is Rarely the Answer

The worst thing you can do is argue with a negative person. This only adds fuel to the fire. A negative person will use the opportunity to argue to reinforce his mood or attitude. I have noticed when my children are in an irritable mood, it is best to avoid trying to convince them to have a positive attitude. As soon as I take the approach of being in opposition with them, they pounce on the opportunity to prove me wrong. Their negativity escalates and the situation gets worse before it gets better. Know when to remain silent and let the negativity pass.

Smother Negative People with Love

Strange as it may seem, a negative person often needs love and attention. Unfortunately, it is not easy to love a negative person. It is our challenge to rise above the off-putting behavior and love the hurt and scared person that is deep inside. By truly listening to what she is trying to tell you, you are showing love. Acknowledge the feelings she has by saying something like, "It sounds like your daughter really makes you angry". Even if you don't quite understand the person's feelings, know that your reality is rarely the same as someone else's. Ask if there is any way you can help. This shows you care about her well being. Offer a hug even if you get rejected. Remember not to take a rejection of your love personally. A negative person often has difficulty receiving love from others.

There is Always Something Good

There is always something good to be found in any negative situation. Search for anything positive that you can draw attention to. Even a negative person has positive character traits. When a person is drowning in negativity, it can be difficult to see the light. Whenever my clients begin highlighting their shortcomings, I always remind them of all the positive things they are forgetting. I admit that sometimes a negative person doesn't want to see the positive. This might require her to shift her perspective. Negativity can become a person's best friend and no one wants to willingly give up their best friend. Be patient and gently remind your ill-tempered friend or family member to be grateful for all her blessings. Hopefully, in her down time, she will begin to reflect on what you have said.

Turn Generalizations Into Specifics

If you pay close attention, you'll notice negative people often speak in generalizations. You may hear them say things like: "Lawyers are shady." "It's stupid to be an entrepreneur." "My kids are driving me crazy." These kinds of statements are referred to as cognitive distortions. To help a person sort through her distorted thinking, ask for more specifics. Questions like "Which lawyers are shady?" or "What specifically are your kids doing that is making you feel crazy?" forces a person to evaluate what he or she is really trying to say. A negative person will either get to the bottom of the issue or drop the subject because they are being challenged to elaborate.

Practice Detached Involvement

Sometimes the best thing you can do is emotionally detach from trying to change the negative person. No one likes it when someone is trying to change them, and their tendency will be to fight harder to remain negative. You can even try a little reverse psychology and agree with everything she says. I once read a great article about a mother who was exasperated with her son's negative mood. Everything she tried to soothe him and make him feel better backfired. She finally gave up and started agreeing with everything he said. When her son told her his teacher hated him, she agreed with him. When he complained that playing with his friends was boring, she couldn't agree more. After several minutes of this conversation with her son, his mood suddenly shifted. He declared that he was sleepy and he went to bed happy.

Remove Negative People or Seek Professional Help

Chronically negative people can critically affect your physical and emotional well being. Sometimes you have no other choice but to avoid these people or completely remove them from your life. It is possible to find a new job if your boss or other co-workers are negative. You can replace a friendship that is bringing you down. Other people, such as children and spouses, may require professional intervention if their negativity is affecting your life. By setting very strong boundaries with chronically negative people, you protect yourself and send a message to them that you care enough about yourself to avoid negativity.

Maintain Your Own Positive Attitude

If you do nothing else but focus on managing your own negative thoughts and behavior, you will come a long way towards remaining positive. A negative attitude is like a bad virus, but a positive attitude is contagious as well. Surround yourself with positive people that encourage you to be your best self. Use positive affirmations to conquer your own negative self-talk. Keep a gratitude journal to remind yourself of all your blessings. Take the time everyday to stop and smell the roses, watch children laugh and play, and listen to the birds chirp in the morning. Read inspirational material and listen to joyful music. Connect with your spiritual self. Do whatever you have to do to remain positive and joyful despite the negativity you face. The world will be a better place because of you and your attitude. And you never know, you just might help a negative person make the transition to a better way of living.

Short note about the author

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