Society and Negativity

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Could communication with other be creating your negative outlook on life? Is it possible that it is your social interactions that are fueling pessimism?

Not everyone who is often sad is also clinically depressed. There is a significant difference between clinical depression and negativity, or pessimism.

While clinical depression is a mental disorder, the rest are unpleasant and unhealthy ways of perceiving the world. The good news is that they are much easier to turn around!

A Myriad of Factors

Why is negativity considered to be the burden of the modern age? This is a complex question, which can perhaps be answered, by the interaction between society and the individual.

As humans, we are social beings. This is one of our core characteristics. Social life, therefore, affects ?ur psychological functioning, which in turn influences physical wellbeing.

A Holistic Approach

Thereby, we may sometimes find ourselves in a position, where multiple factors intertwine, and cause intensified displeasure with life, the world and ourselves. Furthermore, our busy,

demanding lives can make it more challenging to stay in touch with our true selves, and fuel negativity.

Silence and Pessimism

One of the reasons that negativity and pessimism may take a toll on people's lives is the inability to name and address inner experiences. While it is wonderful to be polite, so that you don't hurt others, there is a difference between courtesy and silence.

The longer you stay silent and suppress your actual emotions, the louder they will roar and will, therefore, bring more negative experiences into your life. Obviously, brutal honesty is rarely the answer either, since it may alienate you from others and hurt their feelings.

Identify Your Experiences

An effective alternative you might like to try is first learning to name your emotions, and then communicating them to others, without using any blame.

You may be surprised by how many people are not well-acquainted with the terms of their inner experiences, and will instead tell you what they are doing, upon being asked how they are doing.

Name the Emotion

Training yourself to name your feelings will help you stay away from being overwhelmed by them, and is the first step to encouraging more positive feelings into your life.

Also, once you determine what is the exact emotion you are experiencing, you are also more likely to be able to find a good outlet for it.

Although there are many classifications and word lists to help you name specific emotions, Plutchik's wheel of emotions [1] is a good one to start with since it is relatively straightforward. Whenever you experience an emotion, try naming it using the wheel.

"I" Communication

Another effective way to acknowledge your feelings and not let them get the best of you is by knowing how to communicate them to others, in an effective way.

Whether you are talking to your family members, romantic partner, friends, colleagues, boss, etc., a technique called "I communication" is always helpful.

Communicating without Blaming

The idea is that you convey what you want and how you feel, in a respectful, yet honest way, so that others don't feel blamed. The latter is essential since most people tend to internalize blame as being attacked, and the most natural reaction to being attacked is trying to defend oneself.

Perhaps you have been in situations where you are arguing with someone, without getting anywhere. This may often be the consequence of each side feeling accused and becoming defensive.

The Benefits

"I communication" is helpful, because it allows you to state your needs and wants, without forcing the other side to become defensive. All you have to do, is use "I" sentences, to communicate your experience of the situation, rather than blame others.

Here are some examples:

- "When I had to go to the play alone, I felt ignored", rather than "You are a terrible friend for not coming with me!"

- "I feel underappreciated, because I didn't receive a bonus, despite my hard work", instead of "This company doesn't deserve me and my boss is ungrateful!"

As a challenge, try using "I communication" over the next two weeks, and see how that changes the way people respond and the way you feel. Remember - whatever you need to say, you can communicate it using this approach.

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Links
[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contrasting_and_categorization_of_emotions#/media/File:Plutchik-wheel.svg