

Who You Spend Time With Determines How You Feel

Tell me who you spend your time with and I'll tell you how you feel. Sounds impossible? It's really not. You see, we often take on the feelings, behaviors and attitudes of those we spend time with. For example, let's say you have a friend or coworker who's always complaining. She's speaks negatively about her body, her job, her relationships and her life. She looks forward to spending time with you because it gives her an opportunity to vent and find relief. Once she's through, she feels lighter, freer and ready to go on with her day. She enjoys speaking to you because you're a great listener, enabling her to be heard and valued. That works for her but how do you feel? Chances are you feel drained, deflated and uninspired. Although your intention was to be a good friend, once you became involved emotionally in your friend's negativity, you were brought right down with her.

Now on the other hand, let's say you have plans to see a friend who is lighthearted, enthusiastic and embraces life with eagerness and zest. Just thinking about this friend brings a smile to your face because you know you'll be having fun and enjoying each other's company. After your time together, you're excited about the rest of your day. You want to capture every moment and see all the beauty that's around you. Your friend may not have intentionally tried to alter your thinking but her positive approach and attitude was infectious.

Which person is better for your health? Studies show that positive thinkers have a 55% lower risk of death from all causes and 23% lower risk of death from heart failure. That's not to say that the more positive person doesn't experience anything unpleasant. In fact, the positive, optimistic person may have experienced more unfortunate situations than the negative, pessimistic person. The result of these experiences however leaves the positive thinker with a greater appreciation, perspective and sense of gratitude. They are grateful for what they see and have because they may have something less pleasant to compare it with. When they encounter a stressful situation, they look for ways to improve it versus letting it consume them. When a problem arises, they use it as an opportunity to find the most appropriate solution, rather than dwelling or magnifying all that's gone wrong.

The negative person works much differently. They expect negative results and when it happens, it only confirms what they'd originally predicted. They're more comfortable judging, gossiping or criticizing because putting others down offers them some relief from their pain. The negative person maintains the role of "victim" in a script she's written for herself. She feels other's are responsible for her "lot in life" and often uses it as an excuse to stay exactly where she is.

Within each of us is a broad range of emotions. An optimist doesn't only experience joy and the pessimist doesn't only experience negativity. It's just that the optimist chooses to expect happiness, success and pleasure and as a result, that's what they find. The pessimist chooses to

replay negative thoughts which lead to negative results. It's a choice. We choose how we want to think, feel and act. Although we may be conditioned to think or react a certain way, if we don't like the results it is our choice to change. That's why if we're working towards changing the way we think, feel and react, it's important to be careful about the people you're spending your time with. Look for like minded people who support, encourage and inspire you. Limit your time with people who drain, upset and frustrate you.

This is your life. You are the driver of your car on the road to fulfillment, greater purpose and happiness. While there may be many detours, you have the power to steer yourself in whichever direction you choose to go. If you want to feel good, steer yourself towards an optimistic perspective and let your relationships support your cause. If you choose pessimism, misery loves company and you'll find many people welcoming you into their negative club. Life is a journey and we don't travel alone. Who are you bringing on your ride?

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