AdChoices
SMTP RELAY & API
FREE EMAIL CONSULTATION
HIGHEST Deliverability & 24/7 Customer Support
SIGN UP NOW
SMTP

LIFE

Ditch the gratitude apps: why positive thinking is outdated

01 MAR 2015

102 13

Best-selling author and state of mind and performance expert Chantal Burns explains why being fulfilled and successful is easier than we think

It's fair to say that human beings strive to live happy and successful lives and there's plenty available to help us achieve this.

Thousands of blogs and books abound, promising the answer to success, motivation and happiness. One of the best examples is the 'positive thinking' movement, which has gained huge popularity over the years. The premise - if we think more positively, it will attract abundance and happiness into our lives.

The new 'positivity' kid on the block is gratitude, which has become the modern answer to peace of mind and fulfillment. The idea is that if we practice an attitude of gratitude, then we will feel good and make other people feel good too.

This idea has spurned a market full of gratitude journals, apps and other tools to encourage us out of our negativity and anxiety. I was keen to find out whether journaling the 'three things you're grateful for' each day would change my life (as promised) so I downloaded an app.

Gratitude apps' are becoming popular

Day 1 - I posted a photo of me and Mum having lunch together. Then I uploaded a photo of a gorgeous rose from my garden. And by the time I added the third post, I was definitely in a nice feeling. Day 2 was okay, but I struggled to find my third thing, which left me feeling like a gratitude failure. How could I have so much and yet be unable to find just one more thing to be grateful for?

Each day, the app would bleep to remind me that it was time to be grateful. By Friday, I'd developed an allergic reaction to that sound. By Saturday, 'three things to be grateful for' had gone to app heaven. What should have made me feel good had the very opposite effect. And there's only one reason for that.

Being content, motivated or happy is not about forcing ourselves to think more positively. Feeling content or motivated is what we naturally experience when our minds are free and unburdened. And a free mind is readily available when we understand where our feelings are coming from. Let me explain.

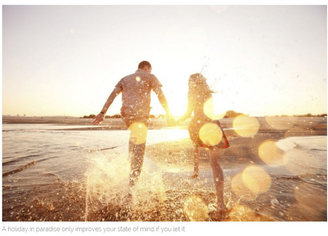
Most people agree that their state of mind is crucial for performing well at work. But in my research, when I asked people what most influences their state of mind, I got a raft of reasons including workload, other people, journey to work or finances. And 'my own thinking/mindset' was very low down on that list when it should be the only thing on the list. Whilst it seems like there are a multitude of things that affect our state of mind, thankfully this isn't how it works. It's our innocent misunderstanding that creates many of the problems we encounter.

People cite their journey to work as affecting their state of mind

The simple yet profound truth is that our thinking creates our entire experience of life and this explains why we can all have different experiences about the exact same situation or person. Only thought can determine our perceptions and how we feel. That's why I was able to enjoy my gratitude app for a couple of days and then utterly despise it for the remainder of the week. And that's why you're able to feel content and loving towards someone in one moment and feel irritated or indifferent a few moments later without them changing.

Feelings of gratitude, happiness, confidence and fulfillment are an inside job. They don't come from gratitude journals, sunny days or a new car. They can only ever come from the thoughts you are having about the journal, the weather or the car. And this is great news because it means that we're far more empowered than we think we are.

Our lives will always be a direct reflection of our own state of mind in any given moment, created by how we are thinking and feeling. That's why life can seem beautiful one moment and awful in the next, even though the external conditions of your life are the same. It explains why I could sit on a perfect beach with perfect white sand and cry for two weeks. I went there to escape my sadness only to realise that the beach and blue sky had no bearing on my state of mind unless I thought it did.



A holiday in paradise only improves your state of mind if you let it

Our experience of life only works one way. But when we believe that something other than our own thoughts can make us feel a particular way, it will give us plenty to think about, filling our minds with unnecessary concerns and worries. It creates insecurity or dependency because we believe that we are somehow at the mercy of all these external factors. This then creates a false filter through which we view life.

When you realise in the moment that how you feel cannot be governed by the past, other people or life circumstances, it will instantly free your mind, generating a more optimistic or hopeful feeling. You'll automatically regain your bearings and perspective. Your state of mind is like the weather. Like clouds, your feelings are a temporary experience of your own thoughts. And our thoughts have no inherent power over us unless we give them power.

The answer to a successful and happy life is not to force ourselves to think more positively or be more grateful. It's far simpler and easier than that. All we require is some understanding of how thought works. This will give you everything you need to live a more inspiring, meaningful and ultimately satisfying life.

Chantal Burns is a state of mind and performance expert. Her bestselling book *Instant Motivation: The Surprising Truth Behind What Really Drives Top Performance* is WHSmith's Non-Fiction Book of the Month. Click here to buy

Chantal Burns is a bestselling author and performance expert

AdChoices
1 IN 5 EMAILS GET BLOCKED
Don't Get Blocked
Optimize Your Email Deliverability Now with SMTP Free Guide
GET YOUR FREE GUIDE
SMTP

MOST RECENT

PEOPLE

"My era of Hollywood was much better"

FASHION

Behold the chic £150 wedding dress that's flying off the shelves

FASHION

Fashion highlights from the week so far

PEOPLE

"I was kidnapped by ISIS as a sex slave"

LUCY MANGAN

Lucy Mangan on why we should all compliment our colleagues more

FASHION

Daily outfit inspiration with our look at the best dressed A listers

PEOPLE

Catastrophe's Sharon Horgan on why real life is key to her success

BOOKS

Life before Google: the funniest questions people asked librarians

PEOPLE

Angelina Jolie "can't wait to turn 50"

THE STYLE LIST

This week's Style List

Toyota Corolla
FIND WHO YOU HAVE NOT YET BECOME.
WATCH VIDEO
Let's Go Places
Optional extras.