

Burke Hedges'
Success X Factor
Positive Change for a Better Life

"Life is not what happens to you, but what you make of it!"

This month I would like to talk to you about your thoughts. If you listen to news reports, pay attention to how much negative information you hear vs. positive information. In fact, negative news sells more newspapers than positive. Most of us don't realize how this negative information impacts our lives and our health. So, pay attention to your thoughts. What are you thinking?

I Can vs. I Can't

"If you think you CAN...or if you think you CAN'T...you're right"

- Henry Ford

Have you noticed there's a lot more I CAN'T thinking (I prefer to call it "stinkin' thinking") going on than I CAN thinking? Certainly there are a lot more negative stories on TV and in the newspapers than positive ones. I don't pretend to know all the reasons people are attracted to negativity. Maybe it's human nature. Maybe it's the fact we hear the word NO about seven times more often than we hear the word YES.

All I know is, there are a lot more pessimistic people in this world than optimistic people. There are a lot more people who believe they CAN'T do something than people who believe they CAN. And that, my friends, is unacceptable!

So how do we go about taking Dr. Peale's advice and "Change your mental habits into belief, instead of disbelief?" The answer is, we start with ourselves...we start by working on the belief system of YOU, INC., instead of blaming all of our woes on THEY, INC. We start by getting I CAN'T thinking out of our lives and replacing it with I CAN thinking! And there's no better time to replace I CAN'T thinking with positive thinking than today...right now...right this moment!

My favorite story about replacing I CAN'T thinking with I CAN thinking comes from the book *Teacher Talk* by Chick Moorman. The story concerns a fourth grade teacher named Donna who devised a creative way for her students to stop thinking in terms of I CAN'T and start thinking in terms of I CAN.

A Funeral for I Can't

One morning early in the school year, Donna asked her class of 31 students to take out a clean sheet of paper and write the words I CAN'T in big capital letters at the very top of the page. Then

she asked the students to make a list of all the things they couldn't do. Here's what some of them wrote:

"I can't do 10 push-ups."

"I can't eat only one cookie."

"I can't do long division with more than three numerals."

"I can't get Debbie to like me."

While the students labored away on their lists, the teacher was busy making her own list, such as:

"I can't get Alan to use his words instead of his fists."

"I can't get John's mother to come in for a teacher conference."

When the lists were completed, Donna asked the students to fold them in half and drop them in the empty shoebox on her desk. Once all the papers were collected, Donna put the lid on the box, tucked it under her arm, and instructed the students to follow her out the door. On the way down the hall, Donna stopped at the custodian's room and grabbed a shovel, and then led her students out the door and onto the playground.

Donna marched the students to the farthest corner of the playground. Turning toward them with a solemn expression, Donna announced, *"Children, we are gathered here today for a very serious occasion. We are going to bury I CAN'T"*

She then proceeded to dig a hole in the ground. The digging took 10 minutes because all of the kids wanted to have a turn. By the time each child had dug out a shovel-full of dirt, the hole was three feet deep. Donna gently placed the box of I CAN'TS into the bottom of the freshly dug grave.

Then she turned to her students and asked them to form a circle around the grave, join hands and bow their heads. Here is the unforgettable eulogy Donna delivered:

"Friends, we gather today to honor the memory of I CAN'T. While he was with us on earth, he touched the lives of everyone...some, more than others. His name, unfortunately, has been spoken in every public building—schools, city halls, state capitols and yes, even in our White House."

"Today we have provided I CAN'T with a final resting place. He is survived by his brothers and sisters—I CAN...I WILL and I'M GOING TO RIGHT AWAY. They are not as well known as their famous relative...and are not as strong and powerful yet. Perhaps someday, with your help, they will make an even bigger mark on the world."

"May I CAN'T rest in peace...and may everyone present pick up their lives and move forward in his absence. Amen."

Then Donna and her students filled the fresh grave before returning to the classroom, where they celebrated the passing of I CAN'T. As part of the celebration, Donna cut out a large tombstone from butcher paper and wrote in big, black letters these words:

**I CAN'T
MAY HE REST IN PEACE
MARCH 28, 1980**

The paper tombstone hung in Donna's classroom for the rest of the year. Whenever one of her students forgot and said "I CAN'T," Donna would point to the tombstone. More often than not, the student would smile and rephrase the statement.

Now I ask you, isn't that a delightful story? You know, I've never had the pleasure of meeting the teacher in this story, but I guarantee you, I'd enroll my children in her school in a heartbeat if she were teaching at the local elementary school.

Just think how much people could accomplish if they'd hold a mental funeral for all their I CAN'TS! I'm telling you, if that happened, you'd see a dramatic increase in the stock of every YOU, INC. in the world.

Believing in yourself is crucial if you want to dramatically increase the value of YOU, INC. The simple fact is, if YOU don't believe in YOU, how do you expect anyone else to believe in you?

Health Benefits

Positive thinking also has health benefits. Carol Ryff, a psychology professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who has been studying whether or not high levels of psychological well-being benefit physical health, stated:

"There is a science that is emerging that says a positive attitude isn't just a state of mind," she says. "It also has linkages to what's going on in the brain and in the body."

Ryff has shown that individuals with higher levels of well-being have lower cardiovascular risk, lower levels of stress hormones and lower levels of inflammation, which serves as a marker of the immune system.

It's clear that stressors produce abnormal changes in the immune system, said Ronald Glaser, director of Ohio State University's Institute for Behavioral Medicine Research. Glaser and his wife, Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, a clinical psychologist also at Ohio State, studied the mind-body connection and found that chronic stress and psychological stress can impede wounds from healing, may impair the effectiveness of vaccines and can weaken the immune system of caregivers.

"Mind-body medicine is now scientifically proven," says Herbert Benson, a cardiologist and associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School who is considered a pioneer in the field. "There are literally thousands of articles on how the mind and brain affect the body."

So, pay attention to your thoughts. Are you thinking negatively, or are you thinking positively? Change not only the results in your life, change the way your body functions and feels. Be the best you can be!

Seize the day!



Burke Hedges