



DANA LIGHTMAN, Ph.D.

Absolutely. Positively. Uplifting.

“Create the outcomes you want. Regardless of the circumstances.”

Five Tips for Staying “Up” in a Down Economy

You tune in to the economic news, and it’s practically impossible not to have some gut-clenching response. The fact is, there’s not much you can do to change the current economic circumstances. But there’s a lot you can do to maintain your own personal and professional equilibrium in the face of increased economic stressors. And once you are on an even keel, you can use these same tips to bolster your friends, family, and co-workers.

#1 Don’t feed the negative. A Cherokee chief, teaching his grandson about life, explains that we all battle two wolves. One is negative, filled with anger, self-pity and self-doubt. The other is positive, filled with joy, hope, and trust. His grandson listens carefully and then asks, “Which wolf will win?” The old chief simply replies, “The one you feed.” Stop feeding your negative wolf with complaints, worries, negative talk, and excessive media. Even if you can’t feel positive, don’t let your negative wolf put you on a downward spiral.

#2 Take a step back. You are taking a photograph. When you have the lens on zoom, it’s easy to focus solely on your subject. Conversely, if you step back far enough, your subject becomes one small part of a larger landscape. It’s the same principle with maintaining an upward spiral. You may need to zoom in on a particular problem or stressor in order to develop a solution. But don’t keep your focus there. Remember to take a step back to see a bigger picture. Put your problem in the context of positive aspects and it ceases to dominate your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. You are now free to experience a sense of relief and perhaps serenity.

#3 Keep breathing. No one knows how this economic crisis will evolve and resolve, but most experts agree that there is no quick fix. Staying fearful and anxious only serves to increase your distress, which may even escalate into more severe physical and mental symptoms. Instead, you can choose to relax and stay calm. Practice yoga, meditation or other relaxation techniques. Take deep, cleansing breaths and center yourself. This is a great way to increase your resiliency.

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#4 Focus on today. The past is the past, the future is the future, but the present is a gift. Life can only be lived in the present moment. So take time to create a positive intention for your day. You may even want to break your day into different segments and visualize successful outcomes for each. Plan activities and take actions that will put you on an upward spiral. In this way, you are feeding your positive wolf!

#5 Reframe difficulties into gains. You are likely to face some personal and business difficulties as a result of the current economic uncertainties. While this can be troublesome, within every difficulty lies the potential for gain. Think about past problems or disappointments and the gains that emerged over time in handling those situations. Now, imagine the possible benefits that you may derive from your current difficulties. For example, in searching for workplace solutions, you may discover some hidden talents among your staff or less expensive yet effective marketing tools. On the home front, you might explore family activities that are free, discover a great thrift shop, find fun ways to spend time together at home.°By focusing on these potential gains, you are creating the momentum you need to keep you inspired and energized.