

Think positive

By Tom Waring
Times Staff Writer

Dana Lightman is an accomplished author, motivational speaker and psychotherapist, but she wasn't always confident of her abilities.

Lightman used to go through a series of "what ifs" in her mind before giving a speech. She'd worry that her car would break down or she'd be late or she'd forget what to say or that the audience would hate her presentation.

Today, Lightman is a confident speaker who approaches every speech expecting to talk eloquently and have audiences laughing at her jokes.

In an address last week sponsored by the Rhawnhurst Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC), Lightman encouraged guests to be positive as they approached specific tasks or life in general.

"Find the positive 'what ifs,'" she said.

The Rhawnhurst NORC provides a variety of services to senior citizens. The organization is sponsored by Catholic Social Services, the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Lightman spoke to the group at Congregation Ner Zedek, a synagogue at 7520 Bustleton Ave. The topic was POWER Optimism, with a focus on helping people overcome the holiday blues and ring in the new year with a positive attitude.

The word "POWER" is an acronym for positive, open-minded, well-informed, evolving and resilient. A couple of benefits of being positive, Lightman said, are less stress and sickness.

A psychotherapist for more than 20 years, she has seen plenty of negative people over the years. She acknowledges that being positive is easier said than done for some people facing difficult circumstances, but she urges those folks to accept what they cannot change.

As an example, she suggests that people think of five positive aspects of their

life for every negative one.

"Appreciate, appreciate, appreciate," she said.

Lightman believes spouses should appreciate one another's actions, not take them for granted. Wives should thank husbands for taking out the trash, while husbands should thank wives for doing the dishes.

In her daily life, Lightman offers frequent thanks. She says "thank you" when her computer turns on in the morning, when she finds a parking space and when she arrives home safely after driving in snow.

Counting all the positives in one's life pays off when times are tough, she preaches.

"It's like putting money in a bank account," she said.

Audience members seemed receptive to Lightman's message.

Mary Bareis told her fellow seniors not to worry about the non-stop heavy rain that day, that they should be grateful it's not snow.

Marie Foremski, who is losing her eyesight, advised the others that they should cherish all that they have in life.

Ruth Pulman, describing herself as the "most negative person in the world," publicly thanked her friend, Martha Halter, for praying that she see the positives in life. Pulman likened Halter to Mother Teresa.

To schedule Lightman for a presentation, contact her at 215-885-2127 or dana@danalightman.com

In other news from the Dec. 11 lecture:

- Stephanie Ahrndt, the victims assistance officer in the 2nd Police District, urged seniors to be careful as they shop during the holiday season. Ahrndt said it's better to shop with a friend, adding that everyone should always be aware of their surroundings.

The police officer encouraged the largely female audience to keep their keys in their pockets, not in a pocketbook, in case of a purse-snatching.

Often, the officer said she receives old cell phones, which can be converted to be able to make free 911-only emergency service calls. Seniors interested in receiving a



JENNY SWIGODA / TIMES PHOTOS

Dana Lightman touts the virtues of bringing in the New Year with a positive attitude. Below, Ruth Pulman (right), who describes herself as the "most negative person in the world," thanks friend Martha Halter for always being there for her and listening to her.



cell phone for emergency use can call her at 215-686-3020.

- Guests were generous in donating canned goods that will be donated to food pantries operated by the JCC Klein Branch and Catholic Social Services.

- Senior citizens living in the 19111,

19149 and 19152 ZIP codes can pay \$5 roundtrip to ride to supermarkets in a handicapped accessible van. For more information, call Rhawnhurst NORC at 215-728-1330. ••

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The art of positive thinking can go a long way to curing the holiday blues. So says an expert in the field.