

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy
Tuesday, 21 October 2014 15:02



Dear Aunt Bossy,

You are always going on about people being victims, obsessing about them “hugging the thorns” as you like to say over and over and over. I am frankly sick of it.

Is your life so perfect that you feel you can lord it over people who have problems and challenges? Don't you have any empathy? Do you just think everybody who doesn't have a perfect life deserves to suffer?

□□□□ *Don't you understand bad luck or accidents or diseases? Not everybody has led the life of privilege that you gloat about.*

□□□□□□□□□□ *You make me sick.*

Bruno

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Dear Bruno,

Oh, my, I certainly have upset you and that is the furthest thing from my intention. Let me explain what I know and what I do believe to be true about that.

I believe that life is horribly unfair and difficult for almost every single person on the planet. I believe that some people are much luckier than others. I also believe there will always be someone luckier, better looking, more intelligent, happier, more talented than I or any of us. How else do you explain Mr. and Mrs. Pitt and the family?

I have a great life, not a life of ease. Never have had a life of ease, but spent many years without having a great life.

I will spare you the details of my tragedies, but, just to mention one, when I flunked my sophomore year of high school and had to repeat the year, I was humiliated beyond compare, and, being a teenager, I did have excuses, but never blamed anyone else, and took real joy in being ahead of the game the second time around.

I have had other and more serious and even hair-raising setbacks, bad luck, and bad decisions, but they don't get shared with the general public.

My life now is great because I gave up hugging the thorns somewhere in my late twenties and was introduced to positivity on my first date with my husband. Until then, I thought it was sophisticated to be in pain, downright poetic to suffer.

My husband is the intellectually smartest person I know, and tough as nails. On our first date he told me he was attending a seminar introduction the following week and asked if I wanted to go. Well, of course I wanted to go! I was single.

We went to an intro of the Silva Method, called, at that time, the ominous name "Silva

Mind Control.” I was horrified. One after another breathless idiot got up and talked about how it had changed their lives and how “HAPPY” they were. It was creepy, not to mention unsophisticated.

As we left, I cautiously asked him what he thought, Dr. PHD from the University of Paris and graduate of Harvard Business School. My jaw almost hit the pavement when he said he loved it and would I like to spend the next two weekends attending as his treat. I was still single so I said yes.

Silva opened up a whole new world for me. The power of positivity, not to be confused with the power of namby pamby delusion that life is always wonderful, was something that I might have stumbled upon accidentally – as I did in enjoying my second time around as a sophomore – but certainly nothing I had categorized or consciously practiced. I started meditating, practicing the exercises Silva teaches, and wham! My life changed.

When I listen to people in pain for all sorts of real and sometimes severe reasons, it is obvious to me that looking for the positivity in any situation (and it is always there) can only help. If you are poor, blaming others and complaining about your lot in life and demanding that someone help you will not put a dent in that situation. If you are sick and you put your energy into blaming circumstances or others, you are wasting energy that scientists can prove increases your chance of recovery and philosophers can prove will enhance your quality of life whatever the prognosis. If you feel like others are prejudiced against you for one reason or another, dwelling on that rather than being the best that you can be and seeking help from those who are willing to give you a hand, is another waste of energy.

I know for sure that asking yourself, “Is this getting me closer to my goal?” is the first step in moving forward and being happy.

Once, when I was so depressed I couldn’t function, I came up with the idea –new to me, old news for Oprah – of writing down one positive thing that happened each day. At first, it was as spare as “I had a good cup of coffee.” In a matter of days, I was filling pages. My perspective changed, and I daresay, my body chemistry changed. (NOTE: I’m not suggesting that a clinically depressed person avoid professional help and medication, but I had never done well with that route. It works wonders for many.)

Now, when I start to slide back, my brain goes to the hey–what’s–good–around–here mode. It works better and better. The more you use it, the better the results. And of course there are those days when only a primal scream works! We all have those.

I witness the power of positivity constantly with my clients. The people who think well of themselves, for good reasons, appear to be happier and others want to work with them. The fellows who have nothing but complaints and feel they aren’t recognized for their talents only attract others with that same attitude. How bleak.

The ultimate example of positive thinking affecting positive change is confidence. It is the one skill you can develop by faking it. You act confident, even though your heart is beating and your glands are sweating, people react by treating you as though you were confident, and that makes you more confident. It works. I know. That is how I learned. It is the think system and it worked for The Music Man.

As for empathy, the main reason I am practically a fanatic on the subject of rejecting victimhood is that my heart breaks for the people I know who embrace victimhood and encourage others to do so. I would do anything to help them. For those of us who really don’t have the power – the mentally ill, those physically or mentally incapable of helping themselves – I step forward, up close and personal.

I also pick up litter, always leave enough room for the guy next to me or behind me to park, leave public restrooms cleaner than I found them, tip in cash, and try to bring cheer to everyone I deal with on a daily basis. It is not effortless, but it spreads positivity, makes me happy, and hopefully others as well.

As for my being obsessed with rejecting thorn hugging, you are correct. In the summer in NYC when I get it with a blast of hot air from a bus, I always say to myself, “That would feel really good in the winter time.”

Now, Bruno, as for that sickness you feel . . .

Aunt Bossy is Susan Murphy, an internationally known Communication Skills Coach who

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adores spending every winter and spring in Beaufort. Ask for advice at bossymurph@mac.com

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