

Breakthrough Life Coaching Newsletter, July 2008

Welcome to the first issue of the Breakthrough Life Coaching Newsletter. I am very interested in hearing from you regarding what you would like me to write about. Please feel free to e-mail me at Donna@BreakThroughLifecoaching.net with suggestions.

In this issue:

1. Introduction
2. How to Identify your strengths

Introduction

I spent some time thinking about what to write in my first newsletter. I began thinking about how we are always living in the midst of change. Some changes are outside of our control and some changes are within our control.

Anger is probably one of the strongest emotions that rises within us when things happen either to us or around us that we can't control. This anger may turn into ruminating about the event and reliving the event over and over again. The end result is we end up feeling very unhappy and stuck and may even impulsively take an action we will later regret!

As much as possible when you are dealing with changes outside your control try your best to let go of what you cannot control and to begin to look for what you can control and change.

For example, you may be working very hard at your job and end up being passed over for a promotion. The first emotion you feel is anger and then you may begin to feel unappreciated and not valued for the contributions you have been making to the organization. What can you do? You can't make your boss promote you when he has already promoted someone else. This event is outside of your control.

What can you do that is within your control? How can you refocus your energy in a new direction? This is the challenge. What will help you refocus? How do you pull yourself into a new direction? This leads me to the next section on identifying your signature strengths.

Strengths

Within the past twenty years a group of psychologists have been researching what causes people to succeed. Why are some people happier than others? One area of research done by Christopher Petersen and Martin Seligman has focused on

strengths. Martin Seligman discusses this in his book titled Authentic Happiness. He defines strengths in the following way:

1. A strength is a trait that can be seen across different situations and seen over time.
2. A strength is valued in its own right and strengths often produce good consequences.
3. When someone displays a strength it doesn't put down or intimidate others. Others are usually inspired by someone's strengths.

By understanding what our strengths are we can use these strengths to get us through a difficult time. For example in the scenario above if one of my strengths is "love of learning" (it actually is) I can begin to use this strength to research jobs in other departments and companies. I can research new careers and think about taking a different direction. Maybe I will read a self-help book or research on the Internet how to deal with this situation.

Another important point about using our strengths is that while we are using them we feel fulfilled. Using your strengths as much as you can each day in your work and life will lead to deeper fulfillment.

If you would like to find out what your top five strengths are you can take the test Chris Petersen and Martin Seligman developed for free on the University of Pennsylvania's website. Dr. Seligman teaches the graduate program at Penn in positive psychology.

The test you want to take is called the VIA strengths test and takes about 25 minutes to administer. You will immediately get the results and will be able to print out your top five strengths.

The website is <http://www.authentichappiness.org>. The test is free and confidential.

Remember, your top five strengths called your signature strengths can be used to help you make changes in your life. Using your strengths will enable you to reach your goals. Whenever you feel stuck look at your top five strengths and think about how you can use one of the strengths to move forward. I will write more about this in my next newsletter.

Have fun with the strengths assessment!

All the best,
Donna

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