

Features

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Love is a four-letter word

By Rebecca Cohen - Chronicle columnist

We're living in a phenomenal universe. Just imagine. There is a machine that we can use to look inside humans to see cells and tissues that work, and those that have stopped working. I can place you in a tube and send you hours into the future, or hours into the past. Real time travel!! We can create an astronaut, doctor or teacher by combining two cells that look very different from each other. There is an energy machine that allows me to turn my food from raw into cooked. I can use a tiny organism that would ordinarily kill you to heal you. And, we now know that two machines, a DVD and a treadmill, can actually prevent disease and heal sick cells!

What marvelous tools, toys and inventions we have at our disposal today. What fantastic knowledge we have gained. And what are these "futuristic approaches" that are today a reality? CT scans and MRI's, jet airplanes, InVitro fertilization and the miracle of pregnancy, microwaves, vaccines, exercise and laughter therapy.

The problem is, how many times have you noticed the blessings that surround you each day? How about the simpler things in life like a young child's laughter, a hug from someone you love or a summer sunset? Have any of these made you stop in wonder for just one short minute? Or, do you notice and count other things in your life, like the number of people killed on the streets of Chicago? The number of terrible four-letter words in movies and on TV? The number of points the stock market has fallen? The number of times someone doesn't agree with you? The number of steps you had to walk into the store because there was no parking space closer? Or, how about how many times you haven't gotten what you want?

What do YOU count? Your blessings, or your fears and failures? The positives or the negatives that you encounter each day? And, yet, does your heart ask for a happier life with more health and prosperity?

How can the good things get to you when there are so many barriers and walls between your heart and your mind? If you focus only on the negatives, on what you DON'T want, how will you ever know when you are faced with the positives, what you DO want? If you aren't looking for it, aren't focusing on it, aren't planning for it, aren't counting it, aren't talking about it, there is no way for you to get it. When you close yourself to seeing what the universe wants to offer you, and sit day after day just "thinking" about what you don't get and don't want and don't like, happiness will forever slip out of your grasp.

How can you keep focused on achieving a healthier, more love-oriented world? First of all, remember that LOVE is a four-letter word, too. There are always two sides to everything. Then take some of these actions to keep your life toxin-free.

1. Don't fall into the "misery loves company" syndrome: If you find yourself participating in a "pity party" at work, politely excuse yourself.

2. Avoid “poison” people or deal with them in small doses: They are the ones who are always complaining, being negative or are quick to criticize your ideas.
3. Don’t watch too much TV, especially when you’re stressed or feeling down.
4. Spend time with your kids, family and friends.
5. Spend time each day motivating yourself with motivational books or tapes.
7. Try new things: Overcome the fear (i.e., fear of failure, rejection or pain)! When you’re learning or doing a new sport or hobby, you don’t think about what’s bothering you.
8. Exercise: Besides the physical benefits, the real payoff of exercise is the mental stress relief. Most important, regardless of how badly you may feel when you start exercising, you will always feel better when you’re done.
9. Meditate or pray for relaxation, inner peace, guidance.
10. Do the inner journey to your heart and keep asking yourself “What do I want and need? What is important to me?” Focus on what you want your life to look like, not on what it was or is.

The single biggest discovery I’ve made about staying positive is that you have to take action at your worst moments. When you feel so miserable that all you want to do is stare at the TV, eat ice cream or sleep, that is the precise moment you either read (or listen to) something motivational, exercise or spend time with your kids, family or friends. There have been times when I had to force myself to exercise or read, and no matter how badly I felt when I started, it helped. Did doing these things solve all my problems immediately? Of course not, but they helped me to maintain the positive attitude I needed to keep trying and gave me energy to move forward. So, when you start to feel negative, remember that it’s all how you look at things. You can count your blessings or count your losses, and see bad four-letter words or love.