

Possibilities: *Create opportunities*

February 2015 Newsletter



Will you be ready
when opportunity
comes knocking?

Secrets of networking

Let it go

e-Thoughts —
Every day is a new game



Even if opportunity is ringing the bell, banging on the front door and shouting from the hilltops, we may not hear it. Why? **More...**



You've probably heard the term "networking" many times. But what does it actually mean? How does it work? And how do you start? **More...**



Moving on in life takes more than making plans for the future. You also need to let go of old "stuff" that's been hanging on to you for who knows how long. **More...**



Baseball's Bob Feller said "Every day is a new opportunity. That's the way life is, with a new game every day..." **More...**

Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

Will you be ready when opportunity comes knocking?

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Even if opportunity is ringing the bell, banging on the front door and shouting from the hilltops, we may not hear it. Why? Many of us give ourselves negative messages. These messages can keep us from grasping opportunities that are there for the taking.

What are some of these discouraging internal messages? They include:

1. I'm not good enough.
2. It's too hard.
3. It's the wrong time.
4. I'm too old/too young.
5. I'm not that smart.
6. I'm too busy.
7. I can't do this by myself.

What do these messages really mean?

I'm not good enough. This is the voice of our inner critic. Our inner critic can come in handy when we're looking for ways out of a scary situation — even if it's a situation full of great potential. The critic makes us focus on our shortcomings. We need to silence the critic and remind ourselves of our strengths.

It's too hard. Ah, comfort. Step outside — or even think of stepping outside — your comfort zone and you may get frightened. It's natural. But think how boring life would be if nothing was ever a challenge. It might help to think of a time when pushing yourself led to something great.

It's the wrong time. Is it ever the “right” time? More likely, you need to make it the right time. So think twice before turning your back on opportunity because of timing.

I'm too young/too old. This is a convenient opportunity-buster. After all, no matter your age, you can always consider yourself too old or too young! Instead, remember when you love what you're doing, you're happy. And that's what keeps us youthful.

I'm not that smart. This phrase is first cousin to “I'm not good enough.” It's another self-defeating judgment. Remember that, while you may not know enough to accomplish your goal right now, you'll learn a lot along the way.

I'm too busy. Are you really too busy? Or are you avoiding something that feels like new territory or you really don't want to do? Make time and put it on your schedule. And say “no” to other activities that will divert your plan. By the way, if you really don't want to try something new right now, that's okay. Simply admit it and move on!

I can't do this by myself. No one said you had to! Everyone goes through times when they feel isolated or even misunderstood. That can feel really lonely. So recruit some help. Turn to a good friend or a trusted family member. See if they'll help you make a plan or even join you in your new endeavor.

Stop your thoughts from chilling your efforts

These samples of negative self-messages are good food for thought. We all have that little voice inside that can sometimes make us feel “less than.” Turn down the volume on that voice. Turn up the volume on the voice that applauds your strengths, skills and potential.

Secrets of networking

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You've probably heard the term "networking" many times. But what does it actually mean? How does it work? And how do you start?

Networking=connecting

Basically, networking is getting to know people who can help you grow personally and professionally. It may seem as if you need to be very outgoing to succeed at networking. But that's not always true.

Everyone already has a network. It's just a fancy name for people you've worked with or know. Your network may include old school friends, family members, coworkers, neighbors or people you know who are in business or professions.

How does it work?

When you're looking for new opportunities in life, the shortest route may be through networks of people you know.

Thinking of taking your career in a new direction? Want to turn a hobby into a second income? Looking to relocate or move to a new area? In each case, knowing and talking to the right people can help improve your opportunities.

How do you start?

Networking is a social behavior. People are always networking — whether they're aware of it or not.

For starters, listen when people talk about the projects or fields they're involved in. Learn who does what. Consider making notes about what different people do, what interests you about them and more. Gather information that may help you later.

Second, like all social behaviors, networking follows certain rules. They include:¹

- **Make a good first impression.** Whether you're meeting someone online or in person, remember that you can only create a first impression once.
- **Be prepared to give and take.** Successful networkers look for ways to help other people rather than just to see how people can help them. Networking is a two-way street.
- **Follow up.** If someone gives you a lead or an idea, do the legwork to follow up. Remember that each new step you take or door you knock on can help expand your network.
- **Leave your comfort zone to meet new people.** If you're shy, you're not alone. Even if you find it hard to extend yourself to new people, practice doing it. Join a new interest group or fitness club. Situations like these provide ways to meet new people with whom you already share or can develop common interests. That can make it even easier to open up conversations and get to know others. And that's how networks grow.
- **Be patient.** A major part of networking is practicing patience. You may meet someone today and perhaps a year from now, you'll turn to that person for assistance. Build friendships and social networks and you'll find that your connections can lead you to unexpected rewards and opportunities.

¹www.about.com

Let it go

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Moving on in life takes more than making plans for the future. You also need to let go of old “stuff” that’s been hanging on to you for who knows how long.

Old injuries and painful memories are emotional quicksand. They can pull you down and prevent you from progressing to new life experiences.

Dealing with the aches and pains of life

No one goes through life without pain. Perhaps you carry the anger and sadness of a messy divorce, disappointing or toxic relatives or other emotional events or experiences.

And who doesn’t want to “right old wrongs”? Yet many wrongs simply can’t be undone. You’ve learned to survive in spite of them. But are you letting “old baggage” keep you from moving ahead to happy new experiences and relationships?

Letting go creates new opportunities

Letting go is not the same as forgetting. It’s not the same as deciding you weren’t hurt that badly after all. It doesn’t cancel out your feelings.

Instead, letting go gives you power. It allows you to change how you view your past and how it impacts your life now. It allows you to take control so history can’t keep you in limbo anymore.

Ways of letting go

Easier said than done, you’re thinking? That may be true. But it’s still possible.

One way to let go is to write a letter about an old hurt. Write down your anger, sadness, regret and grief. Make it long and detailed. Fill it with all your feelings.

When you’re done, re-read your letter to be sure it says everything you feel. When you’re ready, take your writing and destroy it. Make it a real ceremony. If you have a safe fireplace,

toss your letter into the fire and watch it burn up. Have a “funeral” for your letter and bury it in the ground. Put it through a shredder. Take whatever steps you need to say goodbye to “it” once and for all.

Setting new goals

Another way to let go is to start working toward new goals. This is not as simple as setting up general objectives.

Creating goals includes writing down specific things you want to achieve. Want to lose weight? Make new friendships? Advance your career? For each goal, plan action steps. For example:

- **If you want to lose weight**, write down how much and by when. Look into signing up for local weight loss groups or online support.
- **To make new friends**, research community websites where you can find activities to join. Take a class at a local community college or volunteer.
- **If you want to move ahead in your career**, specify the skills you want to use or improve. Set up a meeting with your manager about new responsibilities you might take on.

Finally, you’ll need a way to measure so you’ll know when you’re “there.” Whatever your goal, set up mileposts along the way so you can see your progress.

Going easier on yourself

Try not to focus on your mistakes. No one is perfect or mistake-free. Instead, focus on your achievements. Look how far you’ve come. Write it all down if you need to see it to remember or believe it. If you need more help, ask a good friend or family member to help you identify all your successes.

Think of what you’ve learned, done and overcome. Be proud of who you are and who you’re on your way to becoming.

e-Thoughts — Every day is a new game

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Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.

Baseball great Bob Feller is quoted as saying “Every day is a new opportunity. You can build on yesterday’s success or put its failures behind and start over again. That’s the way life is, with a new game every day, and that’s the way baseball is.”¹

I really like his philosophy. It says that each day can be a clean slate. I can pick up where I left off if that’s what I want to do. Or, I can leave the past behind and start fresh.

Closing out each day

At the end of each day, I take a few minutes to think back over the day. I may have made some mistakes but I’ve probably done some things I’m happy about too. So I don’t beat myself up about my mistakes. Instead I try to focus on lessons I can take away from the day.

How do I identify the lessons? I ask myself what went right and what went wrong. I try to figure out the ingredients of each.

The questions I pose to myself are:

- **What happened today that I’m happy about or proud of?**
What did I do to make it happen?

— For example, yesterday I helped my neighbor. Her father had just died and she has no close family nearby. She was confused about what needed to be done. I offered to order food and do several things to help her with the funeral plans. I like that I was able to sense her need and jump in (which is sometimes hard for me). I took action and did certain tasks for her. She was very appreciative and I felt very good about what I did.

- **What happened today that I felt bad or mistaken about?**
What was my role? What can I do to make sure I don’t repeat those actions?

— I recently overstepped my boundaries with one of my adult kids. My daughter punished my grandchild in front of me and I spoke up — right then and there — saying she shouldn’t have scolded her little one. That upset my daughter (correctly, as I now realize) and put an icy ending to our visit. Next time I disagree with her parenting, I’ll stay silent. If I really need to comment, I’ll wait for a better time and try to raise the topic in a non-judgmental way. I learned that I really need to be respectful of her role as a mom.

I try to close out each day with thoughts and takeaways like these.

Ways to start the new day

I’ve closed out yesterday with takeaways so I can wake up today with new expectations. I have lessons under my belt and I almost always feel energized and ready to take on the world.

It’s a good habit to try: closing the book on yesterday and starting a new chapter today. I find it gives me peace, happiness and incentive to make each new day a good one. See how it works for you!

¹www.brainyquotes.com

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