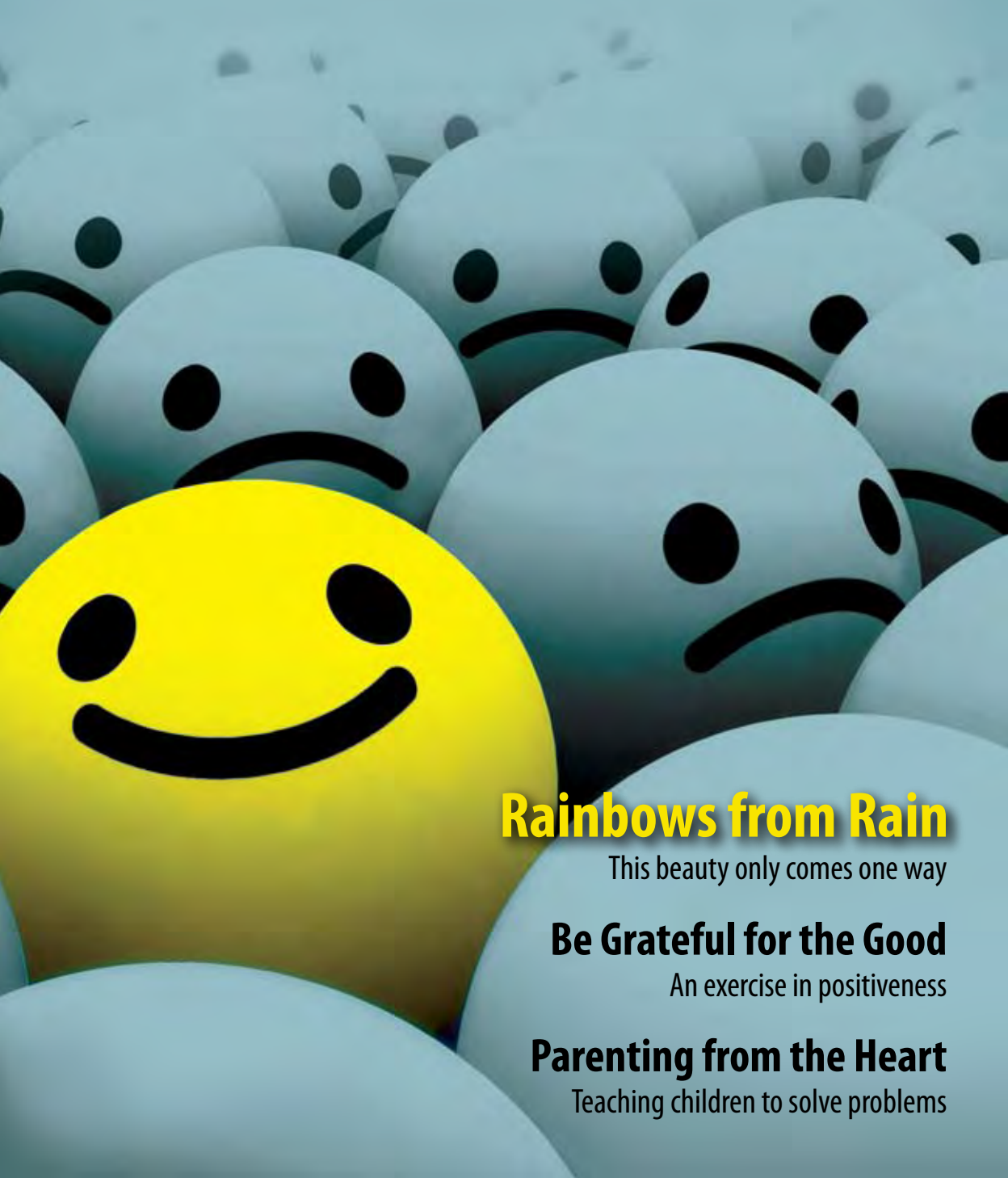


Volume 2, Issue 6

MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!



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Optimist or pessimist? Is your glass half full or half empty? According to staffers at the renowned Mayo Clinic, our answer to the second question not only answers the first, but it also reflects our attitudes toward ourselves and life in general, each of which plays an important part in how well we live and possibly even how *long* we live.

It almost goes without saying that positive thinkers are far more likely to reach their goals than negative thinkers. If our thought patterns have that much bearing on our happiness and well-being, it makes sense to stop from time to time to examine the way we think and to work at making positive thinking a habit.

In explaining their approach to this subject, the Mayo team writes in terms of self-talk—the endless stream of thoughts that run through our head every day. Self-talk can be positive or negative, and so can its outcome. Positive self-talk promotes positive action and progress, while negative self-talk triggers discouragement and defeat.

Some self-talk is based on fact, and some on fallacy. The first step to becoming a more positive thinker is to learn to distinguish between the two, and to reject the false. It is not true, for example, that we can never do anything right. Rejecting such an outright untruth eliminates a lot of the negative. Other negative self-talk has an element of truth, like “I probably won’t be able to do this because I’ve never done it before.” That can be countered with affirmative statements, like “Here’s a chance to learn something new.”

But what about the negative self-talk that stems from hard truths, like a serious accident or illness or the loss of a loved one? How can we think positively about those? There are some good answers to that too, but I’m not going to give them away here. You’ll find them on the following pages.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Let's Just Sing



By Mila Govorukha, Mostar (former Yugoslavia)

I was awakened early by a choir of birds. Singing, chirping, chanting, chiming, and conversing, their melodies were loud, joyful, and everywhere—nature's own surround sound. Some friends and I were camping in a wooded area near Mostar, the 600-year-old city that was often in the news during the Balkan Wars of the early 1990s.

The birds' notes rose in pitch and volume, then swung to a whisper, then reached a crescendo again, victorious, full of inspiration and joy. The difficulties and challenges facing this ethnically divided country were clearly the furthest thing from their little minds.

I went for a walk along the narrow river and took in the scene—the potholed asphalt road lined with bench frames that had no seats, the bridge that had all but been destroyed, the small café without doors or windows with glass, and the flowerbeds overrun with weeds. Don't step onto the grass, I reminded myself. There could be mines! For a few moments I forgot about the birds. Why did this happen? Who was responsible for all of this?

As I neared the teetering remains of the bridge, I saw a bird on one of the rails. Could she remember? Could she have seen someone die here, or have heard the shooting?

Then the bird began to sing, and I forgot about all those questions. Her tiny body quaked as her song burst forth. The music seemed to come from all of her. The sounds poured out with such force

and conviction that I wanted to sing too. She seemed to be singing about the rising sun, about a new morning, about the blue sky, about a new day full of hope, about beautiful flowers and the gentle forest, about cool, flowing, sparkling waters that wash the old away. She wasn't thinking about how she looked or her performance. She was just singing with all of her being.

I don't know how long I sat there watching her, but I forgot about everything else. I listened and sang along. I sang about the feeling of freedom I felt rising in me, about new possibilities, about new ways of looking at life, about a new day full of hope, about the beauty of creation and a great love that washes away mistakes of the past. It felt good, it felt great, and it felt liberating.

Let's learn from the birds and forget about our differences, about broken relationships, and the other person's mistake that never ended in an apology. With all our being, with all our strength, let's just sing! ■

Rainbows from Rain

This beauty only comes one way

By Maria Fontaine

Many normal, natural things in life are seen positively by some people, but resented by others. Take a rainy day, for example. Some might complain about it, while others might consider it a blessing because it waters their crops or grass.

Sometimes something that one person would jump at the chance to do and be thankful for, such as moving to a new location, another person could hate and resent having to do. Anything can become a source of bitterness, even things that aren't actually bad in themselves or that someone else might even consider good. It often depends on how we take events or circumstances.

On the other hand, there are some things that are not merely a matter of personal attitude, which we would all agree are not good or desirable in the natural sense: a physical handicap, a car accident, a house burning down, etc. A physical handicap is something that has obviously caused a lot of pain. It's not imagination, and it's very natural for someone to be down about it. Yet even our handicaps can be turned into stepping stones to a better life; like rungs of a ladder, they can help us climb higher than we could otherwise.

Each of us has something in our life that could seriously hinder us if we allowed it to get us down. But the wonderful thing is that we can overcome those things. In fact, circumstances do not have to dictate our behavior. We certainly don't have to be limited emotionally, mentally, or spiritually by the problems of our distant or recent past. In fact, often those *bad* things are allowed to happen so we will fight to overcome them and grow stronger in the

process. Instead of looking at obstacles, mishaps, or bad experiences as terrible drawbacks and horrible handicaps, we can use those things to better our own lives and the lives of others.

Look at all the men and women throughout history who rose above seemingly insurmountable odds to become great. They had to fight harder to overcome those obstacles, but in so doing they became stronger. Instead of complaining that life had given them a “lemon” and a bad deal, they “made lemonade out of their lemons.” Because of their supposed handicaps, they rose higher than they would have otherwise.

Beethoven was stone deaf when he composed some of the most beautiful music ever written, and Thomas Edison was deaf when he invented the phonograph. Alexander the Great was a hunchback. Homer was a blind minstrel. Renoir painted some of his finest masterpieces when his fingers were so twisted by arthritis that his artist’s brush had to be placed in his hand. Handel’s right side was paralyzed when he composed his greatest work.

Very often it’s also the people who have overcome difficulties who are in turn able to help others have the courage and faith to overcome theirs. Their personal examples are proof that it is possible to rise above seemingly impossible situations.

If Helen Keller hadn’t been blind and deaf from infancy, she never would have had the opportunity to become the inspiration that she was and continues to be to millions.

Booker T. Washington was born a slave and worked in coal mines and salt mines before becoming an educator, a spokesperson for

African American causes, and founder of a college for young African Americans.

Jerome K. Jerome lost his father when he was twelve. At fourteen he had to go to work to support his mother and sister. His life got even harder when his mother also died, but eventually Jerome became a writer, not of sad stories but of humor. After such a hard beginning in life, he said, “It is from the struggle, not the victory, that we gain strength.”

The beautiful colors of the rainbow can only be seen through the prism of rain.

There are so many advantages to having problems and difficulties. If we didn’t have any, we’d be complacent and meander along casually; not building the strength of character that comes from overcoming adversity. The beauty that often results from suffering wouldn’t have a chance to blossom in our lives. We wouldn’t appreciate our loved ones as much, or find true friends in those who come to our side in times of need. We wouldn’t have as much understanding or compassion on others who are going through the same things, or know how to help them.

Sometimes troubles are the only way we will learn to trust, or to get us to accept a circumstance as a stepping stone, or to stop us from making a wrong turn in life. Troubles and difficulties can also make us more humble, teach us patience and mercy, and help us not be judgmental of others, among other things. If we never had any troubles, we wouldn’t learn to be strong, and we also wouldn’t experience the thrill of overcoming obstacles to reach new goals. ■

Trusting and

A folktale

One fine morning, two men mounted their donkeys and set out on a long and dangerous journey through rugged terrain to find a Mr. Ahmed. The one traveler's name was Trusting and the other was Doubting.

Trusting turned to his fellow traveler and said, "Doubting, it will be a long journey to see Mr. Ahmed for our business, but it will be worth it, I am sure."

"What if Mr. Ahmed is not there or he is sick and can't see us? What happens if robbers attack us? What will we do then, Trusting?"

"A boat tied up to shore can never be steered."

"What are you talking about? I don't see any boat."

"Let me put it another way. I am sure that we will be taken care of on this journey."

Doubting paused for a moment and then said, "But, I don't know, we might get attacked by lions or snakes or... or... robbers! Anything bad could happen on our trip!"

"Or anything good! Cheer up! – Life is an adventure!"

They traveled on for some time till the sun began to set.

Doubting said, "It is getting dark! What happens if we get lost and fall off a cliff?"

Trusting tried to reassure him, "We better stop in the next village and look for a place to sleep."

They asked a few people for a place to stay but everyone refused to help them. They left and walked into the forest.

Trusting said hopefully, "Well, no one in that village wanted to help us. We can sleep in the forest tonight and I am sure we will find good accommodations for tomorrow night."

Doubting countered with, "I thought you said that we would be taken care of? Is sleeping out in the forest being taken care of?"

"There must be some good reason that we don't understand yet. The forest is the best place for us to sleep tonight."

The two men fixed their beds beneath a large tree. They tied the donkey up a little distance away and lay down for the night.

No sooner had they drifted off to sleep when they heard a terrible roar. A wild lion attacked the donkey. As they had not tied the donkey very securely, the donkey ran off into the forest, braying and kicking wildly with the wild beast chasing it.

Sometimes things happen that don't seem to be good for us, but later we discover they happened for a specific reason or purpose.

Doubting

Just in case the lion would return to attack them, the two men quickly climbed up a big tree and lit their torch.

In the tree, Trusting exclaimed, "I'm so glad we're safe and taken care of!"

Angrily, Doubting said, "What? How was that taking care of us?"

"Well, we were safe because the lion chased the donkey, and not us! Aren't you thankful for that?"

"Uhhhh... I guess so," Doubting responded, pretty sure that he was not thankful for anything that had happened so far.

Suddenly, a very strong wind began to blow. Their torch blew out. They were left in darkness, high in the tree.

Doubting began to grumble, "I suppose you see something good in this too. This is a terrible night!"

Trusting was getting very tired, "I'm going to get some rest. I suggest you do the same. We have a big day ahead of us tomorrow."

"How are you going to do that? There is no bed here!"

Trusting demonstrated his skills at improvisational bed making, "I'll just put my coat between these branches, like this."

Doubting was not impressed, "That is a silly idea. I'm afraid that I will fall out of this tree.

Besides, what if that lion comes back to eat us up?"

"See you in the morning," Trusting said as he quickly fell sound asleep and began snoring.

The next morning the crow of the rooster greeted them.

Trusting woke up rested and cheerful as usual. Doubting had not slept well at all. They both climbed down out of the tree.

Trusting suggested, "Well, let's go to the village and see if we can find some food for breakfast."

When they arrived the whole village was in an uproar. Some people were running around frantically.

Doubting stopped one of the villagers long enough to ask, "What happened? What's the matter with you?"

The man was unable to speak and ran off looking very worried.

The same distraught villager bumped into Trusting who tried to calm him down, "Please sir, be still, and tell us exactly what happened!"

The villager blurted out, "During the night, a band of armed robbers came to the village and robbed every house!" That is all he would say as he ran off.

Continued on page 8

Trusting turned to Doubting and said, "I am so grateful. If we had been here last night we would have been robbed along with all the villagers. And if the wind had not blown out our torch just when it did, the bandits who must have been passing by on the road would have seen our light up in the tree and robbed us. You see, my friend, we really were taken care of, even though we didn't completely understand. Just imagine if...!"

A farmer approached them and interrupted their conversation to ask, "Excuse me sir, did you lose a donkey in the night?"

Trusting replied, "Uhhh yes. Why?"

"Last night a donkey ran into my farm for safety. He was very afraid of something. Is it yours?" the farmer asked as he pointed to a donkey that was tied to a bush on a hill.

"I think it could be the very one!" Trusting exclaimed.

"Well, come with me, and you can see."

They followed the farmer and found that it was indeed their donkey.

"Thank you, kind sir!" Trusting said as he took the reins of the donkey to lead it down the hill.

"Why don't you come in for a drink of tea?" the farmer asked.

"That is kind of you, but we must get to our destination. You see, we are on our way to find Mr. Ahmed to discuss some business," Trusting said.

"Ahmed, you say? Is that Ahmed Abdullah?"

"That's who I mean. But, why are you asking?" Trusting asked him.

"You don't need to travel any further. Ahmed Abdullah is coming to my farm today. He owns most of the land in this area and he's coming to check on everything before beginning a very long voyage to a far off country."

Trusting exclaimed, "That's amazing! We would have surely missed ever seeing Mr. Ahmed and would have made this whole journey for nothing if our donkey had not been attacked and run away to your farm!"

Doubting only shook his head in amazed silence.

Trusting thought he would hammer the nail home with one more stroke, "Sometimes things happen to us that at the time don't seem to be in any way good for us, but later we discover they happened for a specific reason or purpose." ■

BE GRATEFUL FOR THE GOOD

An exercise in positiveness

*'Tis easy enough to be pleasant,
When life flows along like a song,
But the man worthwhile
Is the one who will smile
When everything goes dead wrong.*
— Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Let's recall a discouraging or adverse situation that we were involved in recently, and then let's think about the good things that came out of our misfortune, or may yet. Let's try to think of at least two things. (Don't give up too soon. If we can think of even one good result, more will probably follow.)

For example, let's say we were driving on a deserted road when our car broke

down in the middle of nowhere, and when we tried to phone for help, we discovered that our cell phone battery was dead. Our grateful thoughts might be something like this:

"I am glad I was in that situation, because even when I was stranded out there with no phone to summon help, a friendly stranger stopped to help me. Even though it took awhile for him to get there, I made a new friend that I wouldn't have otherwise met."

Let's practice this exercise each evening for the next week. Casting past troubles in a positive light will prepare us to approach future ones positively, and that is often half the battle won. ■

THE UPWARD LOOK

Retold by Abi F. May

There was once a university professor who sprinkled his lectures with personal reflections that invariably began with, "As I was walking in my garden, it occurred to me that..." Over and over he passed on to his students thoughts that his garden had inspired.

One day he invited two of his most promising students to visit him at home, and over a cup of coffee the

students asked to see his garden. To their amazement it was only a narrow strip, barely wider than the walkway, with the house on one side and a high wall on the other.

"Is this really the garden where you have all those inspiring thoughts, Doctor?"

one of the students asked.

"Yes," came the professor's reply.

"But it's so small!" protested the student.

"Ah, yes," said the professor, a twinkle in his eye as he gestured toward the sky, "but look how high it is!" ■



TEACHING CHILDREN TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

From Professional and Empowered Parenting

[Note: The following principles can be applied to both younger and older children, but please be sure to tailor this advice to your individual child/children's needs.]

The familiar Chinese proverb states, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” This saying can be aptly applied to teaching our youth good problem-solving skills, which is the focus of this article.

You may find that it will initially take an investment of time to teach these principles of problem solving to your children, but you can expect to reap long-term dividends as your children learn to solve problems and make wise choices for themselves.

Parents are often amazed to discover how capable and resourceful their children are when given the chance to solve their problems in their own way. All children will inevitably encounter problems in their lives of all shapes and kinds; that's simply part of growing up. Through dealing with these challenges, they learn problem-solving skills, which are essential to success in life. Kids have unbelievable and largely untapped potential for finding good solutions to their problems. It's wise to invest time in helping your children develop their problem-solving skills.

Teaching children how to solve problems is an essential skill that is worth learning while young, as it will greatly aid them in the future. It's good for children to go to their parent when they run up against problems, and the parent should guide them to solutions.

However, one tendency of parents is to rectify the problem too quickly or provide the answer to the problem too easily. If you try to solve all your children's problems, you will stunt their ability to solve problems on their own. Don't take over the fixing of the problem unless you have to. Instead, help your children find the solution. This shows that you have faith in their ability to learn to handle the problem constructively.

At first you will have to walk your children through each step of the problem-solving process, and it may take much more time to complete the process than if you had just solved the problem for them, or told them the answer. But when you solve your children's problem for them, you're taking away a valuable opportunity for them to learn. The learning process, however slow, is part of children's development and growth.



Little Sara borrows her friend's doll, but while playing with it, she rips the doll's dress.

"Mommy, I ripped the dress!" Sara whimpers.

"Don't worry, Sara, I'll sew it tonight and you can give it back to Melissa later."

Mom has fixed the problem and Sara is happy. But what did Sara learn from this encounter? "If I have a problem, ask Mommy. She'll solve it." So the next time something happens, she will promptly come to Mommy for solving the problem again.

In the case of the ripped dress, here's how it could turn into a problem-solving learning scenario:

"Mommy, I ripped the doll's dress! And I was only borrowing it from Melissa."

"Oh my! Yes, that is quite a tear. Hmm, what do you think we should do about it?"

"Um, I don't know. Tell Melissa I'm sorry?"

"Well, that would be good to do. But how do you think she'll feel getting her doll back with a torn dress?"

"She might be sad."

"Could we do something to help that?"

"Maybe we could fix it? Could we sew the dress?"

"Excellent solution! How about tonight you and I work on sewing the doll's dress?"

"Okay!"

Mommy has taught Sara how to find a solution to her problem. By helping sew the dress with her Mom, Sara is also now a part of the solution. Next time Sara encounters a problem, she may still go to Mommy for help, but she'll be aware that there will be a way to figure out a solution to the problem, and she'll realize that she can and should play a part in the solution. As Sara practices this problem-solving method day by day, she will learn to figure out solutions on her own, and will have honed a valuable lifelong skill.

Not all problems in life are easily solved, and you will have to impart that to your children as they encounter bigger challenges. But the daily steps you take to encourage their problem-solving skills will provide them with greater personal resources to cope with the more challenging problems of life as they grow older.

Teach your children to take responsibility in finding solutions to their problems, and in so doing, you will be teaching them a valuable skill that will benefit them throughout life. ■

Positively

NOTABLE
QUOTES



The optimist sees the rose and not its thorns; the pessimist stares at the thorns, oblivious to the rose.

– *Khalil Gibran*

There are always flowers for those who want to see them.

– *Henri Matisse*

It is always possible to be thankful for what is given rather than to complain about what is not given. One or the other becomes a habit of life. – *Elisabeth Elliot*

If you don't get everything you want, think of the things you don't get that you don't want.

– *Oscar Wilde*

The door to happiness swings outward. – *Søren Kierkegaard*

If I had my life to live over, I would relax more. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would pick more daisies. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones.

– *Don Herold*

Obstacles cannot crush me. Every obstacle yields to stern resolve. He who is fixed to a star does not change his mind. – *Leonardo da Vinci*

This is the true joy of life, the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clot of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. – *George Bernard Shaw*

I had the blues because I had no shoes until upon the street I met a man who had no feet.

– *Adaptation of an ancient Persian proverb*

There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative. – *W. Clement Stone*

There is nothing so easy but that it becomes difficult when you do it reluctantly.

– *Publius Terentius Afer*

Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens. – *Khalil Gibran*

