



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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Choosing life's color

In the midst of ongoing suffering and tragic loss that still weigh heavily upon New Orleans and Lake Charles, La., and the Mississippi Gulf Coast, the resilience demonstrated by so many is phenomenal. Even during the Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans in late February, there was a mood of optimism, expectation and hope. Years ago, Helen Keller put it very well when she said, "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."

Though you may not have experienced loss from the hurricanes, what is your approach to those situations in your life over which you have no control? Do you gripe and complain, "Why me?" "Life sucks," or do you try to move forward in a positive manner?

Charles Swindoll made the statement, "The longer I live, the more I realize the impact attitude has on my life." As I observe people and surroundings, I see this impact occurring every day. So, how's your attitude? Is it positive or is it negative?

I've read quite often that life is all about choices. When you remove the debris, every situation is a choice. I heard Brian Tracy say, "It is not what happens to you, but how you think about what happens to you that determines how you feel and react." In other words, you choose how you react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood.

Each morning when you wake up, you have two choices. You can choose to be in a good mood, or you can choose to be in a bad mood.

Each time something negative happens to you, you can choose to be a victim, or you can choose to learn from it — look for the positive side, do what you have to and move on.

A strategy I find extremely helpful is to "start your day in a positive way." Consider the time when you may have had a negative interaction with a co-worker or manager, and you walked away thinking, "Wow, did he ever get up on the wrong side of the bed!" Well, each morning when you arise, consider your mood. If it's negative, get back in bed, have a quick attitude adjustment, and this time, get up on the "right side" of the bed in a positive mood.

To help you wake up feeling positive, consider Tom Hopkins' technique. He says you should read something positive every night, and listen to something helpful every morning.

Each morning strive to exhibit an attitude of gratitude. Be thankful that you have another day to experience life, to see and to interact with those you love.

Use a little bit of self-talk. Consider that each day is going to be a better day than yesterday. Get up thinking a good day, planning a good day, putting a smile on our face, then working diligently to make sure you have a good day.

Humor and laughter also promote positive attitudes. According to medical data, a positive emotional state can boost the immune system. Laughter is a way to cope with stress; reduce anxiety; combat pressure, worry and frustration; and improve

interpersonal relationships. All in all, laughter can lead to an improved sense of well being. Once again, remember, being positive and having a good day is your choice.

A pastor friend, Ken Norton, believes we should take each day as a gift from God, and learn to live it to the best of our ability. He mentions that we should remember that yesterday is a canceled check, and tomorrow is a promissory note. Each day is cash in hand. I suggest that we consider Matthew 6:34, "Therefore do not be anxious about

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tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Several years ago, one of my workshop attendees sent me a plaque with a wonderful verse. It reads: "Every day is made special — by what you give it, by how you accept it, then how you live it." Keep in mind, situations may color your view of life, but you have the power to choose what that color will be.

And there you have it. Most things are possible. You have the power to choose, to change and to color your life positively.

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