

Healthy Positivity Vs Toxic Positivity

Today's podcast is called, "Healthy Positivity versus Toxic Positivity."

There is quite the trend in society to be over the top positive. Among many Christians, being anything less demonstrates a lack of faith in God or appreciation of His goodness. Even as a Christian myself, I don't believe this to be a wise belief.

I read once some time ago that many people who commit suicide are optimists. They expect only good things to happen, & when that is not always the case or when catastrophes strike, they become suicidal. That made sense to me. People living in the state of perpetually expecting only good things to happen to them must be highly disappointed on a regular basis. How could they not be? Even when life is good, disappointing things still happen sometimes just because that is how life goes.

Being too negative clearly is not good either. Very negative people are just miserable. I firmly believe the key is to be realistic yet positive.

To do that, you need to know the differences in healthy positivity & toxic positivity.

Healthy positivity recognizes the bad, but also trusts that good can come of it somehow. One example might be you went on a job interview for a job you really wanted, but felt the interview did not go well. Healthy positivity admits the interview could have gone better but that does not guarantee you will not get the job. Or, if you do not, there are other good jobs out there, so there is no need to panic.

Toxic positivity refuses to acknowledge any bad. That job interview situation would be ignored by a toxic positive person. That person would focus on the one thing that went well & pretend the ten things that went badly did not happen. They would believe the job is theirs, then if it fell through, be shocked & extremely disappointed.

When someone is suffering, a person with healthy positivity will allow the suffering person to talk about it. They will admit that sometimes things are really hard or painful, but in time, they will get better.

Someone who functions in toxic positivity behaves much differently. They say things like, "Stop being so negative!" "Think happy thoughts!" "Other people have it worse!" These people probably do not realize it but they are shaming a suffering person for their suffering! This is the absolute last thing a person needs at such a time! It is best to avoid this type of person during dark times.

People who function in toxic positivity simply cannot handle anything negative. They try to "positive" their way out of the situation by shutting down someone who isn't as positive as they are. Even when someone is grieving the death of a loved one, which is a perfectly normal time to be less than happy, they cannot handle this. So many people tell a grieving person "You should be happy! He's not in pain anymore!" or, "Rejoice! She is in Heaven now with her family!" or even, "Now, now.. he wouldn't want to see you crying! Just think about the good times!"

Can you see how unhealthy this so called “positivity” is?

God gave His creation emotions. All emotions, not only happiness. Feeling all of those emotions is part of what makes us human. There is nothing wrong or sinful with feeling disappointed, sad, angry... even Jesus felt these things! Rather than try to be too positive or allow someone to make you feel bad for not being super positive, why not allow yourself to feel your emotions without judgment? Cry if you need to. Be angry if you need to. Remember not to act foolishly out of your emotions of course, but feel them & process them however works best for you. Write in a journal, talk to a counselor or close friend, pray... whatever works for you is not really important so long as it helps you.

There is also nothing wrong with saying a situation is less than ideal. Life is not easy. People are flawed & will hurt you sometimes. It's ok to admit these things! That doesn't make you too negative or a bad person!

Thank you for listening to my podcast!