



The Potency of Positivity

Lesson Content

Can you imagine what kind of workout your athlete would have if every time he went in the weight room he thought to himself, I'm so weak...I can't move these weights...I'll never get any stronger? We all know that doesn't work. Yet parents often tell me how concerned they are about the negativity of their children. Thought patterns become daily habits. According to psychiatrist Daniel Amen, negative thoughts are more like ants ruining a picnic. In fact, he calls them ANTs ...automatic negative thoughts, and they will ruin your child's sport picnic.

There are three negativity traps where the ANTS love to creep in. The good news is that the field of positive psychology has identified strategies for creating new daily thought patterns that are more positive. So here are three traps and a helpful remedy for you to pass along to your children.

Dwelling on PAST disappointments is the first one. This is when your child just can't let go of episodes like the time he made the final out in an important game, or let the winning goal get scored. He just keeps replaying it in his head and so it becomes a harbor for negative thoughts that haunt him.

The remedy for this is to spend more time being thankful for what IS. Both prayer and meditation will put your child in a better frame of mind. Teach you children to dwell on the things they value, not the past.

The next trap that could be full of ANTS is how your child interprets the events of each PRESENT moment. Does she only hear criticism when her coach is correcting her? Does she see every obstacle as a threat? It's easy to fall into a habit of seeing the worst in every situation.

The cure for this one is to go out looking for ways to do a good deed. Committing random acts of kindness will dramatically shift our view from negative to positive. And the good feelings we get last for days!

The third trap is having a doomsday view of the FUTURE...always predicting that things will go wrong. Negative expectations about the next game or what the coach will say at practice make it impossible to have a good outcome.

The fix is to always have something to look forward to in the near future. Anticipation of watching your favorite movie, going out to eat with friends, or looking forward to a relaxing day off can replace negative forecasting.

Here's a final truth to keep in mind. In the absence of a positive goal or thought, we almost always focus on the negative....and NOTHING good comes from negativity. Encourage your kids to choose their thoughts wisely. It does make a difference.





The Potency of Positivity

Discussion Guide

1

Which of the three typical traps produces the most ANTs at your house: PAST, PRESENT, OR FUTURE events?

2

In what way could you help your children use the three remedies?
Thankfulness
Random acts of kindness
Anticipation