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A Negative Attitude Makes You More Susceptible to the Virus

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Since World War II, the developed world hasn't experienced a situation as disruptive as what we are currently experiencing. However, "Psychologically, we are not in better shape than we were eighty years ago," warned Mario Alonso Puig, a physician, specialist in general and digestive surgery, fellow in surgery at Harvard University Medical School, and current president of the Center for Health, Wellbeing, and Happiness at IE University. Over the past century, advanced societies have focused on having, not being. However, in this moment of COVID-19, Alonso says "Everyone, absolutely everyone, is going to lose in having, and gain the opportunity to focus on being."

According to Alonso, we are living in a moment in which we are called upon to be "Authentic, more capable, more generous, and more understanding... It is important to create a positive culture focused more on being than on having. If, on the contrary, we continue to cling to the culture of having, we will not be able to get through the pain, loss, and suffering that we are experiencing." We must not remain static, physically or psychologically. Alonso says, "We must deepen the way we look. There is a profoundly material dimension of the human being that only understands eating, drinking, and not being cold." But, "you can have a lot, and still be deeply unhappy." Human beings tend to feel insignificant, and, therefore, seek happiness, "in success and recognition, going through life without realizing that they are already important."

Thoughts

Now that the world has come to a halt, many are realizing this. Because, "when we stop, we can reflect more deeply. What prevents us from going deeper is inner distraction."

Deepening requires work and effort, and given the unprecedented nature of the situation we are living through, there is room for a multitude of natural reactions. Similar to fighting a disease, during this period of forced confinement, people will experience different states of mind. "Two have already had to happen, such as shock and surprise," and of denial, "it is difficult for a large part of the population to stay at home." The third stage is that of anger and resistance. "In this phase, we ask ourselves why this had to happen to us; it is a situation in which we can direct our anger either against ourselves or against others."

Unfortunately, at the next level, we find a group of people who have already passed through anger and negativity to sadness. "So, we went from fear to sadness. Sadness appears when one realizes what they have lost (loved ones, business losses, work, etc.). It is what is called 'sadness for the lost land.'"

At this point, we begin to think about the future. We continue on to the stage of acceptance, and of, "reconciliation with what we are living through; we accept this new reality and stop

fighting it. We recognize that these are complex circumstances, but we all have something inside of us that can allow us to find acceptance.”

But, Alonso warns, “Acceptance is not the same as resignation. In resignation, we assume that life is so difficult that we cannot do anything to change it; helplessness and hopelessness overwhelm us. These are devastating feelings for human beings;” Devastating not only for the soul, but also the human body. During moments of resignation, Alonso says, the sympathetic nervous system is activated, lowering the mental capacity of a person to pay attention and be creative. It is a chemical process that occurs in the brain and halts the creation of new behaviors.

On the flip side, acceptance can also have positive effects. In this specific case, when we have to live in a complex environment with limited resources, the sympathetic nervous system is deactivated and the parasympathetic nervous system activates, “which helps people to feel more calm, creative, and creates the desire to cooperate. Meanwhile, the inner conversations that generate negative thoughts activate negative feelings, which make the immune system work less effectively than it should. If, on the contrary, one decides to take control of cognitive processes and generate positive thoughts, they will have increased capacity to move forward.”

Evolution

To accomplish this shift, you first need to become aware of the importance of positive thinking. “People don’t know that depression or anxiety kills neurons in the brain, and that negative thinking has a direct negative impact that makes people more susceptible to the virus.” Additionally, it is necessary to “take responsibility and not create a bad environment at home, not be more demanding and uncompromising, and not be selfish; resources are limited. Be part of the solution now by being responsible.” Furthermore, you have to “feel motivated, realize what is at stake, and that being positive helps the immune system to function better.” Viktor Frankl said, “The time has come to choose who I want to be and how I want to be in life.”