

* * * Happy New Year... or, same old year? * * *

When you think of turning the page to 2010, what happens? Do you think of:

- a pile of holiday bills to pay?
- resolutions you will make (and break)?
- a year that (unfortunately) looks a lot like 2009?

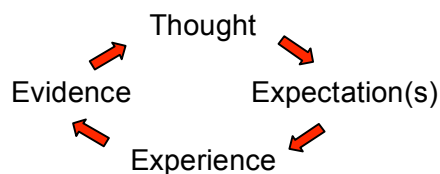
What if you *knew* that what you are thinking right now will affect how your 2009 *actually* is... would you be willing to entertain different thoughts?

Einstein said, *You can't solve a problem with the same kind of thinking that created it.* So if you're hoping for changes in your weight, a relationship, your job — anything... it's important to know what you've been thinking and what kind of thinking might serve you better.

Try this on. Imagine you are driving to work thinking, *I wonder what will go wrong today.* What happens? You may... clench teeth... have an uneasy feeling in your stomach... start muttering to yourself... hit every stop light... spill coffee on yourself... discover an ASAP message from yesterday at work... find you left your wallet at home.

The question is... which came first — the bad day... or the thought that created it? If you believe that you have a hand in creating your reality, **there is hope to change not only what you think, but what you "get" to experience (and how you experience it).** The Toltecs believe that every thought has a life. So, a thought like *I wonder what will go wrong today* acts as a filter through which you will experience the day — and its *energy* will act like a magnet... attracting things gone awry.

To make things even more exciting, if the thought is a frequent one, the pattern looks like this:



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You have a thought... that sets your expectation(s)... your expectations shape your experience... how you interpret the evidence of your experience usually reinforces the original thought. Test drive the model (above) with the thought *I hate the holidays.* Thinking this thought, you might have expected the holidays to be "bad" (whatever "bad" is to you). As you experienced the holidays, you sorted all your experiences, looking for those bad things you expected. So, if a family member was unpleasant to you at a holiday gathering, you may have said to yourself, "See? That's exactly why I hate the holidays!"

Of course, the opposite is also true. **If you had a positive thought, you were more likely to have had a positive experience.** If you thought, *I love the holidays,* you anticipated: hearing familiar, favorite songs; getting together with friends and family; indulging in holiday food. This looking forward enriched your experience of actually doing those things. And, you probably reviewed the "evidence" and said to yourself, "Ah, that's exactly why I love the holidays!"

Many of our thoughts are unconscious, but they don't have to be. **How different would 2010 be if you resolved to think differently?** If you committed yourself to:

- notice what you're thinking;
- *without judging those thoughts*, decide if that's what you want to be thinking;
- think a preferred thought.

2010 could be a very good year.

That doesn't mean that you should "fake it", ignore what you're thinking or feeling, or gloss over what seems real. Instead, become aware of what's going on with you. You don't have to figure out: where the thought came from, how to make it go away, or what will fix it... just *notice* it. Then, **find a preferred thought**.

What would that look like? Let's say you're sitting in a busy restaurant with a friend and it looks like your meal is going to be awhile. You can put your attention and energy into feeling frustrated, thinking, "This is no way to run a restaurant." or "At this rate, we're going to be here forever." or even "I don't care if they have the best pasta in town; I'm never coming here again." (You know the drill.)

Or, you can...

- focus on what's good about being there... or even about the delay. ("This will give us a some extra time together... sometimes I feel like they're rushing us because they need the table." "If you have to be stuck somewhere, this is a pretty great place to be".)
- take action to make use of the delay. ("I know we don't normally splurge like this, but let's have some champagne." "Let's use this time to share our hopes for this year... or talk about the highlights of 2009.")

And, of course, you can always leave and go somewhere else. It's all about *conscious* choice.

After all, it's your life. **What thoughts do you want to intentionally put in the foreground as you step toward 2010?** Here are a few ideas to consider. I wonder what...

- the best thing about 2010 will be.
- interesting people I'll meet.
- I'll learn about myself.
- dreams will come true.

Happy new year!

Susan Sanders, *Synergy—Partners For Growth and Change*, 304.645.2002
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