

A Psychologist's View of *The Secret*

Your spouse has been raving about *The Secret*, but you have a hard time matching their enthusiasm. The book is supposed to be about positive thinking, so why does it make you think negative?

BY DR. NEIL FIORE

Why do I find it so difficult to accept my spouse's enthusiasm for books and CDs like, The Secret?

Rhonda Byrne's book *The Secret* pulls together a number of forms of positive thinking that can have positive results for those in the habit of using negative self-talk and repeating negative patterns.

The downside of *The Secret* is the belief called *The Law of Attraction* that states all things, wanted and unwanted, are brought to you by your thoughts and emotions. This belief tends to blame the victim when negative things happen and makes people afraid of expressing the most powerful emotions of sadness and anger. In fact, it's the release and expression of these so-called "negative emotions" that research has shown to boost our immune system and help heal trauma.

You may be more open to accepting the useful aspects of positive thinking and *The Secret* if you present a more balanced view. After all, it doesn't take a mystical belief system to understand that your brain listens to your view of the world—whether it's positive or negative—and, like your car or computer, drives you in the direction you program into it. Persistence is a universal law for success and it's a proven fact that pessimists tend to stop trying sooner than optimists do. Why not experiment with positive, optimistic thoughts and images. Much of Cognitive-Behavioral Psychology teaches these same strategies with great and proven success.

For example, repeatedly telling your brain, "Life is hard for me. It's not so easy for me. My life is all obligations and hard work with no time for fun," will most likely dampen your motivation and keep you from taking those action steps that could result in success. Most likely, your mood will improve if you challenge such statements with "I choose to face challenges and will expect a surprise. I can find ways to make things easier. Life can be easier for me." Such positive statements prepare your subconscious mind to look for creative ways of problem solving and using more of your body's wisdom to do things more easily.

A client of mine, Alice, wanted to lose 30 to 40 pounds and have a fit and healthy body. But she told me that "exercising is hard" and "I'll never lose weight by exercising." If I were her husband I might have argued with her, but as her coach I agreed that she could prove to herself that exercise is hard. I told her "I want you to discover that you're right. And I can guarantee that if you'll do two things, you'll be surprised at how easy exercise can be for you." Once Alice agreed, I told her that first she was to climb a major hill in town and to feel satisfied about being right about how hard it is. Second, she was to climb the same hill looking for ways to make it easier.

Since she had already proven her point she could relax her struggle and simply climb the hill. Alice started as before pounding her feet and huffing and puffing with each step. It occurred to her that if she imagined a conveyer belt she could gently place her feet down and use an imaginary "ski hook" to move gracefully up that hill. As her body took in the image of easy movement, Alice began to notice the gardens and houses along her way and completely forgot about working hard. In fact, climbing the last half of the hill was so effortless that she doesn't know how she did it. She said, "I was in the zone, the groove. It was easy. I can believe it." Alice lost 36 pounds in six months and has learned to enjoy discovering new ways to make exercise more interesting and effortless.

Regardless, of what you call it, you can be more successful in achieving your goals if you learn to communicate more effectively with your brain:

1. Give yourself images of positive action such as "I will eat more apples and vegetables" rather than "Stop eating chocolate."
2. Tell your brain and body when and where to *start* working on your goals rather than imagine a goal in the distant future.
3. Let your brain know that you are in charge and are choosing to face the task by eliminating all "I have to's" from your self-talk. "I am choosing to start at 5pm," is so much more effective than, "I have to finish by next month."

Become more effective in communicating and leading yourself and you will know how to align yourself with the secrets to success. Do you need to be enthusiastic about the latest "it" book? Perhaps with the right mindset, you'll be more accepting.

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