

Living Through It All

By Dr. Marvin Hendon

Wouldn't it be nice if life would go according to our plans? If we could have just the house we want, the spouse we want and the right amount of children we want at the time that we want them?

There would be no headaches, heartaches, or hassles to contend with — no shattered dreams or unfulfilled requests.

Imagine a worry-free life!

However, for the majority of people, life does not flow according to neatly sketched plans. This is a reality that most people have to deal with, but are not prepared to face.

Living and being happy is easy when you are prepared to face every obstacle that crosses your path. But what do you do when you are not? What happens when your plans fall through?

For some this can prove to be a very devastating and catastrophic event.

Life is full of unexpected twists and turns. If you expect to be happy, despite them, you must know how to handle each one as they arise.

Most people respond with shock when faced with the unforeseen. Rather than deal with the reality, they find it easier to deny, avoid, and ignore it. They feel if they don't deal with it, it will go away.

When you don't face problems head on, you make finding solutions extremely difficult, simply because you refuse to talk about them.

This lack of preparation usually results in feelings of inadequacy, apprehension and insecurity. Not knowing what to do and then not knowing what to do when you don't know what to do only serves to keep you stuck in your situation. In the end, nothing gets done. You are left feeling frustrated, depressed, angry, hostile and resentful.

The first step involved in living life to the fullest is not being afraid to face it. You have to be able

to see things for what they are. Once you face it, you must realize that you have some choices to make. Determine what things you can change and what things you can not. Those that you can't change do not frustrate yourself over. You will only waste time if you continue to ruminate over something that you cannot do anything about. Realize that you have to keep moving on. Learn to view life as a series of learning experiences, and not successes and failures.

When you perceive negative events as failures, and not growth experiences, you will not be too apt to try again. With each growing experience, you learn what works and what does not. Do not identify yourself with the negative experiences. Don't be so hung up on your losses.

In learning to live through it all, you must remember that you are the keeper of your happiness and the guardian of your peace. Ultimately, you control what upsets you. Don't give others the power to ruin your day. That power belongs to you! Exercise it with caution.

Living through it all requires perseverance — especially after you've made a mistake or experienced a disappointment. You must realize that "this, too, will pass."

You must be flexible. Life is constantly changing. If you resist change you will have a difficult time accepting reality. Don't get locked into the comfortable and the familiar. If your methods are not working, throw them out and get new ones. You can't sit still and hope that everything will work itself out.

If you plan to live life to its fullest, you must be willing to implement new ideas and take risks.

Dr. Hendon is a licensed psychologist, with offices in the downtown area of Sarasota.