

Empowering Ourselves In These Tough Times, Part II

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Why are we so Afraid?

Sometimes it is hard to understand what truly is going on in our world today. In 2006 the American Institute in Washington DC held a conference “Panic Attack: The New Precautionary Culture, the Politics of Fear, and the Risks to Innovation”. Frank Furedi, a University of Kent Sociologist and author discussed trends he felt are contributing too many of us feeling we are victims of circumstances out of our control.

You may agree or disagree, but his ideas may make you think about our responses to tough times.

Events are represented in more dramatic fashion and Furedi feels people are no longer expected to rise above adversity or encouraged to get on with their lives. How have you responded to changes that you may be experiencing in your life?

All indications point to people living longer and healthier lives but we appear to be more worried about things that can make us sick or shorten our lives. Furedi feels this is decreasing our cultural capacity to handle uncertainty. Are you able to move in a positive direction even when you are not sure of the future?

Furedi also expresses his concern about people depending on sources outside of themselves to define who they are and how they respond to various situations. He expresses concern that people no longer have the capacity to cope and act for themselves. Who are your role models? Are they family members, teachers, coaches or bosses we have encountered in our lives? Or do you depend on alcohol or drugs, celebrities or the desire to “keep up with the Jones” no matter the cost to you? Are you willing to take reasonable risks not knowing what the outcome may be? Are you one who will not take a risk unless you are certain of a high level of safety? For instance do you continue to contribute to your retirement fund or are you thinking about pulling your money out of the fund in light of the present economic environment.

These questions may be tough to think about but we need to remind ourselves that we are survivors and that things can get better. As we consider our own reactions to the larger events around us, realize that there is this backdrop that may be influencing us. Though we do not have control over the economy and larger world events, we do have control over ourselves and our individual responses. In other words, don't be swept away by the tidal wave, but learn how to swim in it or even surf!

Over the next two weeks we will look at tools we have to increase our optimism or regain it.

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