

Why Can't We Just Be Positive?

Reasons for our negative vibe

By Douglas Miller

Oh boy – here we go. I think I've seen three political ads and I'm already DONE. Stop...just STOP. The sad part is – we fall for it or they wouldn't do it. We eat-up negativity. We search for it and build upon it.

Are we just negative creatures?

Is that just who we are?

Are we just complainers?



Here we are complaining about complainers. Oh by God...geez... we are – complainers.

There are several reasons for our negative vibe:

1. Righteousness

Some of us really do believe that we have all the answers (and that those around us just don't). Our way is the best way and poignantly the only way. We are blinded by the ideas of others and reject other ideas unless (and only if) they align with our own way of thinking.

It sure is a shame – people who tear others down and side-step their personal responsibilities to those around them...to leverage smart thinking and creative ideas. If the righteous being is wrong, they avoid responsibility and skillfully find an opening to blame others. In their world, the failure was a result of others infecting their perfect plan.

If their idea fails to deliver...see #2 and #3 below.

2. Deflector

For the vast majority of us – by accepting negativity and repeating it to those around us – any negative attention directed towards us individually is significantly reduced. Politicians do this all the time – put a negative spotlight on their opponent and their misgivings are forgiven. Leaders certainly use this tactic – deflect attention away from the core causes of failure (which many times is the leader themselves) and pin botched execution on others.

Courage begins with seeing beyond the noise and maneuver around the deflection to expose the epicenter or cause of the issue. This isn't about double-downing on negativity, but rather to achieve the

ultimate goal of realizing positive change.

The most successful leaders will be vulnerable at the right times, to navigate disappointments and to redirect focus to a point of positive outcomes.

3. Lazy Rock Thrower

It is so much easier to throw stones at others than to work cooperatively with each other to identify commonality and synergies. Imagine an unkempt man, in need of significant exercise, sitting in his La-Z-Boy recliner with potato chip stains on his torn t-shirt watching Judge Judy at 4PM on Channel 4 – do you think he's doing real self-reflection...or does he just throw rocks?

We may be able to rally around simple concepts (maybe). As I write this, I was going to say, we can rally around nice weather; however, we fall into the negative trap even on this topic. Even if it's 82° and sunny with no humidity – we follow that with “enjoy it while you can – this won't last”.

I remember [Debbie Downer](#) from SNL. It doesn't matter the topic – she will find the negative angle to any topic.

OK – let's just say we can get behind simplistic positive elements in life. However, once a scenario gets a wee bit tricky – we tend to throw rocks at others. We get lazy – yes, lazy. For example, talking about immigration in politics – once you dissect the issue, peel back the onion – it's complicated. There is no easy or obvious path. This isn't about what your 60,000-foot ideological belief on immigration. This is about untangling the issues, looking at it in its entirety, and then making thoughtful decisions collaboratively with others to achieve a resolution.

However, once things get complicated, we just throw rocks at others while the very issue festers and gets worse for all those involved. It takes courage and cooperation to find common ground and to ultimately find success.

4. Addict

It started with one drink and BAM, we're addicted. The feeling of avoiding personal responsibility and not having to exert effort to work on yourself is addictive. We have all come in contact with them – whatever the topic, negativity is simmering and may show itself subtly or with great fanfare. When you encounter an addict, when the microscope is on them, it's “yeah, well...but...”

It's not about singing Kumbaya around the campfire. Whether it's our family unit, within our organizations or politicians – the most diverse discussions, with the purpose of a common good, may get heated...and that's okay. This heat extracts differentiated thinking. When we strip judgments about what we perceive are someone's motivations, remove emotion and remain keenly focused on positive collaborative outcomes – incredible things can and will happen. **PE**



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