

Having a Bad Day can be Good for You

By: Jen Vortriede

Yes—you read that right—having a bad day CAN be good for you. I know you're used to me talking about the benefits of being positive and how I believe that God wants us to be happy (and by "happy," I mean "content") and not miserable. I've even recommended a few books on the subject, including the timeless classic *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale.

Overall, I believe there are many benefits to being a positive person who is content with the situation in which a person finds him/herself. Studies have proven this to be the case. I think we've gone a bit overboard, however, by believing that one must be positive and happy at ALL times. What I've noticed lately is that we can put pressure on ourselves and others to continually put on a smile in the face of our circumstances. I came to this realization recently by something that happened in my own life.

I was recently ill for a full month. I won't go into details, but it involved a trip to the emergency room, multiple doctor's visits, tests, etc. The naturally positive person that I am was really put to the test. When I was in the E.R., I was doing my best to joke with the nurses as they were putting an I.V. into my arm and with the radiology staff as they were giving me a CT scan. It really helped to make an unpleasant situation not so bad. There were other days, however, when I was lying in bed, crying, moaning and calling out to God for help. On those days, I couldn't even muster up a smile.

One thing I noticed about my illness was that I was putting pressure on myself to put up a brave front. I actually felt guilty that I wasn't being as positive as I "should" be (those "shoulds" are dangerous). The reality was that I felt terrible, but I was denying those feelings by saying to myself, "You're such a wimp—just snap out of it!" By not accepting reality, I actually felt worse. Until I could acknowledge my own feelings and accept them, I could not make progress.

I was not the only one putting pressure on myself to snap out of it, though. What I noticed is that people in my life are not comfortable with me not being the positive, upbeat person I usually am. We get a picture in our heads of what a person is like, and when he or she is not reflecting that picture, we feel uncomfortable. To alleviate our own discomfort, we often resort to giving advice because we feel powerless and really want to help the other person and for them to return to their "normal" state. So, while I was sick, I got a lot of medical advice from the "experts" in my life. What I appreciated more than anything else was their prayers.

Prayer is incredibly powerful. During my illness, every time I cried out a very heartfelt prayer to God, I felt so much better afterwards. I usually also took a turn for the better physically. If I never had a bad day, would I plead with the Lord as I did when I was sick?—probably not. Our heartfelt prayers can bring us closer to God, and such prayers typically are made only when we or others in our life are going through a rough time.

So, what “good” things came out of the bad days of my illness? First of all, I came to realize that it’s OK to have a bad day where I’m accepting that I’m not feeling well and that I don’t feel like smiling. It’s more important to be authentic than to worry about whether I’m making others feeling uncomfortable that I’m not my usual self. I also recognized that it’s important for me to not put pressure on others to always be upbeat and positive. What I can do is empathize with them, stand by them through their pain, and pray for them.

My heartfelt prayers brought me closer to God. When medications weren’t working, I had to rely completely on the Lord for help and comfort. He cares for me as His dear precious child, and I felt His love for me. My illness also provided others with the opportunity to pray for me and for my husband to take care of me.

When I felt better, it really helped me to appreciate how valuable a normal day is. I also appreciated how wonderful it was to feel well. Thank you, Lord!

So, the next time you’re having a bad day:

- ♥ Be authentic and kind to yourself. Acknowledge and accept that you’re having a bad day, and go ahead and tell others if you need to do so.
- ♥ Accept help from others and ask for their prayers. Pray to God for strength and comfort.
- ♥ Once things have turned around for you, thank God for being there for you. Appreciate having a normal day, accentuate the positive, but don’t forget that an occasional bad day is OK too. It’s ALL good!