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MARY



O'CONNOR

Saying 'yes' to life

Carolyn Curtis was recovering from a second bout of viral pneumonia when she came across the book *Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway* © by Susan Jeffers.

That was 15 years ago and the Cork woman credits it with changing her life.

She was only 30 then and her youngest child was two years old. Her doctor told her it could take her up to five years to recover from the illness.

"My biggest fear at the time was, what if I don't get better? Or what if I do get better and I get this ill again?" says Carolyn who previously ran an aromatherapy practice.

"Because I was bed bound I had plenty of time to read. Although it was a very painful time in my life, looking back now I realise that it was a time of metamorphosis.

"Studying wonderful books like Susan Jeffers' *Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway* © turned the tide of thoughts in my mind. It felt like someone had given me a torch in the darkness and all of a sudden I was able to find my way out of my doubts, fears and depression. The book helped me to 'lighten up'. I could liken this to a really heavy basket of fears that weighed me down in life where I felt unable to move forward.

"I could not see my future. I was afraid of not getting better, etc, I was unable to feel happy and good about myself. Then it was like having one of those hot air balloons filled and attached to the basket. It did not remove all the fears completely but lightened them up so much that I could move again. I felt better mentally and emotionally and my health began returning to me much quicker than the three to five years the doctor had said. I began to say 'Yes' to life."

Carolyn began to move out of her comfort zone and, fuelled by her new-found courage and hope, she created the life she wanted. Ten years on, she specialises in self help courses and will give a workshop based on Susan Jeffers' book in Galway next week.

Constant worry

She says constant worry drains our energy. "Although 90 per cent of what we worry about tends to never happen I do believe that when you focus more on your fears your experience of life is not good. Recently I guided a group I had in an evening class through a muscle testing experiment to prove to them the power of their thoughts, and they were absolutely amazed at how their bodies were so weak when thinking about thoughts of



Constant worry drains our energy, says Carolyn Curtis.

revenge to when they changed their thoughts to forgiveness, the difference in their bodies' strength was so immense. Result - when you feed your higher self you have the strength to fly. When you feed your lower self buckle your belt for the crash landing because your experience will be a bumpy ride!"

She says there are five truths about fear. Understanding these will help take the power out of it and can change how you retain it, ie, whether you hold it from a position of pain, paralysis and depression or from power, excitement and action.

"1. The fear will never go away as long as I continue to grow. Every time you try something new you experience

fear so there is no point in saying, 'When I am no longer afraid I will try this'.

"2. The only way to get rid of a fear of doing something is to go out and do it! The more times you do it the easier it gets and the less afraid you are and the more your confidence will build as you realise that you have handled it!"

"3. The only way to feel better about myself is to go out and do it. Every time you go out there and do it, the stronger you feel in yourself and this develops a new pattern of confidence.

"4. Not only am I going to experience fear whenever I'm on unfamiliar territory so is everyone else!

"5. Pushing through fear is

less frightening that living with the underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness."

Helplessness

Carolyn says this is often the hardest one for people to take on board. If you remember something that you can now do but once feared you will understand this. As you pushed through the fear and overcame whatever challenge you faced you were probably relieved as your feelings of helplessness disappeared.

She explains there are also different levels of fear. Level One fears comprise life events and stages such as illness, losing a loved one, losing money, children leaving home,



Susan Jeffers.

accidents and ageing. It also includes things that require action such as making a decision, driving, changing career, dating, public speaking, divorce, etc.

Level Two fears are created by your ego such as fear of rejection, failure, disapproval, being conned, or being vulnerable.

Level Three fears constitute the biggest fear of all - the fear that "I can't handle it!"

She says we can choose which part of ourselves we want to feed into, ie the lower self (which is filled with messages of scarcity, anger, jealousy, judgement, fear and negativity) or the higher self (which is filled with nourishing qualities such as joy, creativity, intuition, peace, power, love, compassion - all good things).

"We can all think of times when we have been able to access this wonderful place within, when everything felt good in the world and any thoughts of struggle or fear were replaced by a sense that all was well. Unfortunately this feeling does not usually last as we unconsciously slip back into our patterns of lower self thinking when the 'what ifs' start popping up in our mind."

Negative chatter

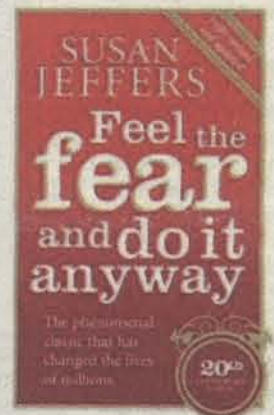
Carolyn says it is important to learn how to quieten the negative chatter (what ifs, shoulds, can't, guilt) that can often prevent us from enjoying life and feeling good about ourselves.

"Taking responsibility for your life means taking responsibility for your thoughts. Get to know your biggest enemy of peace of mind - your chatterbox. This is the voice of doom and gloom that tells you that everything is not all right with your life, it will try to scare you and take away your confidence. It's the voice that weighs you down and can

paralyse you with fear.

"A spiritual tool that can work wonders with the chatterbox is the Affirmation. This is a strong and positive statement telling you that everything is OK despite whatever the chatterbox (the lower self) is saying. I have found this tool really powerful and can bring such relief to a troubled mind.

"Whenever I am worried about something I say an affirmation to drown out my worries and begin to feel better almost instantly, eg, the one that Susan has recommended in her



book is 'It's all happening perfectly'. I have found that the constant repetition of this affirmation has helped me to let go of my need to control every situation. It is the shortened version of 'My mind cannot see the larger picture, the grand design. I will simply trust that all things happen for a reason and I will learn and grow from whatever life brings me. Therefore, even if a certain situation is not going the way I want it to go, it is all happening perfectly.' Think of something in your own life now that you are fearful about and silently or out loud say 10 times 'It's all happening perfectly.'"

If you are inclined to worry about most things practice repeating the phrase "I'll handle it!" when concerns surface.

"What if I lose my job? I'll handle it! What if I get sick? I'll handle it! What if I don't get there on time? I'll handle it! When the 'what ifs' come up just say those three little words to yourself and notice the difference."

* Carolyn Curtis will give a workshop based on Susan Jeffers' book *Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway* © at the **Marriott Hotel** on June 14 and 15. The cost is €350 which includes lunch, workshop materials and refreshments. For further details log onto www.empoweringworkshops.com or telephone (087) 6419912.

courses pages.