

"Positive Expectancy"

by Nightingale-Conant staff

The following experiment was performed in a San Francisco Bay area school by Dr. Robert Rosenthal of Harvard University.

At the beginning of the school year, the principal called three teachers into his office.

And to these teachers he said, "As a result of your teaching excellence over the last three or four years, we have come to the conclusion that you are the best teachers in this school.

"And as a special reward to you, we have identified three classes each with thirty of the brightest students in this school—the students with the highest I.Q.'s And we're going to assign them to you to teach for the entire year.

"Now, we don't want to be accused of discrimination so it's very important that you do not tell these children in any way that that you know that they've been selected for a screened class. And second of all, we're not going to tell their parents, because we don't want to cause any difficulties there. I expect you to teach exactly the same way you normally do and use exactly the same curriculum, and I expect you to get very good results with these students."

The results: At the end of the school year, these students led not only the school, but the entire school district in academic accomplishment.

Calling the three teachers into his office, the principal said:

"Well, you've had a very good year."

"Yes we have... it was so easy," replied the teachers, "These children were so easy to teach. They were so eager to learn, it was such a pleasure to teach them."

"Well, maybe I'd better tell you the truth" said the school principal.

"This has been an experiment, and those ninety children were chosen out of the school population at random. When I assigned them to your class at the beginning of the year, I had no idea what their I.Q.'s were at all."

"That's incredible!" exclaimed the teachers. "But how could it be that they scored so highly? They did so well. They got such good grades. Ah hah! Yes! It must be because we are such excellent teachers."

At which the principal said, "and to think I should also tell you the other side of the experiment. At the beginning of the school year, we put all the teachers' names in a hat, and yours were the first three names that were drawn."

These average students did so well because of the Law of Positive Expectancy. This law states that you achieve what you expect to achieve and what others expect you to achieve.

Since the principal expected a lot, so did the teachers. And, sensing that the teachers expected a lot, the students did too. Dr. Rosenthal repeated this experiment 300 times — each time getting

identical results.

"To achieve more, you have to expect more. And, to get more from the people who work for you, expect more from them." It really is that simple. But the opposite is also true.

That's why so many bright and capable people never perform up to their abilities. For too long, they've been dumped on by people around them — destroying their self-confidence:

"If you expect to fail, you will fail — saying, 'See, I never win... the cards are stacked against me.' Even if by chance you happen to succeed, you'll say, 'It was a fluke... it'll never happen again.' People are failures because deep down they see themselves as failures. We all achieve what we expect to achieve."

I know what you're thinking. Yes, it is hard to accept that simply imagining a "positive outcome" can overcome all obstacles — but it's true.

You see, most of your obstacles are only in your mind. Giving up before you start, or quitting short of reaching your goal never ever gets you the life you really want. It's a fact that, 'positive people' always get the life they want. Instead of seeing obstacles, they've learned to turn them into exciting challenges and opportunities.

Speaking of obstacles, one of the most remarkable stories I've heard is the one about how Colonel Sanders introduced the world to Kentucky Fried Chicken:

While hundreds of people have delicious recipes for chicken, Colonel Sanders was convinced he could make money from his recipe. At the age of 65, he decided to do something with it. He walked into a restaurant and told the owner that he would gladly give him his secret recipe for nothing if he would share the profits. A quick no was all he got.

Now, if Colonel Sanders 'expected' failure, he would've quit right then and there, saying to himself, "Well...it was worth a try."

While that's what many do, not Colonel Sanders. Focusing on a positive outcome, he marched right into the next restaurant...and, just as quickly, got his second rejection.

Before I tell you how many rejections he heard let me ask you this. How many could you handle — 5 ...10... 50...100? Do you have what it takes to become optimistic after 500 people have looked you straight in the eye and said, "NO"? Could you keep on going after hearing 1000 NO's?

Colonel Sanders could! In fact he continued, undaunted, until person number 1,009 finally said, "YES". That's correct; 1,008 people said NO.

Amazing, isn't it?

What about you? I know you've got dreams and goals and hopes and plans and desires. But will you achieve them?

Unfortunately, the odds are against you.

Not because you're incapable. I'm sure you're quite capable. It's because you may still believe that you can't achieve your goals without a lot of hardship.

For too long, you may have been struggling with a hit or miss approach to your life — reacting to what life hands you, instead of taking charge of your circumstances. How long will you settle for

having less than what you should have — being satisfied with living a life that's just "O.K."—when it should be "GREAT"?

You know you have what it takes. Just as a high performance car can spin its wheels and go nowhere, many bright people waste their lives in the same way. I get so angry when I think of how many bright people I see who are down on themselves.

Down on their lives. Down on the people in their lives. Down on their future. Down on simply everything. Sure, there's lots that isn't as we like, but unless you know what to do about those things that affect you, you'll always be a victim of them — them controlling you, instead of you in charge.

Like many talented people, maybe you've become comfortable in your routine and are reluctant to change.

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Dr. Robert Rosenthal (formerly of Harvard University) has research interests including self-fulfilling prophecies, and the Pygmalion Effect: the effect of teachers' expectations on students.

Related book: *Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectation and Pupils' Intellectual Development* - by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson

Related article: *The Pygmalion Effect*. See below...

"The Pygmalion Effect"

by Eric Garner

A team does as well as you and the team think they can.

This idea is known as “the self-fulfilling prophecy”. When you believe the team will perform well, in some strange, magical way they do. And similarly, when you believe they won’t perform well, they don’t.

There is enough experimental data to suggest that the self-fulfilling prophecy is true. One unusual experiment in 1911 concerned a very clever horse called Hans. This horse had the reputation for being able to add, multiply, subtract, and divide by tapping out the answer with its hooves.

The extraordinary thing was that it could do this without its trainer being present. It only needed someone to put the questions.

On investigation, it was found that when the questioner knew the answer, he or she transmitted various very subtle body language clues to Hans such as the raising of an eyebrow or the dilation of the nostrils.

Hans simply picked up on these clues and continued tapping until he arrived at the required answer. The questioner expected a response and Hans obliged.

In similar vein, an experiment was carried out at a British school into the performance of a new intake of pupils. At the start of the year, the pupils were each given a rating, ranging from “excellent prospect” to “unlikely to do well”.

These were totally arbitrary ratings and did not reflect how well the pupils had previously performed. Nevertheless, these ratings were given to the teachers. At the end of the year, the experimenters compared the pupils' performance with the ratings.

Despite their real abilities, there was an astonishingly high correlation between performance and ratings. It seems that people perform as well as we expect them to.

The self-fulfilling prophecy is also known as the Pygmalion Effect. This comes from a story by Ovid about Pygmalion, a sculptor and prince of Cyprus, who created an ivory statue of his ideal woman.

The result which he called Galatea was so beautiful that he immediately fell in love with it. He begged the goddess Aphrodite to breathe life into the statue and make her his own. Aphrodite granted Pygmalion his wish, the statue came to life and the couple married and lived happily ever after.

The story was also the basis of George Bernard Shaw's play "Pygmalion", later turned into the musical "My Fair Lady". In Shaw's play, Professor Henry Higgins claims he can take a Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, and turn her into a duchess.

But, as Eliza herself points out to Higgins' friend Pickering, it isn't what she learns or does that determines whether she will become a duchess, but how she's treated.

"You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves but how she's treated.

"I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will, but I know I can be a lady to you because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."

The implication of the Pygmalion effect for leaders and managers is massive. It means that the performance of your team depends less on them than it does on you.

The performance you get from people is no more or less than what you expect: which means you must always expect the best. As Goethe said, "Treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is. Treat a man as he can and should be and he will become as he can and should be."

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