

COLLABORATIVE LIFE COACHING
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"Agreeable," or Angry?

"How much pleasure you derive from life is in direct proportion to the degree that you do not express anger." Paul Pearsall, PhD, in *The Pleasure Principal*, 1996.

Dr. Pearsall, a respected psycho-neuro-cardio-immunologist, should know what he is talking about. He has spent years researching the connections between mental states and medical illness, and lectures at top medical schools. He says it is a myth that expressing anger is good for us. In fact, it actually contributes, to, rather than prevents, heart disease, cancer, depression, and high blood pressure. He states "Habitual hostility may be the single greatest thief of happiness". In addition, chronic impatience steals health. According to Dr. Pearsall, cardiologists talk about the torn seat edges and arm rests in their waiting rooms from patients who live "on the edge" of their lives.

Do you find his comments about anger and impatience ring true in your life? They do in mine. When I focus on getting things done in a hurry, life is a struggle. A funny story someone wants to tell me takes too long, or waiting in a line bugs me. If I consciously choose to be patient and agreeable instead, there is no stress. My body stays calm, I can focus my energy, and things get finished.

How can you start down this rather novel path of calm and pleasure toward better health? Here are four steps that will help you retrain your habits:

1. Recognize the benefit of life "flow." Pleasure comes from acting with selfless, effortless involvement in the present moment. When you "go with the flow", the myriad of small distractions and disappointments stay small. You can find humor in some, and ignore the rest. You can choose to remain buoyant, never capsizing in anger at the things that go wrong.
2. Provide pleasure for others. Eco-psychology suggests that our inner happiness is connected to how well we are harmonious with others. Making others smile or laugh is key to our own well being. When was the last time you helped someone else have fun? Life presents lots of opportunities to extend this gift.
3. Practice "agreeableness". We can soften our approach and remain pleasant when we are disappointed

or have a grievance. Deciding to offer gentle mercy to those who offend us is an approach that will bring health. This begins with taking a deep breath, letting go of anger, forgiving, and choosing to be pleasant. This take self-discipline at first, but begins to feel natural the more you practice.

4. Slow down and be gentle. When we are impatient and in a hurry to get to another part of life, we cannot enjoy this moment. We become rude and intolerant of others, as well as critical of ourselves. Kindness is best expressed through tenderness. How can you show tenderness today?

For those who agree this wellness approach is worth a try, I challenge you to make a conscious choice to be agreeable and patient for the next days and weeks. I would love to get an e-mail from you in a week or so about whether it has made a difference in a calmer body and more pleasure. I would love to celebrate this victory with you.

To your wellness!

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