

Advice for Your State of Mind¹

Arnie Dahlke
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Whether you are a CEO, a manager, or a front line employee, beware of falling into the Doom Trap. All around you, you see Doom—banks failing, large organizations struggling to stay alive, millions of people out of work, the stock market stumbling—and all of this happening on a world-wide basis. Everything seems to be falling apart.

It is so easy in this climate to slip into anxious pessimism, to be snared by the *Doom Trap*. Fearful about the future, you become skeptical of everyone and everything. You assume the worst. Being skeptical can have very negative consequences for how you deal with your business, people around you, and even yourself. Too much anxiety narrows your perceptions and pessimism negatively filters your view of the world.

On a personal level, anxiety will affect the way you think and the way you approach situations.

- ◆ You will probably not sleep as well as usual. You will more likely find yourself becoming touchier, more irritable with any situation and others around you. You will become more preoccupied with thoughts about the worst outcome possible. You will not be as open to new horizons, to new ways of doing things and reluctant to try something new or challenging because you believe you will fail. You will be less likely to take risks.

Anxious pessimism will also affect how you work with others, particularly with colleagues who are eager to find solutions to the problems created by this economy.

- ◆ You will find it hard to be a constructive problem solver. You will be more likely to take an opposing view to the suggestions of others. You will be more likely to adapt a “yes, but” stance—constantly seeing why things won’t work instead of finding ways to make them work. You will be more likely to see new, creative and inventive ideas as impossible. You will be less open to the alternative solutions to problems offered by others. You will be more likely to turn conversations into griping, complaining, or bitching sessions.

And, in the worst-case scenario, you could slip into a major depression with all of its paralyzing effects on everything you do!

“So, you ask me, “What do I do about this? How can I get out of the *Doom Trap*?”

- ◆ To begin with, pay attention to your physical well-being. Learn how to reduce your tension. If you can afford it, turn to tried and true relaxation methods, ranging from audio CDs to meditation, group martial arts, Tai Chi, Yoga, and fitness classes. If money is tight, commit yourself to simple exercise routines like walking or running on a regular basis, using the stairs instead of

¹ From: <http://arniedahlke.com/timelytips.htm> —Please take a moment to look at Arnie’s site: www.arniedahlke.com

elevators, or other kinds of physical activities you enjoy, such as soccer or basketball with friends on a regular basis. Exercise does wonders to lower tension. Feeling less tension will open your mind to new possibilities.

- ◆ Look for humor in things that happen. The positive effect on your brain of just a few moments of laughter is equivalent to a longer period of exercise in reducing tension. Jau Leno's recent, very funny, "one man comedy stimulus plan" shows in Detroit—free to people attending—got rave reviews from jobless workers.
- ◆ Do whatever you can to make your office and living environments more pleasant and more comfortable. You could add some colorful, life-filled plants, rearrange your furniture, or even buy something new and appealing.
- ◆ Next, truly accept that whatever you think, feel, or do is anchored in the choices you make. Choose to be an optimist, to search for what lies in the glass half full! Stop focusing on the empty half of the glass—to what is happening to your world and its impact on you—and start thinking about what you can do to change it, even in very small ways.

For example, the simple act of consciously smiling more will affect the way you feel and the ways others interact with you, which, in turn, will affect the way you feel. According to the research on the "facial feedback hypothesis," putting a positive expression on your face can actually make you feel happier and more optimistic about the future. In one study people were told to watch cartoons while holding a pencil in their mouths, either between their lips or between their teeth. The people who held their pencils in their lips were prevented from smiling. The people with the pencils in their teeth, who were able to smile, ended up rating cartoons funnier than those who could not. As David G. Myers of Hope College says, "Smile warmly on the outside, and you feel better on the inside. Scowl, and the whole world seem to scowl back."

- ◆ Consciously change your actions. Cognitive psychologists tell us we that we can *act* our way into new ways of thinking. When someone offers a suggestion for solving a problem, don't automatically find reasons for why it won't work. Instead, actively search for ways you could make it work, even if your strategies sound unreal at first. In many brainstorming sessions I've conducted over the years, some of the silliest ideas led to some of the most innovative solutions.

How you deal with anxious pessimism will determine whether or not you fall into the *Doom Trap*. Remember, *if you do nothing, you will accomplish nothing!* Not only your business, but also your personal life will suffer because of it.

It's up to you.

Perhaps it will be helpful to you to keep the following image in mind—become the yellow smiley in a world of pessimists!



From: blogs.psychologytoday.com/files/u45/optimism.jpg