

how to...

Maintaining the “Enthuse” in Enthusiasm

by Paul Vitale

During some period in your life, it is likely you have heard one of the most enduring quotations of all time, which was coined by the great American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.”

Enthusiasm! What actually is it? Why do some people seem to possess such eagerness toward their families, professions, hobbies and travels, while others simply do not?

It was only a few short months ago when I was flying home from NTA’s Spring Meet in Kelowna, British Columbia, when a question asked by an older gentleman seated next to me initiated quite a lengthy conversation.

“Alright then,” he remarked, “If you make your living encouraging others to be enthusiastic about their lives, then how do you stay enthused about your own?”

“Good question,” I said, and I launched into the most sensible explanation I could communicate during that particular moment. As we began to exchange queries and probe each other’s views, we eventually found ourselves dissecting the true meaning behind the *enthuse* in enthusiasm. While considering the questions this gentleman posed miles above the Okanagan Valley, rimmed by mountain ranges spanning two countries, I reflected on the great variety of answers to a commonly asked question.

How do you maintain enthusiasm in this whirlwind of life today? Or better yet, how do you keep your level of energy spiraling upward, not downward? In my profession as an inspirational speaker, one of the most important choices I face is whether to be enthusiastic about what I do. It is tough at times. Believe me, there are days I do not wake up on the right side of the bed. But over the years, I have learned that being enthused about yourself, your place in life and those around you, is truly a conscious decision.

Enthusiasm has often been defined as simply having a passionate interest in something. The excitement generated by your enthusiasm sets an important tone and pace that greatly influences your daily life. The abundance of energy that fuels your passion can be invigorating while you journey here, there and everywhere, but it also provides the incredible opportunity to create positive change along the way.

Now that sounds good, but let us be realistic. Where do you find such passion, and, when you locate it, how do you consistently unleash it? There are six valuable questions you can ask yourself when attempting to discover where your passions lie, how to become more enthusiastic about them and how to help not only yourself but others sustain a constant level of enthusiasm day in and day out.

As featured in:



First, where does your self confidence measure today? Your background and circumstances may have influenced who you are, but you are responsible for who you become. Having self confidence is not about arrogance, but a belief in your true ability to succeed. Accomplishing or succeeding in anything takes a state of mind that is determined, resilient and willing to learn from the trials and tribulations of everyday experiences.

As you know, life’s battles do not discriminate. If you think you’ve been beaten, you definitely have; if you strive to achieve, but think you can’t, it is almost certain you won’t; if your self confidence is lost, so is your will. Remember, preparation creates confidence and through continuous practice, confidence evolves into competence. At that point, you will find yourself accomplishing tasks much more gracefully and with greater assurance.

Second, are your reactions calm, steady and composed? By demonstrating grace under pressure, you inspire others to stay calm and act intelligently. When extreme issues arise, it is natural to want to hide in a hole instead of taking a stand or position. Through a calm, steady and composed reaction, you have the opportunity to respond to what needs to be done, and when, for however long it takes. Things will continuously happen and people will always act

and react in certain ways. You might not be able to control that, but you can keep this in mind – maintaining your composure is in the details. It's not what you say; it's how you say it.

Remember, one of composure's greatest enemies is anxiety. Try not to worry. You cannot change the past, but you sure can ruin the present by worrying over the future. The large majority of the things you worry about never happen and the rest are going to happen anyway. Calmness is an extension of your self confidence and faith that, in the end, everything will work out.

Third, is your communication flow moving freely? Two people can look at the same thing but perceive it in totally different ways, just as two people can hear the same thing but interpret it differently. The quality of the exchange of information between individuals sets the table for either comprehension or misinterpretation. When you have a true understanding and connection to those around you, the lines of communication open and the potential for the many misunderstandings that can jeopardize your level of enthusiasm are eliminated.

Remember, explain to people what you expect. Be the first to listen for feedback that may signal the need for a change. When things go wrong, take two things – charge and responsibility. When things go right, share two things – glory and praise. Individuals truly appreciate knowing where they stand with you, not just every once in a while, but all the time.

Fourth, are you emphasizing the good qualities of others? Emphasizing the good qualities of people is extremely contagious. It has a domino effect. When you hear others building people up, it is easy to join in. On the other hand, you know how easy it is to stray off in the opposite direction. People want to feel valued and respected for their place in life.

A kind and sincere word of appreciation doesn't cost anything, but pays big dividends in loyalty and dedication. Finding the good qualities in others is a selfless act of placing others first. In return, you receive much more than you give. You are able to feel good about yourself and that helps sustain the passion that fuels your enthusiasm.

Remember, research has shown that individuals who receive regular recognition and praise are more likely to commit to their team, become more productive and even tack on additional years to their lives. Studies indicate that increasing positive emotions can lengthen a lifespan by 10 years; whereas being in negative surroundings consistently can increase the risk of stroke by up to 33 percent.

Fifth, do you recognize the strength of influence? Every relationship in your life will affect you one way or another. Those who do not increase you will decrease you. Take note of those who readily share your vision and complement your efforts, because they are the ones who will make you better. Realize you're where you are today because of the many who have influenced you along the way.

Remember, just like those who influence you, the strength of your influence has the power to affect the minds and actions of others, as well. From the way you respond to various circumstances, to the level of enthusiasm you project each day, your attitude and state of mind is extremely influential.

Sixth, are you continuing to look inward, then outward? Most people do not want to be managed. They want to be led. Who has ever heard of a world manager? World leader, yes. Education leader, political leader, religious leader, scout leader, community leader, business leader. They lead; they do not necessarily just manage. Individuals who are able to look inward and get excited about their

own lives are then in turn provided the incredible opportunity to look outward and enthruse others. If you concentrate on managing yourself first and do that well, then you will be able to stop just managing and start leading.

Remember, no great leader ever succeeded alone. There is always a team of followers. It's much easier to find great followers if the leader is able to generate excitement for the cause.

Life is chaotic at times and there is no doubt it is easy to become



discouraged. Like I mentioned earlier, being enthused about yourself, your place in life and those around you is truly a conscious choice. Take the time to recognize what you're passionate about and allow it to motivate you to strive in directions you truly believe in. When you do this, you take ownership in the paths you have chosen and the energy toward your place in life increases. All of a sudden, it's not just you accomplishing your own goals; you're encouraging others to achieve theirs as well. In the end, as your life's journey takes you here, there and everywhere, you might find yourself concurring with Emerson's simple quotation, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." ★

© 2007 Vital Communications, Inc.
Professional speaker and author Paul Vitale delivers keynote presentations and seminars around the globe. For more information call 501-868-8195 or visit paulvitale.com!