

The Simple Power Of Focus

It is an important premise of cognitive psychology that the we get more of whatever we focus on. In fact where we place our awareness has an effect on our lives in a big way. If we choose to focus on pessimistic thinking or negative aspects of our lives then we will only increase these feelings and compound them. Vice versa, we can make a choice to focus on what is good about ourselves and our lives and that way positive aspects of ourselves will become enhanced and then stronger and stronger as a result. Indeed in the last few years much has been written about the so called 'laws of attraction' with the bestselling book 'The Secret' being extremely popular. However, the book only reinforces the principles of increased awareness that happens when we change our focus. For example, when I bought my first car many years ago, a little yellow Renault Five model, I had never seen this particular model or colour before, but of course within half an hour of driving around in it, what do you think I saw, yes, dozens of yellow Renault Fives. They had always been there of course but it wasn't until my awareness and focus changed that it was more obvious. In the same way if you change your focus to things that you want to attract more of you will notice those things more and more. There is even a small organ in your brain that is responsible for this. It is known as the reticular activating system which in turn is part of your hypothalamus and is responsible for changes in focus and new awarenesses. As a practicing counselor and therapist I often use this approach with clients when I ask them "where are things going well in your life" even if just in a small way somewhere. Most people can find small areas that are fine. Then you can build on this by changing their awareness to how they know that this is a good area. Ask them what is different about this area and then expand on that one thing more and more. This may sound and seem simplistic but it forms the basis of a particular technique known as solution focused counseling or coaching and gets its effectiveness from concentrating on only what is going well and identifying why. People's awareness can move quite quickly to finding solutions instead of focusing on problem areas of their lives. In fact some research from the last fifteen years has shown that solution focused coaching was responsible for seventy-five percent improvements with a large group of clients who suffered from mild to moderate depression. That is an amazing finding as traditional cognitive-behavior therapy usually used in this type of treatment has only been about forty percent effective. It does seem then that where we place our focus and awareness is vitally important to emotional health and well-being and can strongly affect life outcomes and goals. If we can take one thing from all of this it is this. Be aware of what you do want more of. Do not place your awareness on what you don't want as you may get more of it. Think the opposite and place more awareness on that as a goal. This will aid you in moving towards outcomes instead of dwelling on the problem areas in your life.

About the Author

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