

My Invisible Emotional Raincoat

How many times have you had to deal with the negativity of others this week? Today?

We know that anger and stress are all around us from the frustrated car driver waiting for the pedestrian to cross the road to the mom dealing with toddler tantrums. Coping with all this stresses us out and becomes contagious as it manifests itself in our own hostility towards the people in our lives' and so the cycle continues.



There is this idea that we have to absorb the all moodiness and aggression of those around us. And it's just not true. We don't have to take into our bodies this negativity; there are things we can do, just as with anything that is bad for us.

I gave up salt twenty years ago, a fact which is treated with incredulity by some.

"I bet you put it on baked potatoes" a friend remarked to me recently.

Nope.

"Fried chicken?"

No.

"French fries?"

Absolutely not.

Most Americans consume a good teaspoon and a half of sodium a day, more than double what our bodies need. It leads to rises in blood pressure and with that, risks of heart attacks and strokes which kill over 800,000 Americans a year.

Like anger, salt is everywhere.

(We add salt to our meals via our trusty dinner table saltshaker, there is vast amounts of salt in packaged food (six pretzel sticks will give you half your daily ration) and in restaurants, cooks are used to grabbing fistfuls of the stuff to give a dish extra zing. Everyday, most of us unconsciously absorb salt, damaging our bodies and setting ourselves up for ill-health. So I gave up salt.)

By getting conscious about the ill-effects of salt, getting conscious about the presence of salt in my daily life, then utilizing some strategies to avoid it, I was able to cut down on the excess that causes the damage. The same is true for the negative affects of the people around us. Every day in the morning, I put on my "invisible emotional raincoat." I look in the mirror, imagine myself putting it on, check it for fit and mentally put it there. As I do this, I am consciously protecting my emotions. I am putting an imaginary barrier between my own and those of other people.

As I go through my day and someone is rude or obnoxious, I remember I have on my coat. It acts as a shield around my body with which I can deflect the frustration, anger, grumpiness of those I come into contact with. I still listen and reciprocate but avoid taking on the chaotic effects of their moods, remaining still and balanced within myself and ready to go on with my day. The anger becomes just another event neither loaded good or bad.

What can you do to protect yourself from negativity as you go through today? Why don't you try this technique and see how it works for you. And while you do that, I'll work on giving up chocolate.

Posted by: Jensen, Anabel. "My Invisible Emotional Raincoat." SixSeconds, 19 September 2011.
<<http://www.6seconds.org/2011/09/19/my-invisible-emotional-raincoat/>>.
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