

Smiling Thursday

Mother Teresa once said: "We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do." Today is "Smiling Thursday" (December 11, 2014) which is sponsored by Sounds of Encouragement Association (SOE), an organization helping people smile again. This article is the second in the series during the month of December dubbed by SOE as "Social Transformation Month." Last Thursday was "Kindness Thursday." During the month of December we are inviting every resident of The Bahamas, Black and White, foreigner and Bahamian to engage in social transformation by doing simple acts that SOE believes can change our country for the better. Next week, December 18 will be "Friendship Thursday." December 25 will be "Giving Thursday." Then finally, January 1 will be "New Relationship Thursday."

Many people underestimate the power and the effect of a genuine smile. A smile works miracles for the one who is smiling and for the one looking at the smile. A smile can change the atmosphere, reduce tension, and even prevent chaos. Smiling people tend to live long. People whose faces are always cold and rigid are doing so because their hearts are defragmented with stress, hatred, resentment, and animosity. If we can get more people to smile today and always, our country would be different. The violence and hatred would diminish. So let's start smiling the crime away.

I want to give a word of caution here. I do not want us to judge everyone as mean and angry because their faces are always serious, almost like a frown. For some people, their faces do not always demonstrate their true hearts. So be careful not to throw every stern face in to the trash bag. However, research tells us that all of us need to smile more. You really want to avoid having a permanent grouchy expression on your face. Even those people whose faces seem to constantly be grouchy for no negative reason have to learn that the message their faces is giving is not positive and may negatively affect their hearts. People with grouchy faces tend not to have or keep friends. Many of them try to do or think of something to bring a smile to their faces. Some "permanent frowning" faces may be the result of a physical facial design that leaves a fixed frown on one's face. When these people with fixed-frowning faces realize their dilemma, they make an effort to smile. It is hard work but it always pays off. You see, smiling does make a difference. Although we do not want to judge all frowning to be the results of a negative heart, we must understand that frowning itself is negative. So I want to encourage those "straight face" people to start letting their happy hearts show on their faces. Why? An unknown author put it this way: "Smiling can make you happier and conversely frowning can make you sadder. We often think of how it works the opposite way - I'm happy therefore I'm smiling; but research has shown that your facial expressions can influence your feelings"

REASONS TO SMILE

Here are a few reasons Jennipher Walters, a Health and Fitness Writer, gives smiling is so important to everyone. I thought to share them with you with very little adjustments.

1. **“Smiling can make you happy** (even when you're not). Remember that mind-body connection we were just talking about? Well, it turns out that the simple act of smiling sends a message to your brain that you're happy. And when you're happy, your body pumps out all kinds of feel-good endorphins.”
2. This one is really important. **“Smiling can make others happy**. When you're smiling, the whole world smiles with you." Ever heard that song made famous by Louis Armstrong? Well, it's true. Research shows that smiling is contagious. Ever been around someone who just had something fantastic happen to him or her? Isn't it almost impossible not to feel good, too? Studies show that something as simple as seeing a friend smile can activate the muscles in your face to make that same expression, without you even being aware that you are doing it. Crazy, right?" I hope you believe it. Smiling can make a difference. Walters continues: “But remember that this, too, can be for better or for worse. You know the expression "misery loves company"? Frowns act just like smiles, just with a negative reaction, so choose to smile and watch the world smile back!”
3. **“Smiling makes you more attractive**. Ever wonder why are we always asked to smile in photos? Because people usually look their best – and happiest – when smiling. According to the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, 96 percent of American adults believe an attractive smile makes a person more appealing to members of the opposite sex. So the next time you are about to ask someone on a date, smile. It'll make her feel happier, and you'll already be more attractive in her eyes!
4. The writer shares about the impact of smiling on stress. She says **“Smiling can help you de-stress**. . . .The next time you're stressed about work or realize that your favorite jeans feel a little snug, don't freak out. Take a few deep breaths and smile! Smiling may help to reduce symptoms associated with anxiety. When that smile signals to your brain that you're feeling happy (even though you're not really feeling happy...yet), your body will usually slow its breathing and heart rate.” Here are health benefits of smiling. The writer points out that “Reducing stress is so important for health, too, as it can lower blood pressure, improve digestion and regulate blood sugar. Note that this works during workouts, too! If you're having a hard time getting through that last rep or getting those final 5 minutes in on the treadmill, smiling can do wonders!”
5. **Smiling can help you land a job**. Some people never think that smiling can do this one. “If you're about to go on a job interview, you may think that your appearance is just about wearing nice clothes. Wrong! You can't just wear that suit; you have to wear it with a smile. In a study published in the December 2009 issue of Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, people looked at full-body photographs of 123 people they had never met. The people in the photos had one of two expressions: neutral (think your passport photo) or a smile. And guess what? When observers saw the photos of smiling people, they were more likely to think that the person in the photo was likeable, confident, conscientious and stable. Sound like traits most companies want in an employee, right? So the next time you're dressing to impress, make sure to take that beautiful, natural smile with you!”
6. **Smiling just feels good**. “Have you ever found that smiling just feels good? Go ahead, smile now. Doesn't it feel natural? Make you feel happy to be alive? It sure does beat the heck out of a frown.”

Dr. David Song of the University of Chicago Medical Center in A research writes that “In studies, it has been demonstrated that people who produced facial expressions of anger, sadness, fear or disgust produced the same physical reactions that the actual emotions would have provoked (e.g., elevated skin temperature, sweating and increased heart rate.). Similarly, in studies of people who were told to smile reported feeling happier than the control group who didn’t. What is surprising is that even though the test subjects knew they were acting, their bodies didn’t, and so responded accordingly.”

Let us change our country today by smiling. Believe it our not, it can work.

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