

Mindset Shift

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

After absolutely loving my career in a challenging urban school setting, I was hired at my alma mater. This was my dream job. Unfortunately, after three years, I found myself searching the IDOE for a new job. I wanted out. Regardless of my efforts, the negativity was contagious. When talking to former administrators, they experienced the same thing and consequently, they left. I realized that the negativity was impacting my professional well-being and also my personal well-being. The purpose of my action research was to change my mindset to positively affect my personal well-being and hopefully diminish the impact of staff negativity on my professional well-being.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if I could find a way to change my thinking, positively affect my personal well-being, and ultimately, be happy in my position....regardless of the negativity surrounding me.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wonderings, I began by adopting two new rituals.

First, I began reading nightly inspirational verses. I wanted to go to bed with a positive thought in my mind.

Second, I wrote down two positives at the end of each work day. They were simply positive interactions with staff or a positive comment from a student or parent.

I also began utilizing the Happify app. Happify shares research based activities to overcome negative thinking. I would complete periodic assessments that demonstrated my progress over the action research period.

Finally, I read two books. One was Bright Side Up by Amy Spencer and the other was Illuminate: Harnessing the Positive Power of Negative Thinking by David M. Corbin.

The majority of my data collection provided anecdotal evidence including journal reflections of the positive daily interactions and the impact of the inspirational verses.

Happify provided monthly assessment results that revealed improvements in positive emotions and life satisfaction.

I collected both forms of data for five months.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, two important things I learned include:

- 1) Personally, I did feel better; however, the negativity was still affecting me professionally.
- 2) The assessment results revealed improvements in my positive emotions and life satisfaction.

3) The three step process from David Corbin's book Illuminate.

Face It: I must be willing to really see what is there. It was easier to stay in denial because you don't agree with the feedback.

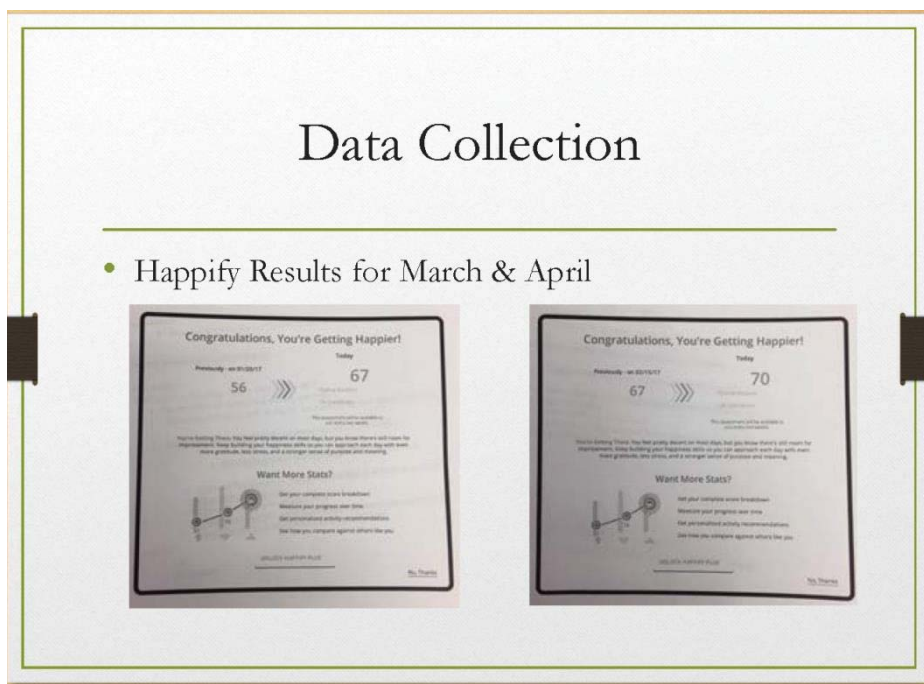
Follow It: I must clearly define the mitigating factors causing negativity. Time is a factor because we often want a quick fix.

Fix It: I must do what it takes to eliminate or mitigate the causes and factors. Be wary of a short-term fix.

Personally, I found the two rituals involving the inspirational thoughts and the journaling to be positive additions to my day. I especially liked ending my day in a positive way. Also, rereading the journal each morning was very rewarding. Examples included, "Today Mrs. Moore reminded me that NHS is a better place since I became principal." Also, "My daughter stopped to tell me that she is happy I'm here." Simple reminders like the two above help keep me focused and remind me that there is a lot of good at our school and that I am a part of that.

The attached assessment results show an increase in my positive emotions and life satisfaction.

The book Illuminate provided the most meaningful information. I completed a staff survey and plan to work with key staff members to address the negativity with the Face It, Follow It, Fix It process.



Providing Concluding Thoughts:

I have learned to continue to support my personal well-being with journaling and to address our negativity head on. Through the survey, I learned that my teachers do not trust one another. They actually have a high level of trust for the administration, but lack the trust and support of each other. I believe that is why several other administrators (and me to this point) have been unable to impact the climate of negativity. Like others, I was addressing my relationship with the teachers. I need to help create a support system among teachers. I

need to cultivate their trust of one another. In the future, we will utilize the three step process by David Corbin to identify areas of concern. We will work together to face it, follow it, and fix it.

References:

Corbin, D. M. (2016). *Illuminate: Harnessing the Positive Power of Negative Thinking*.

John Wiley & Sons. Spencer, A. (2012). *Bright side up: 100 ways to be happier right now*. New York: Penguin Group.