

Your Personal Coach

Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

Dear Kathleen,

My brother Joe has been successful for most of his life, and he used to believe that he could accomplish almost anything, but the failure of his business and a subsequent bankruptcy has left him shattered. He doesn't seem to believe in himself anymore, and has stopped trying to get his life back together, although he says he wants to get his business up and running. I love him a lot and want to help. Is there anything I can do to get him to rediscover his optimism and confidence?

-- Susan

Dear Susan,

Henry Ford once said, "Whether you think you can or think you can't – you are right." Isn't it just amazing how our mindsets determine our success or failure? I mean, if you believe – really believe -- that you can achieve your goals, then you are well on the way to doing it. This power of mind is simply incredible.

Joe has had the pins knocked out from under him as a result of these difficult and painful experiences. I'm sure he's grieving these losses and has not yet found his way back to his previous self-confidence. That journey may take some time. But you can help by letting him know how much you care and by listening. Encourage him to talk about his feelings and his pain.

He might also want to consider talking with a therapist who specializes in loss. There are business associations where he can learn some new approaches to reestablishing and running his business. There are lots of resources at the Small Business Administration (www.sba.gov). Retired and working executives offer advice, mentoring, encouragement, and training for small business entrepreneurs through a nonprofit organization called SCORE – www.score.org. In short, there are specific action steps he can take to get back on track in his life and work.

But he must be allowed to grieve his losses as he pulls himself back up, and comes to the awareness that failure is temporary and that he can once again succeed. As he goes through his journey of loss and renewal, it will help him to be aware of what he expects from himself and just how powerful that outlook can be.

Let me give you just one example of the power of expectations. Recently, I read a psychology study in which kids in some classes in a California elementary school were told that they had been selected for a particular "gifted" class because they showed great aptitude and intelligence. Kids in the other classes were not told anything about why they were assigned to their particular class.

At the end of the school year, the kids in the "gifted" class were reading at higher levels and scored higher on every educational test. Well, you might say, "Of course! I would expect that 'gifted' children would score better on their tests." But here's the interesting part: all the kids were *randomly* assigned to those classes. The ones who were told they had been placed in a "gifted" class were, in fact, no more intelligent than

the other kids. The only difference between the groups was that one class of children had been told that they were *expected* to succeed because of their superior abilities.

What we believe about ourselves – what we expect – creates our destiny. You can help Joe remember this. You might want to remind him he was chosen for his particular life because of the “gifted” aptitude and intelligence that he’s shown. Remind him that it’s a good idea to look to the future with an intention to succeed, and then put his plans into action. He is already blessed to have such a loving, concerned sister.

Send your personal coaching questions to kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com or call 473-4004. Kathleen is a personal and executive coach, clinical psychologist, and writer. (©2003 Kathleen Brehony. All Rights Reserved.) All of the “Your Personal Coach” columns are archived at www.fullpotentialliving.com