



## Here's to 2021!

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At the beginning of a new year, which is without question going to be a very challenging year, it may be prudent to stand still for a moment and reflect on our expectations, our priorities and our attitude to life.

The past year is widely regarded as one best forgotten, yet though it was not business as usual; it was a year with challenges and with rewards, like any other.

Then how do we learn to be content with what we have and not feel disappointed with not achieving all we expected to? Do we need to lower our expectations? I do not think so, but we certainly need to keep a close watch on our thought pattern to ensure we maintain a positive, "can-do" attitude at all times.

To stay positive in trying times is easier said than done, but we can begin by learning more about ourselves for a start. If I know my personality type and my fallback behaviours, it is easier to spot when I fall into an unhealthy, negative pattern. The earlier I realise it, the easier it is to correct.

It is also important to keep a strength perspective. There are some things I may not be able to do, yet there are numerous other options available. If I keep concentrating on those activities that I cannot do, it may later seem as if nothing is permitted or possible to do. By shifting the focus to the activities still available, it opens a whole new world.

This approach is not limited to the COVID-19 lockdown period but also has a bearing on times of financial constraints, loss of physical mobility and numerous other areas of life.

It is important to get enough sleep, as sleep deprivation inevitably leads to losing focus and perspective. Do not allow problems to steal your sleep. It is said that we spend most of our time worrying about things that, in the end, never happen.

As we are not alone on this planet, it is important to add positivity to somebody else's life. We all dread those folks who always talk about the doom and gloom surrounding us. You can't get away from them fast enough. So! Let's do something positive for somebody else, it brightens their lives and it gives us a sense of accomplishment. It also may create a wave of positivity.

Yet, we do need to check our thought pattern and challenge our negative thinking. Why am I so negative today? Why do I allow negative people to encroach on my happy space, and what can I do to get the grumpy, negative people out of my life? The funny thing is that people who really have lots of reasons to be negative seldom are. I have visited friends who were at death's door and hoping my visit will comfort them; I left ever so embarrassed. I was the one that was comforted, though the reality of the situation was dire, I never heard a complaint or resentment.

For me, as for most people, it's difficult to accept criticism. We do our honest best and if we are then criticised, we feel that we fall short of the mark. Most of the time, the criticism is not aimed at one's person, but at our actions and once one realises that, it is easier to accept that there are different ways to reach the same goal and that positive criticism can actually help us to do so more effectively. Embrace positive criticism!

Another strategy to stay positive is to determine what is in your control. Do not waste energy on things you have no control over. Equally, make sure you do not decide that something is outside your control, when it is indeed possible to influence those who are in control, as that will be a dereliction of duty.

With a conscious, mindful and self-aware mindset, we can approach 2021 with a positive, "can-do" attitude and ensure that we render a great service to our patients and our country. This, in turn, will contribute to our profession getting the recognition it deserves.