

# MINUS SIGNS

## Negativity can drag you down at work

**F**eelings of negativity can creep into any aspect of our lives, but it can be very dangerous when it pervades your work life. When you start to feel negative at work, it can spread quickly and encompass all of your work experience.

Dana Lightman, an Abington, Pa.-based author of "POWER Optimism" (\$15, POWER Optimism), says to be careful of tunnel vision.

"Tunnel vision happens when you focus only on the negative situation," she says. "When this occurs, the



negative becomes 100 percent of your work experience. Instead, take a step back to look at the larger picture and put the negative situation in perspective. It will still exist, but it will no longer be 100 percent, which will diminish its impact."

### Thank you

Lightman says that another method to dealing with negativity is to adopt an attitude of appreciation.

"It is not possible to feel negative emotions, such as anger, and appreciation simultaneously," she says. "So, find things at work to appreciate, even if they are little things. If you can't find anything to appreciate at work, think about other areas of your life and focus on those."

If these steps don't lead you on an upwards spiral, Lightman says you can always use the negative to your advantage.

"Often times there are lessons to be learned from negative situations," she says. "Ask yourself, 'what can I gain from having to cope with this situation?' Focus your attention on the potential gains and use

them to feel empowered."

Mike Cook, a founding partner in Vitalwork, a Pittsford, N.Y.-based consulting firm, agrees and adds that the first conversation should always be with yourself.

"If the situation at work is negative, then it's negative," he says. "You may not be able to change that, but you can stay positive about yourself and the way you respond to the situation."

### Work through it

It's less about talking yourself into something and more about talking yourself through something by being as objective as possible, Cook says.

"Beware of positive thinking as a solution in itself," he says. "Often it may be a tactic to avoid something we fear could be even worse. If you are someone who does not deal well with confrontation, emotionally or psychologically, your positive view may really be a Pollyanna approach."

In order to gain objectivity, figure out what's really going on — what are the facts of the situation?

"This means you will need to eliminate all interpretations," says Cook. "The answers here will keep you away from emotional swirling. You may not be positive about what you discover, but you will be able to tell the difference between what's real and measurable and what's imagined."

Another way to gain objectivity is to reframe the situation.

"This is a technique where you look at the situation from a different vantage point," says Lightman. "When you take a different point-of-view you can often see things in a different light. When you adopt a different perspective, you empower yourself to create your own interpretation of the situation that feels more positive."

