

HPCG High-Performance Coaching Newsletter #26, Ralf Wolter



Dear Reader,



If you were asked to describe the photo above, would the glass be half full or half empty? What might be a slightly cliché-question, could give a hint about whether you tend to think either more optimistic or more pessimistic. In my experience, looking at the positive side of things is simply more fun. But there's more to it. It comes down to the conscious decision to look at the positive aspects without ignoring the negative side of the coin. With that kind of mindset, you can find creative ways to overcome hopelessness, fears, and worries, without getting lost in naïve, wishful thinking. What all of that has to do with "I don't get upset on Mondays" and *pies in the sky* - read below.

A father-daughter talk, recorded in May 2022

Lydia: I would describe you as someone who rarely complains about work, or life in general, instead rather as someone who sees the good in everything. Would you agree with that?

Ralf: Short answer - yes. The longer answer is - that's how it appears on the outside and it's not something I was born with. I was raised with a different mindset, where complaining was daily business, but then at some point – and over a longer period - I adopted a different approach.

L: Was there a specific trigger that caused your mindset change?

R: I remember the theme of positive thinking becoming popular when I was younger, and it resonated well with me. Maybe because I wasn't born and raised with that kind of mindset. My dad was more on the sceptical side, so this new kind of concept was a trigger for me to see the opposite side. In addition, the influence of business culture at the beginning of my career had an impact. I remember attending a business workshop, and one sentence stayed on my mind: "Ich ärgere mich Montags nicht mehr", translating to: "I am no longer getting upset on Mondays".

Looking at that sentence now, I would phrase it in the opposite way to express what I really want: “I’ll be happy – even on Mondays” But anyways, the sentence stuck with me.

L: What does optimism mean to you? Where do you see the difference to being naive and unrealistic?

R: Optimism does not mean to see everything through rose-colored glasses, it’s one side of the coin. The real question is: what are the consequences for a conversation if I mostly focus on the negative instead of the positive side. If I feel negative on the inside, it’s not a mandate to influence the world around me negatively. Sometimes in coaching conversations I share my fears, uncertainties, and doubts as a bridge for a person who is in a negative space.

The combination of the two parts can provide a balance. It’s the analogy of the glass that’s either half full or half empty - it’s all about your personal perspective.

And one more thing: the danger of going into a downturn spiral is the biggest danger of a too negative perspective, it can drag you down forever.

Regarding the difference between optimism and naive, unrealistic thinking - I draw that line based on life experience. In addition, I always take on an analytical approach – I simply can’t stop my engineering mind to influence all areas of life 😊 If my plans and thoughts contradict logical arguments, then it is probably an unrealistic dream - a pie in the sky.

L: Do you ever find yourself losing optimism and hope? How do you feel when watching the news these days?

R: The situation in the Ukraine is one of those examples where I wish for a positive outcome, but I find it very hard to see. Still, hope dies last...

When it comes to the struggles of every day’s life, sometimes I need to sleep over it, and wait a day or so. Afterwards, one of my strengths to overcome the downturn spiral is creativity. I rarely run out of ideas. So, if a situation looks hopeless, I just need to get into my creative mode, which sometimes takes a while, still it has never failed me yet.

My life experience says: there’s always an open door. If one door closes, another one opens. During difficult situations it helps to ask: “What other options do I have?”.

I would also say that fears, doubts, and worries are my anchor into reality. They help me to be grounded and not get lost in wishful thinking. They are an important part of our lives! You can use the analogy of pain - our body experiences pain as a warning signal, which ultimately is a good sign, because it shows that there this is something I should pay attention to. I could even die if I ignore the pain.

L: Has the ongoing pandemic changed something about your perspective?

R: Personally, yes. It’s another example of “one door closes, another one opens”: realizing how many things can be done virtually, to experience that video conferences are not just for IT people but for everyone. However, I’m one of the lucky ones who were able to transform their business into the virtual world, which obviously is not possible for everyone.

L: To sum it up - any closing remarks on an optimistic life?

R: Positive thinking is a conscious decision; I am fully convinced of that. And just remember: it’s more fun to see things positively!

I hope our conversation on optimism has stirred your thinking and inspires you to make conscious choices about the mindset you see the world through. I'd love to hear your thoughts!

Have a nice weekend! And if you need to work during the weekend, make sure that it is fulfilling.

Best regards,

Ralf Wolter

HPCG® Founder, Coach and Consultant

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