



It's YOUR Time -- Make the Most of it!
By Mary Judd

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

Opening line from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens

I think many of us would agree that this famous line could be used to describe our own lives! Some days are definitely better than others, right? That is to be expected.

But, often the days we expect to be among the best, like holidays and other special occasions, can become "the worst" due to unanticipated obstacles like illness, cancellations, bad moods, weather, etc.. No doubt, these disappointments can be hard to deal with, and if they occur too frequently, we can find ourselves in a downward spiral. Fortunately, by learning how to apply Positive Psychology tools, we can diminish the impact of 'the worst' of times while heightening 'the best'.

Below you will find a list of effective tools and examples of how to use them with family and friends.

1. **Savoring & Energizing** – Take time to extend a pleasant experience. Where are you right now? Look for the good. Stop to note what is happening. Practice gratitude about where you are and what you are experiencing. If recalling an event in the past, take time to describe as many aspects as you can – where, who, when, what is happening, how do things feel, smell, sound? What role did you play in the event? Taking time to savor reminds us of good times in the past and helps energize us in the present.

- **For adults/elderly parents:** Remember a positive event: meeting a new friend, learning something, a marriage, graduation, landmark achievement. Share stories about the event, focusing on the positive. Discuss what strengths of yours might have come into play in order for the event to take place, to be appreciated.

- For children – “What went well?” Start a nightly family discussion about the day. Name the good things that happened. Keep track of the good by creating an ongoing memory book, a memory collage on a wall. Write a mini story of the event, illustrate it with pictures, or act it out again in a play. Savoring helps extend the joy and also reinforces to children that good times happen and will again.

2. **Positive Ratio** – In *Positivity*, Dr. Barbara Fredrickson advises readers to pay attention to their positivity ratio. We need 3 positive occurrences to make up for every negative one. When we get out of balance, when the negatives begin to dominate our lives for too long, the effects are evident: less energy, less motivation, decreased creativity and productivity. We are less fun to be around. So, what should we do?

- For adults/elderly parents – know your happy points. What makes you feel good? Fresh air? Music? Games? Color? Laughing? Treat these happy points like vitamins. Little or big doses, they all add up and keep you strong. You *need* them to feel good, every day. Know what makes your loved ones happy and help them boost their ratio, too.
- For children – It is usually easy to see when children are feeling positive or negative. They smile and laugh easily. Allow for time to laugh hard, wiggle around, sing, dance, run, jump. Share stories. Let them know how happy they make you feel, too, and thank them for spending time with you. Building a positive ration can be a great team effort.

3. **Practice Gratitude** - awareness of what is going well creates strong bonds.

- For adults/elderly parents – Write a personal gratitude list for your own reference. Write thank you letters to others. What are you thankful for? Who would you like to tell? If you are involved in a gift exchange with someone, how about giving them a list of all the things you love about them, all the things you are thankful for about them? By taking account of what we have that we are grateful for, we often feel less alone and more energized, thus continuing the cycle of boosting ourselves and others.
- For children – Help children develop gratitude habits. Encourage them to thank others (friends, teachers, shop keepers), writing notes if possible, but particularly being aware of all the aspects of their lives where other people’s work and effort makes a difference in their lives. Practice by example – write or perform a thank you speech to your children. Describe what you notice about them that is strong and beautiful and what they add to the world.

As psychologist Christopher Peterson reiterates often, “Other people matter.” We each play an important role in the well-being of others. Whether we are spending time alone, with friends or with family, by paying attention to what is going right in our lives and refueling it often, we strengthen ourselves, each other, and our world.