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## 12 CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTALLY STRONG PERSON

### Part I

These past few months have been a real challenge for many people. Some are struggling with boredom, depression, loneliness, others with anxiety and suicidal thoughts. While mentally strong people seem to allow the stress and anxiety just to roll off their shoulders, others do not. Which would you rather be? You can be a strong, confident, empathetic person if you are willing to learn and practice the 12 characteristics of a mentally strong person.

To be a mentally strong person does **not** mean you are cold, indifferent, aloof, and not caring. In fact, just the opposite is true. Mentally strong people are not afraid of emotional pain, their own or someone else's. They can feel another person's feelings and, at the same time, not become enmeshed in others feelings and drama.

They are empathetic, caring, and creative. They do not take things personally or get their feelings hurt. Is this the type of person you would like to be?

**I. Mentally strong people** do **not** see themselves as co-dependent [Rescuer, Victim, Persecutor]. They see themselves as resilient and capable of handling every problem that life might throw at them. They do this by never blaming anyone or anything else for the vicissitudes of life.

In fact, they will go one step further and are willing to accept that every problem is theirs. Their motto is "Everything is my fault. . . . . if I am lucky."

Mentally strong people believe that if it is their fault, they can fix it. They also believe that sometimes they are unlucky!

They believe that the only person they can change is themselves. At the same time, they believe that there are two areas in their lives that they have no power over. Those areas involve other people and other things (act of God). Then, it is in their power to accept the “isness” of the world.

They believe that they cannot fail and that nothing is a failure if you learn from it. As a result, there is no need to blame someone else. An example of this was said by my client “My second marriage is a success because my first marriage was a failure.”

Mentally strong people are not afraid to risk. When asked what risk means to them, most people would say, “risk involves the chance of failing.” A Mentally strong person would say, “risk is a chance to win.” You will never make money in the stock market if you do not invest (risk) money in the stock market! Your horse will never win a race, unless you enter him into the race.

**II. Mentally strong people do not** live in the future or the past. They do not lie in bed and ruminate over what they “could have” or “should have” done differently in the past.

This is not as easy as telling someone “Do Not dwell in the past.” To be able stop dwelling in the past, you will need to make two columns on a piece of paper. In the first column, write down the issue which you keep ruminating about. In the second column write down, in specific terms, how you would do it differently the next time.

In the future, if you start to ruminate about that same thing, stop and get your two-column paper out. Read out loud what you had written down about how you would handle it differently next time. [When you ruminate, you do not finish the sentence or paragraph. Your mind jumps from sentence to sentence, then back to the first sentence again. When you write it or say it out loud, you allow your mind to finish the Gestalt.] For example: Have you ever had a song that keeps going around in your head?

To stop that song, sing it out loud with a lot of gusto. Once you finish the song, it will stop!

Most rumination focuses on things in the past (I should have said/done...) Or, "I gotta remember to. . ." in the future. To cope with these two situations requires two different approaches.

If what is keeping you awake is possible future events, this is about not trusting yourself. The fear here is that 1. You will forget what you need to do or buy. In that case you need to make a list. 2. This is often called "overthinking." This is where you are trying to figure out every possible variation of what could happen if. . . . This is where you can really see the problem of not trusting yourself to be able to handle any situation that might happen in the future. The possibility of worrying about the future is endless. If you do not have enough things to worry about in the future let me suggest:

- ✓ the loss of a loved one;
- ✓ your house burning down;
- ✓ the Republicans winning;
- ✓ having enough money to pay the bills at the end of the month;
- ✓ being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer;
- ✓ getting fired from a job that you need;
- ✓ China and Russia taking over the world;
- ✓ getting raped;
- ✓ being homeless;
- ✓ etc.

What future events are causing you anxiety and stress? In each situation, there are literally thousands, perhaps millions of variations for each situation! Do you believe that all your rehearsing could cover all the possible variations to be prepared? If not, then all the anxiety and stress you are creating in yourself is an exercise in futility.

How long do you need to keep doing something that does not work? If what is blocking me is my trust of myself, then the next question has got to be, How Do I Learn to Trust Myself?

**There are several beliefs, that if you hold as true, you will trust yourself.** Check to see how many of these beliefs you have:

- I do not have to do/look perfect for people to accept me;
- I believe that my mistakes are steppingstones to learn from;
- I believe that my screw-ups just prove that I am human;
- I believe that if someone cannot accept me, then it is their problem, not mine;
- I believe that everyone does not have to like me;
- I believe I do not need to like everyone.
- I believe that I do **not need** anyone. However, there are numerous people that I **want** in my life. [I do **need** food, water, and air. But I do not **need** any specific person.]
- I do believe that emotional pain is not terminal. [*"I can never stand be hurt this way again . . . is a lie."* If I have gone through so much emotional pain that it hurts physically, and come out the other side, then I must be an extremely strong and gutsy person.]

If you do not believe these statements about yourself, then you will be easily manipulated, threatened, and will spend a lot of time worrying about what could happen.

Without these beliefs, you will have problems setting boundaries and keeping personal space. You will have problems saying No. You will end up doing things you really do not want to do. You will become a people pleaser. You will not protect yourself or the ones you love from abuse.

The goal of being a mentally strong person has just started. It will entail new beliefs that could be uncomfortable for you. And, then it will take practice and monitoring your behaviors. However, the results will be well worth it.

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