

Surround Yourself with Positive People

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

A few years ago I made friends with a guy I met at a self-improvement seminar. It was his second time attending the seminar; apparently he had gotten incredible results the first time around.

According to this man, he had lost fifty pounds, had given up drinking and drugs, was cured of his ADD, stopped working fourteen hours a day every day of the week, started exercising daily, dramatically improved his marriage and family life, and started a successful new career--all after attending the seminar. He credited this massive and profound life turnaround to going to the seminar. In fact, he had gone from a relatively depressed and financially non-notable life before attending the seminar, to a new life making more than \$2 million a year, working only a few days a week. He had even turned somewhat religious and started playing the guitar for children at services once a week.

As I learned, the big *take-away* this man had gotten from the seminar was that it had enabled him to make such a significant life shift. I was pretty amazed. In all honesty, to me the seminar we attended had not been that special. It was all about getting in touch with your feelings; however, it was certainly not the sort of thing that would have led me to make massive changes in my life.

I was intrigued by all of this because this guy was not anything like the person he described himself to have been before he attended his first seminar. It was hard to imagine. For example, the friend I knew was on a calorie-restricted diet and generally seemed to be a happy person in all respects. He seemed very well balanced. Since he was so successful, I was interested in learning his success secrets so that I could share them with other people.

"What has made you so happy and successful? What was it you got out of the seminar that made everything change for you?" I asked him one evening.

We were in New York in the basement of the Time Warner Building, in a small Whole Foods shop that sold gifts made from hemp. It was a Thursday evening and my friend was chatting with the cashier in the store while he looked for presents for his kids. Everywhere this guy went, people seemed to pick up his happy energy and return his smile. We might be walking through a hotel and he would stop and start chatting with a complete stranger about this or that. He was always chatting with strangers in hotels and different places. People just gravitated toward this guy, and he was genuinely happy to see just about anyone.

"The only thing I do differently now that I did not do before when I was so unhappy is make sure I associate with positive people. That's it. Just associate with positive people."

At the time I did not think much of it, but I have come to realize more and more that associating with positive people is among the most important things we can do in our lives. As long as you share the energy of positive actions and thoughts, and surround yourself with people who have a positive energy, there are few limits to what you can accomplish in your life. Your attitude--how you feel about your life--is among the most important concepts governing your existence on this earth. *The more positive your attitude is, the better off you will be in your career and in your life.*

When you surround yourself with people who are happy, driven, and well balanced, you too are more likely to become happy, driven, and well balanced. In addition, these people will not drain energy from you and you will feel better when you are around them.

I remember the time when I had my first [legal job](#) and was working over the summer for the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, DC. I was enjoying the job a great deal and having a wonderful summer. I had friends in Washington, DC, at the time and my friends were all pretty positive and nice people who were excited about the future. I had been working there a few weeks when one day I decided to make a telephone call to a friend in another city. I had this acquaintance who was always very down and complaining about one thing or another. The person would use drugs often and always seemed to be going through one personal crisis or another. I never realized how toxic this person was; however, when I called home everything hit me:

- The person spoke in depressed tones.
- Everything that came out of the person's mouth was about something negative.
- The person did not make me feel good, and acted like I was a loser for spending my summer working.
- The person told me bad news about various other people.

I could go into further detail but, it should suffice to say, I had not realized how negative this person was, or made me feel, until I put down the phone. When I put down the phone, all the enthusiasm I had for my work--as good as I felt about myself, my job, and everything else in the world that I was excited about--seemed to suddenly fade into the background. I felt a deep sense of lack and sadness in my soul. It was a feeling I will never forget because it was like running into a brick wall. It took me hours to overcome it and to feel better about myself. The entire experience was depressing in a monumental way.

The reason this experience was so depressing, I think, was that it contrasted with how I had been feeling at the present time and over the previous few weeks. I had been away from this person for some time and had never realized before how negatively he had been affecting me day-to-day. My conversation with the person was really no different from the conversations I had with him in the past--it was only the contrast that made it so glaringly different this time. A short time later I decided that it was not in my best interest to remain friends with this person, and I am sure I was better off for it.

I am sure you have had similar experiences as well:

- You may be feeling very good and then encounter a very depressed person, and suddenly you too become depressed.

- You may be feeling very bad and then encounter someone who is very happy, and suddenly you too become happy.

Moods are contagious and they can often instantly affect us in a positive or a negative way.

When I was in my first year of high school, I was a competitive tennis player. I would play tennis against pros and other very good players. While I was nowhere near as good a tennis player as a professional, I would always make for a challenging match against my opponent, and we would have long volleys and somewhat competitive games. I always felt I was playing much better tennis when I played with the best players than when I would play against average or poor players. When I played against average or poor players I would find myself moving more slowly, hitting more balls out of bounds, missing more serves, and not having as much fun. The poor players I played against often destabilized my game. I would hit ridiculous and stupid shots where the ball would fly from the tennis court into the road and hit cars, for example. It was embarrassing.

The company you keep can either make you rise or bring you down. One of my favorite quotes is from John Steinbeck, who wrote: "A sad soul can kill you far quicker than a germ."

Do you associate with people who improve your game? Or do you surround yourself with people who destabilize your career and life?

Whom you call your friends and acquaintances tells a lot about who you are. In order to be happy and successful, it is important to surround yourself with other people who are happy and successful. You need to be very careful in terms of whom you let into your sphere of influence. Positive energy spreads quickly--just as negative energy does.

One of the greatest characteristics I have found in the [best legal recruiters](#) I have worked with is the ability to be continually positive. Over the years I have hired and worked with a large number of legal recruiters in our company, and one of my greatest concerns has always been making sure I have positive people working for us. I would rather have 10 positive recruiters working in our company than 100 negative recruiters--even if the total financial cost were the same. Negative people infect others and bring an entire group down.

One of my favorite movies is *300*, which is about a group of 300 Spartans who fight against thousands of Persians. The Spartans have an incredible positive spirit that empowers them to do well. It is a great movie because it shows what a small group with the right mind-set can do against a much larger force. I believe the Spartans' strength in the film comes from their ability to remain positive.

Have you ever attended a meeting in which there is someone throwing out a long diatribe of doubts and fears about this or that? People like this typically drag down the whole group and make things extremely difficult for everyone. It is hard for groups of people to get motivated when there is even one extremely negative person in their midst.

Your life is valuable and your time is as well. It is challenging enough to remain positive and continually enjoy our lives, while feeling good about ourselves. The last thing you need in your career is to deal with another person's constant negativity.

Your career and life will change for the better when you learn to surround yourself with positive people--and keep the negative ones away.

Read More About If You Spend Time With Negative People, Your Organization Will Assume that You too Have a Negative Attitude and it Will Hurt You:

- [Plant Yourself in Good Soil](#)
- [Appreciate Those Around You](#)
- [Self Image](#)
- [The People You Work and Associate With Can Either Make or Break You](#)

<https://www.harrisonbarnes.com/>