

Pressure Solution 8

USE YOUR POSITIVE GPS SYSTEM

"We went on a lot of missions but we never worried about coming back. We always assumed we would be successful. A lot of it was our training, but we were pretty positive people, too. We never got rattled when the action started."

Now eighty-eight years old and living in Santa Monica, California, World War II fighter pilot lieutenant Marvin Tanner's words reflect the perfect recipe for this pressure solution:

BE POSITIVE BEFORE AND DURING HIGH-PRESSURE MOMENTS

Each of us has an inherent internal GPS that is programmed to give us a positive attitude. When you have a positive attitude, you are more apt to attend to the necessary task with confidence and the knowledge that you can succeed.

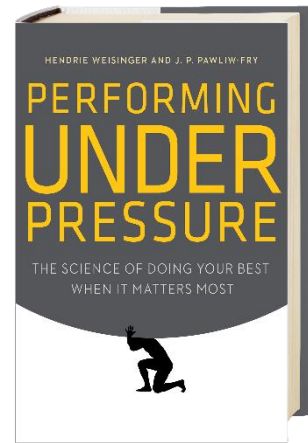
In prehistoric times, those of our ancestors with a positive attitude had an evolutionary advantage; the attitude motivated them to approach their tasks with a minimum of fear and anxiety, two factors that lead to poor performance under pressure. Because positive individuals were more successful, and better able to pass on their genes through the process of natural selection, positive thinking became a natural attribute in our species, to help us succeed. However, for many of us, life circumstances and a pattern of ineffective responses have instilled a tendency to think negatively. People who do so are at a disadvantage in high-pressure moments; pressure short-circuits their positive thinking system by adding anxiety and fear of failure, which distracts them and takes them off course.

This pressure solution helps you depressurize the moment by rebooting your inherent tendency for positive thinking. Belief in a successful outcome can prevent you from worry that can drain and distract your working memory. Anxiety and fear are stripped from the equation, allowing you to act with confidence.

You can incorporate this pressure solution into a high-pressure situation with little effort.

- Positive images can foster your tendency to think positively. As a Mount Everest climber reported, "Every day during my training, I staffed out by imagining myself at the summit. I pictured all the details of my surroundings and saw myself dancing around like Rocky. That image energized my training and, during the actual climb, motivated me to succeed."
- Assume a positive outcome. Lieutenant Tanner would tell himself and his men, "when we get back," as opposed to "if we get back." The day before a critical client meeting, a manager might say to his or her staff: "when we get the client," or "after the client says yes," as opposed to "if we get the client," which creates anxiety and pressure. When success is assumed, you and your staff can focus on the details for success.
- Use a variety of encouraging and confidence-building statements, such as "I am going to be great," "I'm going to be successful." Make a list of such statements. Keep them visible or available for those moments when you encounter a high-pressure situation.

If you have a high-pressure event coming up, and you feel ill prepared, or haven't had the time to ready yourself, act as if you are positive. Studies show that individuals' feelings and moods respond to their actions. Acting depressed leads people to feel depressed; acting euphoric creates feelings that match. That is why a marine drill sergeant orders nervous "newbies" to "stand up straight," so that they will feel confident, like the Marines they are training to be.



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