MOTIVATION | PERSONAL GROWTH

HardOptimism

written by **Price Pritchett Ph.D.**

1261 words | 6 pages

The first book I read by Price Pritchett was one I now treasure, *you^2,* subtitled: *A High velocity Formula for Multiplying your Personal Effectiveness in Quantum Leaps.* The book was a gift from my not yet, though sooner than later to be, friend Richard Brooke. It was admirably written with clear powerful word selection and sentences that made their points with such brevity and grace I actually was a bit in awe of the writing (and certain there was a masterful and anonymous 'ghost writer' behind the scenes). Chapter headings such as: *Quit trying harder, Ignore conventional approaches, Think beyond what common sense would allow, Suspend disbelief, Focus on ends rather than means* and *Get uncomfortable* resonated deeply with me. Still do. My beat up and highlighted copy proves it. These ideas are even more relevant today than in November of 1991, and I can appreciate them more.

"A True Story" that served as the forward to the booklet (only 36 pages) is one I have told again and again around the world. It never fails to move people. It's been nicknamed "The fly story", about a small creature burning out the last of it's life's energy in a futile attempt to get through a windowpane. I'll cut and paste it below this review for you. It's a classic.

I do, once, remember reading another of Pritchett's mini-manifestos, but it didn't have the insight or impact of *you^2.* And now here's his latest, HardOptimism. As good as the first? Sadly, no. Good enough? Absolutely.

What's lacking for me in both is:

1. The book turns me on to a great new idea, something I have GOT to do in my life and work NOW!

2. But doesn't tell me how. Not really. For that, I'll have to go to other sources, or (I suspect) take one of the good doctor's courses. Suspicion confirmed by this bit at the end:

For more details on how to launch HardOptimism in your organization, call 800-992-5922.

Sigh....

> ***Get the book and read it anyway. Because it's only $6.95 per and it's a great little read and an even greater more-or-less cost-effective give-away to important prospects on your "drip list" and leading team members.***

As you've probably inferred by the title, HardOptimism does two things: It makes the case for choosing optimism over pessimism, and it asserts this won't be easy as demonstrated by this wonderful bumper sticker reprinted in the book, "No sense being pessimistic. Wouldn't work anyway." (The booklet is sprinkled with great pages of quotes and introductory wisdom just like that.)

Here's a taste or two from the book:

> **HardOptimism** ***points you toward a tough, forceful, steadfast optimism.***
> ***It is not Pollyannaish.***
>
> ***Not a rose-colored glasses view of the world.***

And not just a rehash of "the power of positive thinking".

This is a research-based set of mental practices from the new field of behavioral science called "positive psychology".

HardOptimism ***coaches you on how to think— how to manage your mind—***
which is the most important aspect of your work in today's Knowledge Economy....

There's more. Here's some of it:

"There's very little difference in people. But that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it's positive or negative."
— W. Clement Stone

From *HardOptimism* Chapter One

Positive thinking is important, but non-negative thinking is the essence of hard optimism. The secret is to manage the way we explain situations to ourselves—

especially when we experience failure, difficulties, uncertainty, or loss, but also as we encounter opportunity and success.

Psychologists have discovered that optimism and pessimism are not two poles on a single scale. They're two quite separate dimensions. And the best results seem to come when we consciously reshape our mental activity that's pessimistic.

Hard optimism represents a disciplined, deliberate way of thinking about whatever life throws at us. It's about focusing on blessings rather than bad things... emphasizing opportunities instead of obstacles... explaining events to ourselves in a way that enhances performance and improves our quality of life...."

"What an interesting life I had.
And how I wish I had realized it sooner"
— Collette

I thoroughly enjoyed *HardOptimism*. My wife Katyusha and I read it aloud (I read to her) on the deck and sitting on the grass in a park while Ele' played at The Little Gym. We stopped many times to discuss and explore this or that of Pritchett Ph.D.'s points. The book (let) still misses making connections and "how to's" for me. But is a great rallying cry for optimism and sings the song lyrics "Accentuate the positive. Eliminate the negative", which certainly appeals to my "What's right? What's working? What makes it work right?" perspective.

As with my first close encounter with Dr. Pritchett in *you*^{2}, I yearn for more hands-on, do this and that, how to's, and I am suspicious that the "For more details on how to launch..." bit at the very end of the booklet is some-kind of clever marketing come-on. Still, in all, it's an uplifting read and a good book to share with friends and associates. What's missing for me are the action steps that can be taken. But then that might have led to very different little booklet, EasyOptimism. Now, there's a concept.

HardOptimism is only available directly through the Pritchett Online Institute: **Pritchettnet.com** Single copies are $6.95.

The direct link to get the book is here: HardOptimism

— JMF

Here's the story from Price Pritchett's classic booklet **you^2**.

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you^2

The fly story— doing it differently
by **Price Pritchett Ph.D.**

I'm sitting is a quiet room at the Millcroft Inn, a peaceful little place hidden back among the pine trees about an hour out of Toronto. It's just past noon, late July, and I'm listening to the desperate sounds of a life-or-death struggle going on just a few feet away.

There's a small fly burning out the last of its short life's energies in a futile attempt to fly through the glass of the windowpane. The whining wings tell the poignant story of the fly's strategy— *try harder.*

But it's not working.

The frenzied effort offers no hope for survival. Ironically, the struggle is part of the trap. It is impossible for the fly to try hard enough to succeed at breaking through the glass. Nevertheless, this little insect has staked its life on reaching its goal through raw effort and determination.

This fly is doomed. It will die there on the windowsill.

Across the room, ten steps away, the door is open. Ten seconds of flying time and this small creature could reach the outside world it seeks. With only a fraction of the effort now being wasted, it could be free of this self-imposed trap. The breakthrough possibility is there. It would be so easy.

Why doesn't the fly try another approach, something dramatically different? How did it get so locked in on the idea that this particular route, and determined effort,

offers the most promise for success? What logic is there in continuing until death, to seek a breakthrough with "more of the same? "

No doubt this approach makes sense to the fly. Regrettably, it's an idea that will kill.

"Trying harder" isn't necessarily the solution to achieving more. It may not offer any real promise for getting what you want out of life. Sometimes, in fact, it's a big part of the problem.

If you stake your hopes for a breakthrough on trying harder than ever, you may kill your chances for success.
— Price Pritchett, Ph.D.