

Stepping Stones

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A book review on “Positive Living Skills: Joy and Focus for Everyone” by Terry Orlick

“I envision a world where we all embrace joy and harmony within ourselves, our relationships, our homes, schools, communities, and places of work - a world in which we all strive to contribute in meaningful ways.”(Orlick,2011, p.3)

In the positive action-oriented book, “Positive Living Skills: Joy and Focus for Everyone” Terry Orlick (2011) shares his dream and life-long mission to create a better world by nurturing better people. The success of such a mission is dependent upon children, youth and adults learning, applying, and living pertinent life skills. These life skills called “Positive Living Skills” are the “stepping stones” alluded to in the introductory poem of his book – skills that may allow us to be positive “Builders of Eternity” with a life-changing “Bag of tools” to build such a positive world. This book provides the tools and the content which positions it as one of the most important stepping stones for helping everyone to live a better, more meaningful and more positive life.

“Builders of Eternity”

Within the introductory chapters of this book, Orlick invites his readers to ask themselves what three gifts they would give their children if they could give them any three gifts in the world. Orlick’s three gifts support the foundation of this book: Positive Focus, Connected Focus, Less Stress and More Harmony. Orlick affirms his stance that we all can create positive-real world change by teaching children the essential skills to live more fully and more joyfully. He acknowledges that we are not teaching children these life enhancing skills and many people do not live in fully connected, joyful and respectful ways, subsequently wasting meaningful talents, opportunities, and daily moments to embrace and produce acts of kindness, love, and joy to those around us. He calls for better role models

who exhibit positive thoughts, feelings, and attitudes, and highlights the need to create more positive educational programs for life long learning and quality living. Orlick then presents to his readers the real-world skills that we can apply to live more meaningful, joyful, and focused lives everyday – right now.

Embracing Opportunities and Choice

The simplistic beauty of Orlick’s book resides in the power of choice and positive action. In a world full of “polluted people” who choose to dwell in negative thoughts and action, Orlick contends that we can choose to act in more positive ways. We can choose to imagine and create a better and more positive world. We can choose to live in less stress and more harmony by engaging

in a fully connected positive focus. We can make a promise to ourselves and keep that promise to live more fully and express our love, joy and appreciation through the simplest acts within our daily lives. As Orlick explains, we can CHOOSE to be open to life's magic moments and we have the CHOICE to love openly, listen to others, and show our appreciation and support in meaningful and positive ways. Thus he provides his readers with pages filled with personal insight and tools to help his readers start to live more positively – beginning with positive action in the present moment. Furthermore, this book offers a reflective mirror to its readers to closely examine their own lives. Orlick places the power of positive change in the reader's control, alluding to the fact that we are the drivers in our own lives and we can choose and act in ways that become energy gains, rather than energy drains. Through the "Positive Living Reflections" and "Personal Reflections" questions the reader has the opportunity to reflect about the quality of his/her current life and how he/she can live more fully. There are no gimmicks or tricks to living a more meaningful life. After reading the pages in this book the reader cannot help but realize that he/she has the opportunity to contribute the quality of his or her own life and to a better world through positive choices and actions.

“Bag of Tools”

After creating the foundation and purpose within the first five chapters, Orlick proceeds to provide the reader with the tools, or positive living skills, to live a more fully connected and positive life. Not only does Orlick discuss the significance of these tools, he also provides real-life activities to reinforce and instill these tools through interactive opportunities that can be shared among family members, teams, and within educational classrooms. These tools consist

of Highlights, Fully Connected Focus, and Relaxation activities. Anyone willing and ready to live a more positive life and create a better world can actively participate in these activities.

Highlights

“Highlights are simple positive experiences, connections, actions, or interactions that bring joy, quality, and meaning to your life” (Orlick, 2001, p. 61).

At the beginning of this chapter, Orlick provides meaningful quotes from children and teens who have participated in the Positive Living Skills programs. These quotes provide support for the importance and impact of positive living skills and were developed from over 30 years of applied research with children, teens, and adults within the Positive Living Skills programs. The beauty of Highlights is that they can immediately be enhanced by becoming more engaged and attuned to our environments and by actively seeking out the Highlights around us and within us. By simply choosing and acting to embrace the Highlights around us, we can greatly enhance the quality of our lives. Orlick provides a “Wheel of Highlights” to encompass the wide range of highlights that are within our everyday experiences, including elements such as Nature, Relaxation, and Physical Activity & Play. Engaging activities, such as Treasure Hunting for Highlights, Clicking for Highlights, or listening to the highlight activities on the Positive Living Skills Audio CDs provides the reader with a chance to not only personally acknowledge his/her highlights, but to share these highlights with the people around him/her. Furthermore, within activities such as Songs of Praise, the reader can acknowledge the positive

attributes within the people around him/her. Orlick has used this activity to build collaboration and positive connections among teammates, students, and even business personnel thus demonstrating the wide variety of applicability of these skills to different life domains.

Fully Connected Focus

“A fully connected focus is a complete, positive connection with an experience, learning opportunity, performance, action, or interaction. There is a feeling of being totally absorbed in the experience, becoming the experience or inseparable from it”

(Orlick, 2011, p. 101).

At the heart of living a better life and creating a better world is fully connected focus. Through years of working with high level performers, children, teens, and adults, Orlick has found that our focus determines the direction and destiny of our lives. Similar to his 2008 book, “In Pursuit of Excellence,” Orlick positions focus as the central component to higher quality living. Likewise, this skill is a central to the positive living skills tool box. As noted by Orlick, our focus moves in the directions we choose or allow it to move. Fully connecting to our experiences and environment is a like a flowing stream of connection, rather than short bursts of concentration and attention that are typically attached to the term “focus” within other contexts. With a fully connected focus we can learn more, feel more, and move closer to our potential as human beings. In contrast, with a disconnected focus we live within the confines of a shallow life and fall within energy drains and negativity traps.

Similar to the Highlights chapters, in the Focus chapters Orlick provides the reader with questions to understand and act towards a personally relevant and meaningful fully connected focus within his/her life. To teach a fully connected focus to children, teens, and adults Orlick provides the eight Pillars of Focus (such as Focused Learning, Listening, Seeing and Feeling) and activities to enhance the focus in each of these areas. These activities are enhanced when shared among family members, classmates, and teammates. Furthermore, Orlick explains how we can teach activities that enhance the depth, duration and meaning within our Outside-in Focus, Inside-out Focus, and Inside-in Focus. Through activities that involve making connections through seeing and listening, connecting to objects, working through distractions and learning to refocus, and embracing “Magic Moments” Orlick claims that we can learn to be in the present moment and connect to the positive aspects around us. Within the Focus chapters, Orlick supports why this book is such an essential tool for teaching children and youth how to live more fully – specifically he explains that we expect people of all ages to focus yet we do not teach children or youth how to focus fully or to understand how to fully connect to their experiences. Furthermore, he reminds his readers that we have the CHOICE to connect more fully and focus on more meaningful positive actions, interactions, and connections within the everyday moments of our lives.

Relaxation and Joyful Living

“A life that includes daily relaxation or moments of silence – to simply relax, reflect, and regenerate mentally, physically, and emotionally is the best path to positive, balanced living” (Orlick, 2011, p. 168).

Similar to Highlights and Fully Connected Focus, Relaxation is a key tool within the Positive Living Skills programs. Orlick acknowledges the wide range of physical, mental, and emotional benefits in learning to relax. The content of this chapter includes relaxation scripts from the Positive Living Skills Series audio CDs and simple activities that invite the reader to engage in Spaghetti Toes, Jelly Belly, Flowing Streams, and Muscle Relaxation. Although it may seem that the vocabulary within this chapter is sometimes geared only towards children, these scripts and activities are of benefit to all ages and provide the reader with ample opportunities to learn and practice relaxation through simple, real-world methods that can be practiced and enjoyed every day.

Conclusion

Terry Orlick's (2011) book, "Positive Living Skills: Joy and Focus for Everyone" offers an incredible opportunity to live more meaningful, positive lives and to create a better world for all people. By sharing his dream and mission of a better world, Orlick has written a book that will inspire and create positive real world change. Teachers, parents, children, families, classrooms, teams, and anyone wanting to live a more positive life will benefit from this book. The

material shared within the pages is insightful, heart warming, and action orientated. We CAN CHOOSE and ACT for a better world and live to our true human potential. This book and the content within it should be shared with everyone around the world, especially within the educational curriculums and programs teaching our children and youth. As emphasized by Orlick, a more positive world and positive living can begin now. This book inspires the reader to realize how our feelings, choices, and actions impact our lives and the lives of others. In a very clear and concise manner, Orlick provides his readers with the tools and insight to create real world positive change. These pages remind us of our responsibility to be positive "Builders of Eternity" and to use the aforementioned "Bag of tools" provided within these pages to be better, live better, connect better, and build a better world. Within the final paragraphs of the Positive Living Skills book, the reader is left with the choice to begin on a more positive journey starting NOW. There is no conclusion to this book, only positive beginnings and the capacity to start building a better world through one positive skill, one positive activity, one positive choice and one positive action at a time.