

Time for a Media Diet?
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Is our insatiable appetite for information giving us heartburn?

In these economically turbulent times, people around the world are worried, depressed, and fearful. Now, more than ever, it's vital to look forward and see our way beyond the current circumstances. It will require vision, a positive mindset, and persistence.

To keep the faith amidst the negative news and uncertainty, each of us is responsible for managing our own mental and emotional state. We need to be on guard for anything that could drag us down. Unfortunately, for many, the constant hum of the news is like a drug whose side-effects include anxiety, fear, and even hopelessness.

Here's a story from one of our coaching clients. Can you relate?

"Yesterday started out great. I had breakfast with my family, signed up a new client, had some productive meetings, and at the end of the day took a run at the beach. I was feeling great. Then I got into my car and turned on the news. Within a couple minutes, my mood turned from joy to anxiety. The more I listened, the worse I felt. I began to worry that I might lose my job and wouldn't be able to pay my mortgage. I felt guilty that I was enjoying myself while others were suffering. My mental funk continued through the evening. When I got into bed, I turned on CNN and listened to a panel of economists and business leaders predicting more bad economic news. My stomach was churning. I shut the TV off and tossed and turned for an over an hour before I eventually drifted off to sleep. The next morning before work, I went online and read a couple of blogs about current business conditions and got that same gnawing feeling in the pit of my stomach. My motivation was down the rest of the day. I'm usually a pretty positive guy, but lately I find myself putting off business-building activities. My attitude is like, 'The economy's tanking and nobody's buying--what's the use?'"

The media commands our attention. We are continuously bombarded, not just with facts, but also with commentary about what the facts mean, as well as dire predictions of worse things to come. We ingest not just the news, but endless interpretation and gossip about the news. The media is omnipresent, hypnotic, and

addictive. To varying degrees, we have all become subject to a kind of cultural trance.

Sensationalism sells and the major media outlets know they must keep the drama and suspense high to keep us tuned in and constantly replenish their advertising dollars. Bad news and negative predictions keep us glued to the screen to find out who or what company will fall next. Negative and fear-inducing stories and big personalities with loud voices and strong opinions capture our attention and play upon our emotions. The talking heads and bloviators are authoritative, glib, and charismatic. They wield great power. They sway and seduce us with their opinions and pronouncements--their version of the truth.

Unfortunately, most people accept what they hear in the media, even when it's gossip dressed up as news. Like it or not, we assimilate what the media tells us, even when it's opinion. When the news is negative and full of doom-and-gloom prophecies, we feel fearful, anxious, depressed, or even powerless.

What You Can Do

So what's the antidote? Do we do, turn off the media and bury our heads in the sand? Of course not. We suggest you use the news media consciously, in ways that serve you. Stay informed, but be judicious about what you allow into your mind. Here are some suggestions:

- **Go on a media diet.** Reduce or eliminate your consumption of 'junk food'--sensationalist news sources and bloviators. You know who and what we're talking about. Get the news you need to stay abreast from reliable professional sources.
- **Separate fact from speculation and prediction.** Listen for phrases like, "could lead to," "might result in," "authorities predict," etc. Like a weather forecast for next week, conditions are subject to change.
- **Become media-savvy.** Notice how certain shows, personalities and Web sites use language, voice tone, graphics, and music to manipulate you. Keep in mind that most news sources are in business and that sensationalism sells.
- **Stay in touch with your emotions.** If you find that the media you're consuming is increasing your fear or anxiety, take control and turn it off.
- **Use the news with purpose.** Use the trends in business and the economy to spot needs you can fill and opportunities you can take advantage of. Lots of people win in a down market. Why shouldn't you be one of them?

- **Continue building your business.** The concentrated efforts you make during the current slowdown will put you way ahead of the game when the market shifts. While others are tearing their hair out, you'll be building something. For information and resources on how you can successfully influence your customers, clients and prospects in any market, go to sellthefeeling.com.
- **Be careful whom and what you give your attention to.** Whatever you put or let in affects your thoughts and emotions. If you fill it with negative news and opinions, your attitude will trend negative and your ability to see, create, and respond positively to opportunities will diminish. Nourish yourself with a healthy, balanced mental diet. There are plenty of inspiring and positive books, audio recordings, workshops, and people. Balance your consumption of negative news with positive ideas and influences.

Control your news intake and use the media wisely. While the masses are going negative, nourish yourself. Don't buy into the cultural trance. Don't let the media do your thinking for you or play havoc with your emotional state. Stand guard to the gateway of your mind.

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