



BECOMING AN OPTIMISTIC DISTURBER

BY DES PENNY

“An optimistic disturber is someone who gets disturbed about ‘creating a better way’, not about minor, insignificant issues that do not move a situation forward. A person that pushes the boundaries, challenges most things, especially fads, and believes that to make things happen they must be prepared to lead the way, even if it means personal cost.”

Des Penny

I have often gotten myself into trouble by being what I call an Optimistic Disturber. Many times that trouble was justified, but in most cases it was because I had in some way rattled the mediocrity of a situation or place and dared to ask the questions that others were thinking.

How many times have you wished that you could just say what you were really thinking and cut through the endless meetings and the pandering to people's egos and insecurities?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were able to create an environment where those crucial conversations were commonplace? Where people were

encouraged to stand up for what they believed in and could make things happen? Well we can!

The key is in how we do it and whether or not we are brave enough to not only speak about what we would like to see happen, but to also have the courage to follow through with our convictions.

However, when we do this it is also important to understand that an Optimistic Disturber is not just someone who is unhappy with a situation; it is someone that is prepared to work at making it better and has insight into what they are doing and why.

There is a real difference between an Optimistic Disturber and someone who is just a Disturber and creates problems because they don't get their own way.

Following are eight insights that differentiate Disturbers from Optimistic Disturbers. I call them insights because you need to live your life with insight to truly understand them.

Hindsight + Foresight = Insight

INSIGHT ONE: YOU MUST FIRST BE AN OPTIMISTIC PERSON!

Seriously, how hard is it to be happy? It is a choice you know! But even being happy does not necessarily mean you are an optimistic person. It is however, a good start! Happiness can so often be determined by the situations we find ourselves in, but being optimistic is about seeing the best in a situation, even if it is a bad one and then finding solutions to make the situation better.

Pessimists definitely should NOT apply for this role!

Optimism is about who we are, not who we say we are. People will not follow a fraud who is only optimistic in the good times; they want to follow people who live an optimistic life.

One of the simple things that we can do to become more optimistic is to check ourselves every time we speak negatively and follow each negative comment with a positive solution-focused comment. Over time habits will change. It is all about seeing the potential in people and situations and building on that. It is not that



easy I know, but it will certainly make you a more happy and fulfilled person and also a more pleasant person to be around.

One of the other characteristics of Optimistic Disturbers is that they do not act when they are angry, do not crack under pressure or give up. They remain confident that things will work out and set about to find ways to make that happen.

INSIGHT TWO: YOU MUST UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WOULD WANT TO DO THIS

Disturbers often act because of ego. This is the worst possible reason for 'shaking the cage'. Optimistic Disturbers act because they can see a better way and want to be a part of bringing it about.

When they do step out to bring about change, there can be no grey areas; their purpose and reason for doing what they do must be clear.

One important thing to remember is that we do not need to have all of the answers; many of them will not be revealed until we take steps into the unknown. This is the exciting thing about being an Optimistic

Disturber; the final destination is never clear and continually changes, but our purpose must be clear.

INSIGHT THREE: YOU MUST BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE THE POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

What will all of this angst and breaking of new ground actually achieve?

People will not join a revolt unless they know there are both benefits for them and a good chance of success. They will not risk burning bridges unless they are building a better bridge.

The role of an Optimistic Disturber is to communicate the vision and to give others a picture of what the future could look like!

We must remember however, that it will take time for others to get on board.

Don't expect people to see the picture immediately; you have had a long time to process your thoughts, allow others the same courtesy.

But whatever you do, don't keep your ideas to yourself, shout them from the rooftops because the only time anything of value happens is when we share it with

others and allow them to become a part of the dream.

INSIGHT FOUR: YOU MUST HAVE A CLEAR PLAN FOR MOVING FORWARD

When you are not happy with something and want to see change, you must have a clear plan of action that results in a better way. As mentioned earlier, the plan will change throughout the journey and that is OK, but you must have an initial plan to start moving forward.

If you truly believe in something then give it the best possible chance of success by creating a road map, but be careful that you do not over plan and manage risk so tightly that you block the 'unknown' from showing its face.

Remember that your plan is just a launching pad for something better!

INSIGHT FIVE: YOU MUST BE ABLE TO LEAD THE DISTURBANCE

If you create a disturbance then you must be prepared to lead it!

Disturbers are people that just throw out



Short-term pain that brings about positive change is far better than a life of regret.

INSIGHT EIGHT: YOU MUST ALSO KNOW WHEN TO LET GO – CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES

Some battles are just not worth fighting – especially if they are personal.

This is where being honest with ourselves is so important. An Optimistic Disturber understands the need to reflect and to process the disturbance around them. In other words, to put the situation through the disturbance sieve and only spend time on the things that do not fall through.

Letting go is not a weakness or an admission of guilt, in fact it is a position of incredible strength.

Optimistic Disturbers choose battles that change the direction of something; they do not sweat over letting go. They understand the art of strategic quitting in their lives and how it allows them to focus on the important issues. Pride is the main thing that will stop this happening.

So if it is not going to bring about positive change, or make a situation better, then let it go and choose another battle that will.

Being an Optimistic Disturber can be very lonely sometimes, but when you see that you are playing a role in making positive change happen around you, then it is one of the most rewarding and humbling experiences that you can have.

CONCLUSION

It's OK to challenge the 'status quo' if you are prepared to live the above eight insights on a daily basis. It is just as acceptable not to move forward if you discover that the issue is just something you are annoyed or angry about and in the scheme of things it is not really that important.

Often using these insights as a filter, will be just what is required to put the disturbance into perspective and to help you see what is really important and what is not.

So what are the areas, personally and professionally that are disturbing you at the moment? What would you really love to see change so that a better way is created for everyone?

But the bigger question is this, are you prepared to get disturbed enough to change it and in the process change yourself?

The world needs more Optimistic Disturbers; why not join the cause!

ideas and complain constantly about the current situation but then leave it for everyone else to change. Optimistic Disturbers understand the difference between emotional response and reality. Reality is about getting behind what needs to happen and being prepared to lead others to a better way.

You see, being an Optimistic Disturber is simply hard work and if you are committed to your cause then you will have to work hard to make it happen.

The difference is that when you truly believe in something then it is not seen as hard work but an incredible opportunity to make things better.

INSIGHT SIX: YOU MUST BE ABLE TO TAKE THE HEAT BECAUSE IT WILL COME!

When you try to make a difference, even if the results are incredibly positive, people will not like you – get used to it!

You have rocked their world of mediocrity and although they say they are not happy in that world, they are often very comfortable in their misery. Disturbers believe that everyone else should change, as long as they don't have to.

There will be others though that are like-minded and completely get what

you are trying to achieve. Work with them. They are like gold!

When you get a negative reaction for doing something you believe in, then it is time to revisit why you would want to do it, re-examine your motives and if they are in tact, push even harder for what you believe in.

Optimistic Disturbers build a wall around themselves that does not allow negativity to enter. This does not mean that they do not listen or reflect, or even feel hurt, but it does mean that they learn how to turn negative comments and behaviour into fuel that makes them stronger and more determined.

INSIGHT SEVEN: YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT GOING AHEAD

There are consequences to not doing what you believe in for you and for others. Just imagine if some of our great change agents like Richard Branson, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs or Nelson Mandela just sat back and accepted the situations they found themselves in. The world would be a very different place for all of us. They were Optimistic Disturbers; people who believed that there was a better way and understood that not to do anything about it was even worse than accepting the situation they opposed.