

**POSITIVELY BLACK**

**Facing up to problems**

*By Junious Ricardo Stanton  
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

The first step in solving any problem is to acknowledge the unfavorable condition or situation that is not to our liking or in our best interests. One reason so few problems get resolved in our community, is because we willfully engage in patterns of delusion, denial, resistance and avoidance. We have erroneously convinced ourselves that problems will disappear on their own if we pretend they don't exist. We foolishly believe the difficulty will magically disappear of its own volition or be resolved without any action on our part.

Another reason things don't change is because certain people have vested interests in the status quo and want to maintain their advantageous position at all costs. They will use any means at their disposal to discourage any and all action that will jeopardize their positions, power or influence. People in power rarely give it up, or voluntarily relinquish control over those they are abusing.

Delusion occurs when a person holds false beliefs that cannot be altered by argument or the presentation of facts. For example Europeans delude themselves they are the "master race." They tell themselves their favored position in the world is the natural outgrowth of their superior intellect instead of their aggression, pillage, plunder and exploitation of people of color.

Denial is when we pretend not to know what we know or when we choose to disbelieve the truth. For example, Africans in America are in serious denial about our status in this country despite 377 years of continuous enmity, contempt, disprivilege and rejection. We keep fighting to buy a ticket into the burning building that is America. We need to ask ourselves what the advantage is of integrating into a morally and spiritually bankrupt culture?

Resistance can be either passive or aggressive, pro active or reactionary. For example many captured Africans openly rebelled rather than submit to the degradation of slavery. On the other hand some became collaborators and traitors, siding with the slave masters against their own! Rosa Parks is an example of proactive resistance. She refused to give up her bus seat to a white man and sparked the Montgomery bus boycott and the modern civil rights movement.

Avoidance is when we put off doing something we don't feel comfortable attempting, something we perceive as unpleasant or something we don't have the confidence to do. People can't grow mentally and spiritually when they avoid tackling the issues of life, those things necessary to affect their growth and maturation. Growth and change are laws of life. Avoiding either puts us in the absurd position of attempting to go against the natural flow of life. No matter how many times we try, in the long run it just won't work!

Problem solving demands we confront the situation and make a seriously pro-active commitment to deal with it. The deep wounds to our psyche will never heal as long as we deny we are hurting. Recovery is impossible as long as we deny the negative impact of racism and oppression. As long as we refuse to do what is necessary to return to wholeness, nothing will change. Our social, economic and political status can't be altered as long as we deny the reasons we're unwilling to trust and co-operate with one another. If we continue to avoid addressing these issues we will remain divided and impotent.

Our enemies will do any and everything to discourage our self-determination, social cohesion and unity. Their positions of privilege depend upon us remaining disorganized, discouraged and dependent. Don't expect them to support positive change! Don't expect the masses who have been brainwashed into believing in the inherent inferiority of Africans to act in ways befitting sane self-loving people. This will only happen when the truth is spread abroad, when more and more of us accept it and our responsibility to liberate ourselves.

We have a responsibility and a duty to snap out of our stupor, shake off our lethargy and do what is in our best interests. Sanity is possible only when we reject the options of delusion and denial. Change is possible only when we stop procrastinating, avoiding and resisting taking positive steps to alleviate the problems and conditions that are unpleasant or harmful. If upon evaluation of the situation we determine we have no control over it, then it is incumbent upon us to change our perspective of it, as well as our mental and emotional responses to it. Anyway you cut it, you're going to have to do something differently.

**HEALTH**  
**Self-acceptance, self-love: Promote good relations**

*By Michael A. Grant, J.D.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Perfection in this life is not an attainable goal. Living a fulfilled life - with much contentment or peace of mind - is. Therefore, why agonize over the former when you can enjoy the latter?

It is so important that we accept ourselves as we are and that we learn to really love - not merely indulge - ourselves. For this we need several things.

First is self-acceptance. Walter Cronkite, the celebrated news anchor, would conclude his daily chronicling of newsworthy events with an emphatic: "And that's the way it is." To paraphrase Cronkite, I would like to challenge you to take an honest look at yourself, your strengths, your weaknesses, your good judgments, your fiascoes, your kind gestures, and your outbursts of anger and simply state: "And this is the way I am." Accept it. You may not be perfect but you are perfectly you! One of over 5,000,000,000 inhabitants on this small planet rotating in infinite space, you are unique in all creation.

Seeing yourself - flaws and all - and telling yourself that you accept who and what you are is mentally healthy and an important ingredient in your search for a formula for happiness.

Accepting yourself is not tantamount to condoning undesirable behavior. Nor is acceptance necessarily approving. Acceptance is acknowledging the reality of who you are at this point in your personal development.

Why is self-acceptance so important? Because you get to declare a truce with yourself. Your inner walls of resistance come down.

All of that wasted psychic energy can now be rechanneled for more positive thinking, more constructive feeling, and more fulfilled living.

Some of the harshest judgments that we pass, we pass on ourselves. "I should have done this" or "I should have done that." "How could I have been so stupid?" or "I can never forgive myself for what I did."

If we start to listen to that non-stop conversation that goes on inside our heads, we become painfully aware that we are not accepting the reality of our frail humanity. Once we accept ourselves, forgive ourselves, and shift our focus onto what it is we want to accomplish with our lives, guilt, shame, low self-esteem and a sense that somehow we just do not measure up to some unreachable ideal, are replaced with a new-found inner peace.

In addition, accepting ourselves as we are is a

necessary predicate for accepting others as they are. And the benefits of this new awareness can be incalculable.

We human beings desperately want to be accepted as we are. Much of our self-worth and sense of belonging are inextricably intertwined with the degree of acceptance that we receive from others - especially significant others.

Acceptance of ourselves and others is a prelude to more harmonious human relations.

Now, what about self-love? Neo-Freudian, Dr. Erich Fromm, once wrote: "Love is the active concern for the growth and development of the beloved." Apply this definition to the way you feel about and ultimately treat yourself.

Testing how much you really do love yourself (not to be confused with being stuck on yourself), how would you answer the following questions?

1. Do you find time, everyday, to do something - large or small - that pleases you?
2. Do you allow others to place demands on your energy and resources when you would rather say no?

3. Do you forgive yourself for the mistakes that you make?

4. Do you allow anger to fester like a sore inside you or to erupt like a volcano? (Note: Our most intense feelings of anger - especially if the anger is prolonged - is usually directed at ourselves. And please be forewarned that protracted, intense anger has been associated with heart attacks, ulcers, and other threatening physical conditions).

5. Do you actively pursue your greatest interests?

6. Do you allow family members or friends to continuously make comments about you that leave you feeling anxious, insecure, intimidated, overwhelmed, or resentful?

7. Do you allow yourself to express your true feelings with individuals or within a group or do you feel that you must "go along to get along?"

8. Do you take good care of your body or is it treated like a dumping ground for toxic waste?

9. What do you tell yourself about your abilities and what you are entitled to receive from life?

10. How long do you endure

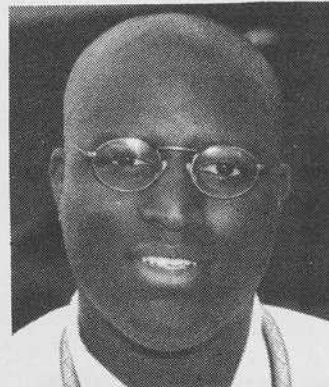
unpleasant situations and people before you decide to choose a better place or more enjoyable space?

11. Typically, during the course of a day, how often do you laugh?

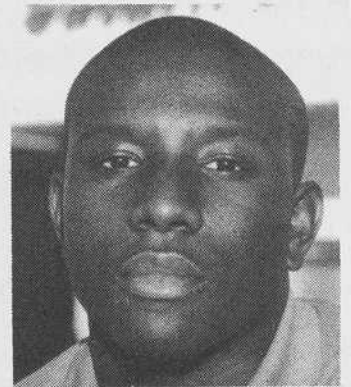
Like self-acceptance, self-love is the starting point for living life at its best.

To use the analogy of concentric circles, like those seen when you toss a pebble into a lake, our deepest feelings for ourselves radiate out to others. In Karmic fashion, the acceptance and love of others is sent back to us - oftentimes, not in ripples, but in tidal waves.

Become aware of whether or not (moment-by-precious moment) you routinely accept and love yourself. Consciously listen to your own thoughts about yourself. If you choose a more positive approach with you, this old troubled world will not only not get you down, but you will soon discover that you have created your own light, that when combined with the light of others like you, will help to stamp out much of the darkness that characterizes human relations on our shrinking planet.



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