

## 5 Questions to Make 2010 Count by Katrina Cummins

What if you spent 5 minutes a day, asking yourself five key questions to truly make 2010 count?? Many of us spend longer in the bathroom each day than we do reflecting on our lives! Why is it crucial to ask yourself the right questions? Because reflective thinking produces intentional living, says Portland Life Coach & Motivational Speaker Katrina Cummins, about her 5-on-5 New Year's commitment. "Asking the right questions produces life changing answers, that allow you to be in the driver's seat of your life, instead of being an out-of-control back seat driver, only reacting to what others are doing.

For every one of these 5 questions, there is a life-affirming action strategy using the acronym COUNT.

### **1) What energizes you and what drains you in life?**

Strategy: *Constantly Evaluate Energy.*

What people and situations bring energy to your life and which scenarios and folks zap your life force every time?? Do you know the answers?

Everything in life either energizes or drains us. Think about your mother-in-law, does she energize you or drain you? When we pinpoint situations/people that fall into these categories, we can start to apply strategies to balance these events so we can manage our lives better.

For example, generally speaking we can't choose our boss. Some of us have a boss that drains our energy. How do you best handle your boss? I call it the "Stop & Go" technique. We need to ask ourselves do I need to STOP or GO ahead with that situation, person, conversation? With our boss, of course, we have to talk to them-and the good news is we have 100% control on how we respond to our boss no matter what they are saying to us. Can you say 'no' to having lunch with your boss because you know he or she is going to sit and criticize your co-workers and be a negative drain on you?? YES, YOU CAN! Establish boundaries around the negativity in your life and your energy will remain intact.

Wondering how to boost your energy in a situation that normally drains you? Let's say going to the gym by yourself feels boring or hard, but being with your friend energizes you, simply ask your friend if they would start going to the gym with you.

### **2) What is weighing you down from the past that you need to be free from?**

Strategy: *Open to free yourself*

We all have situations from our childhood, good and bad. We need to choose, as adults, how we are going to let go of those situations from our past that do not serve us today. Some of us are walking around with emotional baggage holding onto resentment over events that happened decades ago. To determine what is weighing you down from your past, ask yourself, where in my life do I need to apply forgiveness? Answering that will open you up to new insight and healing.

A traumatic or unpleasant situation can actually mold you for the better if you are open to that possibility. You get to decide how to mold that situation in your life...It can be a creative opportunity in disguise...For example, through healing, abused women can mold that experience to help other women - by volunteering at a safe house or being a counselor on a crisis phone line.

-I encourage people to use the "This won't last forever" technique. When I was pregnant, I felt like I was going to be pregnant forever. I put a sign on our fridge that said, "I will not be pregnant forever" and I read it every day! Sometimes when we are going through a situation we need to remember that today is not a lifetime.

### **3) What part of your life story could encourage someone else?**

Strategy: *Use your unique voice.*

-We all need to remember that we don't live in a vacuum and we have gained experiences that can be

used to encourage others. For example, when I moved here to America eleven years ago from Australia I was feeling so overwhelmed. I remember speaking with other people who also had moved - and they had only moved just across town. To see them thriving and not just surviving was a huge encouragement for me. I knew I would get through that difficult time because someone else encouraged me along the way.

Is there a difficult time in your life, a divorce, a move, an illness, financial struggles, that you have overcome?? Think of how your unique hardships could help someone else today. Or perhaps you have a positive success story of developing your own business late in life...With the economy right now, many people have been laid off. Some people are having to go back to school to start a new career. Speaking to someone else who has walked that path and navigated a new career can be very inspirational.

**Take the opportunity every day to perform random acts of encouragement...**checking out at the grocery store last week, I commented to the clerk about the state of the economy. The clerk told me she was a struggling single mom, raising three children. I encouraged her, saying that she is doing the best she can with what she has. Encouragement brings others hope, and provides opportunity for each of us to count in life. Never underestimate making a difference in someone else's life by just a few caring words.

#### **4) What 2 qualities attracts people towards you?**

Strategy: *Nuture Your Best Self*

When you identify your 2 best qualities that attract people, and you focus on playing up those strengths, your life will expand through the enriching interactions with like-minded people who are drawn to you. If you are not too sure what your 2 best qualities are, ask! Ask your spouse, family, trusted friends or even co-workers to list your strengths. Every person has amazing gifts to offer the world. When we review our top qualities, we see how these qualities have already brought success into our lives. These qualities offer a blueprint of where to continue building in our life.

For me, I have been intentional about tapping into my ability to problem solve, through training and education. In coaching and speaking, I counsel people and businesses to help them become "simply the best". But this focus had to start at home with me first. Every day I have asked myself, What did I do today to develop my problem-solving ability? And second, what have the outcomes in my life been for being a problem solver? I noticed that when I took the time to nurture that quality, I attracted more significant and fulfilling experiences into my life, such as motivational speaking.

#### **5) Do you step out in trust or fear in unknown situations?**

Strategy: *Think Ahead About Your Motivation* -

- Every day is an unknown day. The question is "How will you handle it?" When we have fear, at the heart of our daily thoughts and actions, we are questioning our own abilities to handle life. Trust is all about a commitment to your self. Commitment that you will find a way, no matter what, to persevere.

For your clothes dryer to work properly, you need to clean out the lint trap. If you don't, there are blockages, it could shut down. Likewise, fear produces blockages in our lives and we can shut down - emotionally/mentally/physically. Trust produces a flow of life through us. Like hooking the dryer up to electricity so it can work properly, we need to plug into trusting ourselves.

-We can plug into that trust through a few simple techniques such as positive visualization of the situation or writing down the best case scenario of what you want to happen. A very practical technique is to put a quarter in a jar every time you trust yourself and take out a quarter every time you step out fear. Would you be in negative balance?

-Your motivation to step out in trust can be like super glue, holding you together in an unknown situation. Just learning to surrender and trust that we can trust life to be on our side is a leap of faith

that takes renewed daily practice and commitment.