

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES Careers

www.suntimes.com

Harvey Mackay

Looking for —and finding— the silver lining

Someone once said: An optimist stays up until midnight to see in the New Year. A pessimist stays up until midnight to make sure the old year leaves.

The New Year is a terrific time for a fresh start, particularly in the attitude department. If your outlook on life has been looking down more than up, take advantage of the calendar change and change your perspective.

Being the optimist that I am, I found some great inspiration in the book "It's Your Move: Dealing Yourself the Best Cards in Life and Work" by Cyndi Maxey and Jill Bremer. They acknowledge that everyone faces adversity and difficult times. The challenge is to remember that the situation is usually only temporary. They encourage readers to find their way to the silver lining—the place where you can feel hopeful again.

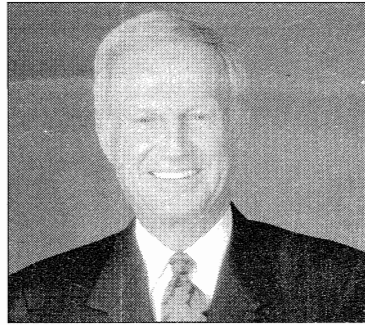
To do that, they write, you must look at your situation realistically and then make adjustments. Start with the things you can't control: Traffic. Hours in the day. Your bad eyesight. Your age. Another's whims. Someone else's follow through. The number of vacation days your company offers. Spilled milk after you've cleaned. Death and taxes.

When you look at this list, you can probably relate to many, if not most of these items. Traffic won't change just because you swear at the drivers around you. You get 24 hours every day, just like everyone

else. Your eyesight/arthritis/heart condition may be improved as medical advances occur, but you still have to learn to live with it as best you can. The day you were born is non-negotiable. Controlling another's behavior, whether whim or follow through, is hardly ever your prerogative. Your company tells you how much time off you will receive when you sign on. Messes happen. We will all die, and the IRS will find us eventually. Deal with it. Those are the facts of life. I don't expect them to change much in my lifetime.

But then, in the clouds, is the silver lining. Consider what you can control: Your treatment of others. How often you praise others. The time you leave work. The way you spend your evening (or off hours). What you say about yourself to yourself. How often you exercise. When and how to share your feelings. How to let others know you're stressed. How old you act.

What a list! These are opportunities waiting to be explored, the silver lining that offsets the clouds described above. You, and only you, can decide how you will treat others in your life—and your behavior can serve as a sterling example of kindness and respect. If you make a habit of leaving work late every night, consider this: the boss may be impressed for a while, but will your family? Remember, finding balance in your life keeps you from getting burned out. How you spend your off time is part of that equation.



Harvey Mackay is the best-selling author of *Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive*, the chairman of Mackay Envelope Company and a motivational speaker. He can be contacted at Harvey@Mackay.com.

Finding fulfillment away from work keeps you sharp and inspired.

Talking to yourself about yourself is really very normal, as long as you give yourself credit for the things you do well and encouragement for the things you hope to do better. Take care of your physical self to augment your mental health. You also control how much and when you should share what's on your mind—doing so in a positive way is essential to good communication. You also have a responsibility to yourself to say when enough is enough, and stick to your guns.

Ever heard the saying about how "you're only as old as you feel?" Birthdays are occasions for celebrations and presents and cake, not excuses for what you can't do any more. If you're looking at the green side of the grass, you should also be able to see the silver linings in the clouds! Take your cue from Orison Swett Marden, founder of *Success Magazine* and a motivational writer from the early 1900s: "The golden opportunity you are seeking is in yourself. It is not in your environment; it is not in luck or in chance, or the help of others; it is in yourself alone."

Mackay's Moral: *Invest in precious mettle: silver linings and golden opportunities.*