

# A Health Esteem Tune Up for the New Century

*by Judith Parker Harris*

**Note:** This article was written in 2000. As I re-read it, the application is universal to many traumas we have faced since, including September 11, Hurricane Katrina and, of course the constant threat of terrorism. Y2K has been replaced by BE VERY FEARFUL

I offer you these words to understand and then to take control of your life and your happiness. BE VERY ALIVE.

The passage into the year 2000 came with jubilation and peace in most parts of the world. While the Year 2000 problem washed uneventfully across the globe, a vast army of computer technicians, economists and pundits began to wonder what they would do next. The only Y2K bug in our household was the flu. Indeed, I decided the Y2K bug was a people affliction, not a machine one. For the first time in years I was felled by the flu. For the better part of three weeks, I was weak, stuffy headed and racked with coughs as were many of my friends and associates.

Why? I asked myself. After years of being healthy, why was I overtaken by the Y2K bug? The answer was in my book, CONQUER CRISIS WITH HEALTH-ESTEEM, and in my lectures and workshops, but I was ignoring it. The answer was hype! I was completely over-stressed. What would happen on December 31st, 1999? Should I stock up with water and supplies? Did I need martial arts training? I surely wouldn't travel! Would neighbor turn against neighbor in a fight for survival? And, how about those pre-Y2K holidays? Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and the spirituality of each trying to rise above the insanity as people turned into merry, well-meaning maniacs. More money spent than ever before. More gifts to give, parties to throw and attend, families to be with and love, traffic to fight through with a smile on your face, crowds to contend with at every destination. And the background music to all of these activities was drowned out by a media blitz before unknown to mankind. The warnings of the possible perils that might arrive when the clock struck midnight marking the treacherous transition from 1999 to 2000 were deafening, mind numbing, exhausting, and quite frankly sick-making. And then, of course, there was everyday life -- work, family, community service, yoga lessons, meals to cook and consume and *SLEEP*. Was there any time for sleep and normal everyday routines at year, century and millennium end? The background to every waking breath and activity was Y2K, Y2K, Y2K, are you Y2K ready? Y2K, Y2K, Y2K... adnauseum.

I thought I was handling it. And, then I got sick. The hype sunk in. The news, the media blitz, the societal pressure, the frenzied expectations of everyone with whom I came into contact sunk in and attacked my immune system and won. I got sick. And, so I understand, did many of you. That's my definition of the Y2K bug.

Our bodies got mad as hell and wouldn't take it anymore! They were filled with predictions, expectations, postulations, and exhortations. The will to rise and shine left us down and dull. The feverish pace of keeping up turned into a fever and the thought garbage going into our

systems turned into congestion. Suddenly all we could do is cough, hack, blow our noses and try in every possible way to get the JUNK out of our systems.

What can we do to not let another virulent flu bug like Y2K take us down for the count? Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Rebel against 24-hour newscasts, shows and magazines repeating the same stressful guesses and prognostications over and over. Turn it off!
- 2) Remember to stay true to your own wisdom, common sense and optimism. Yes, we've got to accentuate the positive. Martin Seligman, a University of Pennsylvania psychologist and past president of the American Psychological Assn. cites in a 1998 speech that over the last three decades there were 46,000 papers in the psychology literature on depression and just 400 on joy. But 21st century psychology, he predicted, "will become a science of human strength and of personal fulfillment." UCLA psychologist, Shelly Taylor cites that an optimistic frame of mind actually modulates the nervous system in a way that bolsters immune-system defenses.
- 3) Balance. There are at least twelve major life areas. (work, money, love/spousal relationships, friendships, community, environment, family of origin, current family, parenthood, play, health, spiritual/religion) Have you charted them out lately to see where your energy is being over-invested and what areas you need to pump up to balance your life?
- 4) Discover inherited emotional patterns such as pessimism, anger, jealousy, guilt, lack of affection, etc., and decide to re-program what no longer works for you.
- 5) Realize the emotional link to physical symptoms, such as Y2K stress and hype to Y2K flu, and deal with the emotions before they deal with you.
- 6) Make sure your actions are based on personal motivations not world, social and peer pressure.
- 7) Listen for your *essential-self voice*, the wise self that is often silenced by external pressures and roles. Let that voice overpower the outsiders and their accumulated stressisms.
- 8) Feel life's events as well as observing them. Acknowledge those feelings and deal with them rather than stuffing them inside, where they can make you sick.

I've learned a lot about optimism from my husband Jack, the optimist, who didn't believe any of the predictions about the Y2K Bug. When an investment of his goes sour, he looks forward to the next one that will do better. His life philosophy is "to wake up every morning with joy in your heart for what the day will bring." He didn't get the Y2K bug -- otherwise known as the flu.

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