

Meditate those bad tax day attitudes away

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Let's face it, income taxes, like bad hair days, are just not that pleasant. Actually, I don't know anybody who loves to pay taxes. However, I do know some smug people who smile as they see friends struggling, lamenting, fearing where they'll come up with the extra cash or leave the onerous task to the last minute. None-the-less, even these well-prepared souls would probably rather keep their hard earned cash.

Why don't we like taxes? After all, most societies have levied taxes in some way to keep their style of civilization going and provide some degree of safety, security and general welfare. Whether or not we think our money or labor is worth what we receive in return, the idea that taxes are out of our control, and we do like that illusion of control in our lives, makes this a bitter pill to swallow. We have a bad attitude, if even for a day.

Try this tax attitude quiz. Say the word taxes, either aloud or silently. Now judge your own state of mind on a scale from one to ten. A ten means you feel great, fantastic, super and a one means the stress is unbearable and you hate yourself and the world.

Did you feel any of the following as you said the word taxes or as you prepared your tax return?

- Uncertainty: Am I taking the right exemptions? Am I doing my taxes correctly?
- Foolishness: Why didn't I save all my sales receipts? Why didn't I start this process sooner? Why didn't I just use Turbo Tax or a CPA?
- Fear: How am I going to save any money for my retirement when I have nothing left after taxes?
- Anxiety: Hmm, maybe I shouldn't have claimed that exemption; I might be audited.
- Anger: What benefits do I get for my taxes? Or why won't my boss give me that raise!

Yes, we are not in control. Like a child we must mind, feel humbled, and accept that taxes demand attention. Then we start thinking and feeling in negative terms.

Now think of tomorrow, April 16, a nice spring day. Ahh, we can feel the tension leaving. We hear the birds, see the budding frangipanis and oleander, and enjoy the later sunsets. Take the attitude quiz again and rate yourself from one to ten as you conjure up these springtime images. I bet you rated yourself higher. Why the difference? Because for one moment you choose to think positive, focus on the present, not on the anger provoking past or the anxiety focused future. This simple meditation is a great stress management tool.

If today happens to be a last minute, lamentable scramble, remember, like a bad hair day, it will be gone tomorrow. Meditate. Take a deep breath, close your eyes and focus on a pleasant memory. Feel your heart rate and blood pressure slow. Breathe easily. Feel yourself relax. We can feel good, if even for a minute, even on April 15.

And, the next time you feel bad, say to yourself, “The good thing is, it’s not tax day!” Or try a simple meditation to manage your stress.

If you’d like to learn more about the benefits of meditation, please call me at 941-778-8356 or 941-778-3149.