

excerpt from

POSITIVELY M.A.D.

edited by Bill Treasurer

INTRODUCTION

There is an inverse relationship between initiative and enormity. The bigger and more challenging the issue, the less willing we are to face it head on. The trouble is, our world has “issues”—challenging, complex, and big . . . very big. There’s the big stuff, like globalization, pollution, terrorism, jingoism, religious intolerance, and war. And the less big stuff, like offshore outsourcing, a broken healthcare system, an obesity epidemic, and rising gas prices. But it’s all big stuff.

The challenges faced by our increasingly frenetic world are enough to make you throw up your hands in resignation. “Why bother?” you ask. “I can’t make a difference anyway.” “*Au contraire*,” say we! And this book sets out to prove it. Who are “we” you ask? First and foremost, we’re authors. Authors with opinions and ideas that we’re not afraid to share. Second, we’re authors who have all published books with Berrett-Koehler Publishers. B-K tirelessly promotes ideas that elevate the human condition. Third, we’re MAD. Really MAD. Steaming MAD in fact.

As authors, our expertise is varied. But the outcome we all aim for is strikingly similar—to leave the world better off than we found it. And our MADness allows us to do this. In spiritual literature, there is a concept called *holy anger*. It is the notion that our dissatisfactions (sometimes referred to as “divine discontent”) can be our fuel for making an enduring impact on the world. It is this holy anger, this dissatisfaction with the inadequacies of the present, that brings about the change necessary to create a better future. This is the idea behind *Positively M.A.D.* Despite the complexity of the world’s problems and inadequacies, and despite our own frustration with the current state of affairs, we *can* indeed Make A Difference. Regardless of our station in life, each of us is entitled, if not obliged, to etch our initials onto the tree of humanity.

In the stories and descriptions that follow, you’ll learn of people just like you who are making a true difference in the world. You’ll learn about contemporary ideas from some of the world’s leading thinkers. Though MAD, in some instances certifi- ably so, our MADness is directed at a purposeful aim: to help you take action in your own life in order to make a positive difference in the organizations and communities you serve. In the end, we think you will be inspired to make a difference in your world. The chapters of *Positively M.A.D.* are organized into twelve lessons (outlined below). Each lesson is composed of a number of stories that illustrate, with real-life examples, how to make a meaningful difference in the world. Each story contains a number of MAD Tips that can be immediately applied in your life. Sometimes these tips are included as part of the story, at other times the tips appear at the story’s end.

12 Lessons For Being Positively M.A.D.:

1. Embrace Your MADness: The stories in this chapter underscore why it is important to move toward your madness. It is the people with an almost obsessive passion who get the most done. The toughest part is sticking to it when everyone around you is convinced that you're crazy.

2. Have A Higher Purpose: Making a difference takes energy and effort. This chapter describes how having a higher purpose helps you stay goal-focused, thus sustaining your motivation in the face of obstacles and setbacks.

3. Find Common Ground: Rarely can you, or should you, do it alone. Lasting impact often requires bringing together people who see the world in different ways. As this chapter illustrates, by focusing on their common purpose, rather than their points of friction, diverse people can come together to change the world.

4. Lead Earnestly: Often the impact of a single person extends far beyond normal expectations. This chapter shows how an enduring difference is often a by-product of a single person's influence earnestly applied.

5. Mobilize Committed People: It takes more than a long lever to move the world. It takes committed people directing their efforts toward a worthwhile aim. The stories in this chapter demonstrate that the best way to get things done is to *share the madness!*

6. Capitalize on Adversity: This chapter includes stories about people who have done more than just overcome adversity . . . they've actually capitalized on their adversity and leveraged it to their advantage.

7. Defy Convention: As the saying goes, *if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten.* This chapter includes stories about people who refuse to stick to stale approaches and outdated responses. They rely on, and relish, unconventional approaches.

8. Shift Perspective: The stories in this chapter show how sometimes the only thing standing between you and the difference you can make is a slight shift in perspective.

9. Work With City Hall: MAD people, as this chapter illustrates, don't always buck the system. Rather, they bring about profound change by working within the system. Sometimes they even change the system by working the system itself.

10. Stand Up to Authority: Sometimes those with the power to make a difference, stand in the way of the difference being made. This chapter includes stories of MAD people who are self-assured enough to stand up, and *speak up*, to authority.

11. Pay Attention to the Little Things: As the stories in this chapter show, the best way to make a difference in the world isn't with grandiose plans. Sometimes it's the little

ordinary things, consistently and persistently applied, that bring about the most profound changes.

12. Express Gratitude: People who are truly MAD aren't doing it alone. As related in this chapter, they benefit from the good works of many people. As such, people who are MAD take the risk of being vulnerable by expressing sincere gratitude. In so doing, they improve morale, deepen relationships, and give others a reason to work hard.