

Abstinence Contract Blog Post 1

7/3/22

Prompt: What are you abstaining from? How did you arrive at this decision? Who is (are) your support person(s)? What substitutions will you employ this semester? What are your initial thoughts/feelings about the project?

This summer, I'm abstaining from negative comments. I know that sounds weird, but it's really very important to me. Will I not say anything negative all summer? Of course I will say negative things, we all do. But, my problem is specific. I grew up in a household where sarcasm and negative putdowns were issued in a constant stream of banter and it's not something that I want to do anymore. I have curbed this tendency a lot over the years, but I still find myself starting to randomly just say negative things and it's something that I see my kids picking up on as young adults. I know my husband doesn't like it, either. He grew up in a very different household. To understand what sort of thing I'm abstaining from, I'll give you an example. My husband and I can be out, just grabbing some brunch and driving through our neighborhood. We live in a really lovely neighborhood with beautiful homes and landscapes. While we're casually remarking on the day, the weather, little rabbits we see in the yards sometimes, I'll find myself glancing at some random thing about one of the houses I don't like. Say, the door. I cannot seem not to say "I really like that house, but that door is awful." Or something similar. I fell into the habit of critiquing houses when we were searching for a house to buy years ago and I still do it. Now, though, my husband sees my continuing to do that a part of this thing where I will just say negative stuff in a stream of consciousness way that is not really uplifting and he's right. I don't want to be the person who is always saying some negative stuff even on a pretty day out on a

nice drive. So, I'm replacing these comments as they come to mind by finding a nice thing to say about whatever thing I was going to mindlessly critique. It's been interesting so far and I like it! It's not easy. These totally pointless things pop into my head and I have to redirect my commentary. I don't just NOT say anything. I feel like I won't be practicing the behavior I want to learn that way. Or unlearning the one I want to quit. My husband and my kids are my support people and I am actually hoping it helps my kids as they see me modeling this behavior and understand how much it matters to me. I'm really excited to make this change. I think I can do it and make it stick!