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Positive thinking definition

See also: The Importance of Mindset Positive thinking is the idea that you can change your life by thinking positively about things. This idea can sound a bit soft and fluffy, which is something of a problem for many people who recognise that just thinking good thoughts won't change the world and therefore discard the whole idea. However, research shows that positive thinking really does have a scientific basis. You can't change the world, but you can change how you perceive it and how you react to it. And that can change the way that you feel about yourself and others, which can in turn have a huge effect on your well-being. Quick Tips to Enable Positive Thinking Gain Control of Yourself: Do not be critical of yourself to others. Whilst it can be useful to confide your concerns to someone you trust, telling the world is something else. Be kind to yourself. Make a list of your good qualities and believe them, believe in yourself. Don't Be A Complainer: By being negative you can isolate yourself from others and cut yourself off from positive solutions to problems. Learn to Relax: Allow time for yourself each day, if only for a few minutes it is important to find time to relax and unwind. See our page on Mindfulness for more. Boost Your Own Morale: Treat yourself every now and again. Especially if you have overcome a problem or made a personal achievement. Congratulate Yourself on a job/task well done and perhaps tell a friend. Justified praise is a good boost to morale. Learn to Channel Nerves and Tension Positively: when you are nervous, adrenalin is pumped through the body and you feel more keyed up and alert. This extra energy can be used to good effect; enabling you to communicate with greater enthusiasm and intensity, for example. Learn to be Assertive: Stand up for what you believe in and do not be pressured by others. See our section on Assertiveness for more. The Effect of Negative Thinking To understand the effect of positive thinking, it's helpful to think about negative thinking first. Most negative emotions, such as fear or anger, are designed to help with survival. They cause us to take swift and effective action to save ourselves from whatever is threatening us. This means that they also prevent us from being distracted by other things around us. So far, so good, in survival terms. If there's a bear standing in front of you, you don't want to stop to pick flowers. But negative thinking is not so great in more modern settings. If you've got a lot to do, and you're worried that you won't get it all done, the last thing you need is for your brain to shut down and focus only on how long your 'To Do' list has got. Negative thinking is a habit, something you can train your brain to avoid. Constant negative thinking can make you much more likely to be stressed and can lead to more serious problems, like depression. See our pages: Avoiding Stress and What is Depression? for more information. The Power of Positive Thinking Barbara Fredrickson, a researcher at the University of North Carolina, carried out a classic experiment with five groups of people where she showed each group images designed to provoke a different emotional response. Group 1 saw images designed to trigger feelings of joy; Group 2's images were selected to make them feel contented; Group 3's images were neutral; Group 4 saw images to make them afraid; and Group 5 saw a series of images designed to make them angry. Each group was then asked to write down what actions they would take in a situation that created similar feelings. Groups 4 and 5 wrote down significantly fewer actions than the other groups. Groups 1 and 2 wrote down the most actions. In other words, feeling positive emotions helps you to identify more possibilities and options in your life. But what is perhaps even more interesting is that these extra possibilities and options seem to translate into action. People who think more positively are more likely to do things to deliver on those options. They build new skills and develop existing ones, so that they genuinely have more options in life. Positive Thinking in Practice: The Placebo Effect High quality trials for new medicines and therapies compare a treatment group, which receives the new treatment, with a 'control group' that does not. But as a general rule, these control groups do not just have 'no treatment'. Instead, they receive a 'placebo', that is, a treatment substitute which looks like the real thing, but has no physical effect. Examples of placebos include sugar pills or flavoured water instead of genuine tablets or medicines. Why do they receive a placebo? Because of the power of positive thinking... The 'Placebo Effect' is a well-documented phenomenon in medicine, in which those who think that they are being given a new and effective treatment are more likely to recover than those who know that their treatment is nothing new. The placebo effect may sound extraordinary, but it has been seen time and time again in clinical trials. The lessons are twofold: New treatments have to 'beat' placebos to be sure that they have a real effect; and The mind is an extremely powerful tool and, if at all possible, healthcare practitioners should help their patients to draw on it. A positive attitude will probably not cure cancer in itself. But positive thinking will make it easier to manage your life, reduce stress, and also help you to take care of yourself better. And those things are important to help you recover from serious diseases. WARNING! Don't force it Positive thinking is good. But you should not try to use it to block out everything negative that happens in your life. Sometimes bad stuff happens, and you will feel down about it. It's no good pretending that you don't because forced positive thinking can be counterproductive. What you need to avoid is the 'developing disaster' scenario (the 'my life is a total disaster' tape that plays in your head). The best way to do that is NOT to tell yourself that your life is perfect. Instead, you need to recognise what has gone wrong but set it in context. For example: "Yes, I'm having a bad day, but tomorrow will be better. I will go home now and I will be able to think of a solution to the problem in the morning when I am less tired." Tamar Chamsky, a clinical psychologist, calls this 'Possible Thinking', and research suggests that it is the best way to recover from difficult events. Developing Habits of Positive Thinking If you think about positive thinking as 'being happy', it is much easier to work out what you should do to develop habits based on it. For example, what do you like doing? And with whom do you like spending time? Research shows that there are three very good ways to build positive thinking skills: 1. Meditation People who meditate every day show more positive thinking than those who do not. Is that the meditation causing the positive thinking, or just having time to think? It's hard to tell, but it's also hard to argue with the science. People who meditate tend to show more mindfulness, or ability to live in the present, which is also associated with positive thinking. 2. Writing A group of undergraduates were asked to write about an intensely positive experience every day for three days. Amazingly, they had better moods and better physical health afterwards, and the effect lasted for quite a long time. This is a pretty easy thing to do: you could, for example, write a blog focusing on positive experiences, or keep a diary. 3. Play It's important to make time for yourself to have fun Sometimes you might need to actually put it into your diary to force yourself to make that time, whether it's to meet a friend for coffee, or go out for a walk or a bike ride. You can also look at our page on Neuro-linguistic Programming for more ideas about how to help yourself to think positively. Further Reading from Skills You Need The Skills You Need Guide to Life: Looking After Yourself Based on some of our most popular content, this eBook will help you to live a happier, healthier and more productive life. Learn how to look after your body and mind: the fundamental first steps to personal development. This eBook, now in its second edition, with new and revised content, is designed to make life both easier and better. A Virtuous Circle Happy people, those with a positive outlook on life, are not just happier, but also seem to achieve much more. While success may lead to happiness, there is very little question that happiness also leads to success. Finding time to be positive about your life, and to do the things that make you feel positive emotions like happiness, is vital to helping you to develop skills and grow as a person. Positive thinking is everywhere: Manifestation, vision boards and phrases like "No bad days" abound, and it seems that everyone on the planet wants to learn how to think positive. But what does it really mean to think positive? And can positive thinking alone help you realize your dreams? It is true that your thoughts affect your actions. Your actions, in turn, translate into whether or not you succeed - in your career, relationships and life. Your thoughts also play a part in your values and beliefs, which influence the quality of your personal relationships and how you view the world at large. It's essential that we don't get caught up in only thinking positively. You can sit in the garden of your mind telling yourself there are no weeds, but to build a truly fulfilling life, you need to stop covering up the weeds with positive thinking - and pick them instead. You need to get to the root of what's holding you back and cultivate an overall positive mindset that doesn't ignore negative emotions, but knows how to control them. Positive thinking is an emotional and mental attitude that focuses on the good and expects results that will benefit you. It's about anticipating happiness, health and success instead of expecting the worst. Leveraging the law of attraction, this mindset creates a positive feedback loop that brings even more good into your life. So what is positive thinking not? It is not a cure-all that will automatically make you happier and more fulfilled. It isn't a solution to deep-seated limiting beliefs like fear of failure and fear of success. And it doesn't mean sitting around all day telling yourself you're happy. To achieve your dreams, you'll need more than a positive mindset. You'll need to act. Don't just think positive - overcome your limiting beliefs and transform your entire mindset. Get the Free Guide Ultimately, building a fulfilling life is about mastering your emotions, both positive and negative. Positive thinking is one tool in your toolkit, but there are others you'll need. Here are six ways to fully embrace not only the power of positive thinking but also the incredible power of your mindset. You didn't get the promotion you worked so hard for. You've been let go from your job. Your partner broke up with you. You have chronic health issues that hold you back. These are all difficult situations that many of us will face at some point in our lives. The real question is: How will you react to them? Do you blame others when bad things happen to you? Or do you look to yourself for the solution? When you take responsibility for how you think, act and feel, you have an internal locus of control - and that's a key trait of successful people. This type of thinking lends you a deep belief in yourself and a positive mindset that allows you to get up and start over after a failure. From there, everything else in your life can fall into place. Remember: The only thing in life you can control is yourself. You can't control every event - but you can control how you react to them. Once you empower yourself to change what's in your control - you - only then are you ready for the power of positive thinking. Have you noticed that when you're having a bad day, your body language shows it? You slump over in your chair, you have a hard time making eye contact with others and do things like cross your arms when you're feeling uncomfortable. You stop being mindful and allow your environment and circumstances to control you. This is not a powerful stance. Your body tells those around you that you are uneasy, angry or sad and want to be left alone. This creates a feedback loop as your poor posture reinforces your poor mindset. Positive thinking is as much about your body as it is about your brain. Take control of your physiology by taking pride in how you present yourself. Work on your posture to give those around you nonverbal cues that you are feeling strong and positive, and are ready to listen to them. Stop nervous habits like fidgeting or twirling your hair. This technique requires you to observe yourself, as soon as you catch yourself giving in to a nervous tic or starting to slump, straighten up. As you hold your body in a power pose, a more positive mindset will naturally follow. Those around you will pick up on the physiological signals you're sending and will respond with positivity. The more you portray positivity and others see you this way, the easier positive thinking becomes, creating a new feedback loop. You will then be able to focus on others and do things such as asking three vital questions to find out how you can give to the world and others. Adjusting your physiology is only one part of the puzzle; it's critical to catch the other negativity trigger in its opening stages as well. Your mindset governs what thoughts flow through your head and how you feel and react to each one. If your mindset is poor, everything around you is going to seem all the worse. For example, you're at the airport and are unnecessarily delayed while going through security. Then the airline attendant checking you in is rude to you. Another airline worker overhears, apologizes and bumps your ticket up to business class. Once you're in the air, are you fixated on the hassles you faced in the airport, or are you grateful for your spacious seat and free cocktail? Do you think of the delay as wasted time or as a way to take time and reconnect with yourself? Do you automatically revert to the power of positive thinking or do negative thoughts take over? You can choose to focus on the negatives or the positives of this - and any - scenario, but if you choose to focus on what's bothering you, it will begin to negatively impact your life. You'll also attract more negative situations - people won't be friendly to you when you're scowling and hostile. You may punish your partner or others for not living up to your expectations, eroding your relationships and adding to more bitterness. You'll forget that you can empower yourself to tackle any situation and start believing that a positive mindset is out of your reach. Positive thinking bypasses that rage and inconvenience, allowing you to enjoy the moment and be fully present. By consciously choosing to focus on positive moments in your life, you'll begin to reframe your thoughts, cultivating an abundance mindset that is grateful and open rather than negative and closed off. You can't form new habits and harness the power of positive thinking if you're unaware of your current ones. Are there things that set you into a negative spiral of self-doubt? Do you react to situations openly or do you utilize defense mechanisms? If so, what are they? Perhaps you become agitated whenever you start thinking about going after a promotion at work. Your thoughts take you to a dark place and positive thinking goes out the window. You calculate how long you've been with the company and start thinking about why you haven't been promoted already. Do your bosses know something you don't? Maybe they don't think you're capable of doing the job. You begin to question your skill set, and then you wonder if you'll ever move up in your field. Maybe you'll just quit. Think of all the time you're wasting by falling back on this negative habit. Self-doubt is almost always rooted in fear - often the fear of failure. Doing something and failing seems like it would be unbearable, so your mind comes up with all sorts of reasons as to why you won't even make an effort. If you give in to these negative thoughts, you might not fail but you will stagnate, which is worse. As Tony says, "If you're not growing, you're dying." If you fail, at least you can learn something. If you stagnate, you won't. What if, instead of getting swept up in a pattern of negative thoughts, you refocused your energy and developed empowering habits that use positive thinking? Stop the spiral of doubt by blocking it with positive thoughts. If you're able to cut off a negative thought pattern before it gets out of hand, you can shift to recalling positive affirmations instead. By training your mind to block negative thoughts with positive thinking, you're steadily training yourself to stop thinking in a negative way. Fear won't rule you anymore. That's the power of positive thinking. One habit that is essential to positive thinking is to transform your vocabulary. The words you choose - both in conversation and in your own mind - have a deep impact on your mindset. Studies have found that positive self-talk improves psychological states, helps people regulate their emotions and more. Your conversation affects how others respond to you, again creating a feedback loop that can be either positive or negative. Before you can choose different words, you need to recognize what words you're already using. Take note of how you label and describe things in conversation, particularly your own emotions. Are you really "terrified" of that big work presentation or just a little nervous? Are you truly "angry" at your partner or mildly annoyed at one of their bad habits? When you dial back your vocabulary and use words that are less emotionally loaded, you'll find your mindset becomes attuned to more positive thinking. Many people find it helpful to write down negative words they find themselves using throughout the day. For every negative word, write a positive alternative next to it. Keep the alternatives in the back of your mind to use next time. Find this aspect of positive thinking overwhelming? Start with just one area of your life that causes negative thoughts, like work or your relationship status. Catch yourself in those moments, and build from there. Think of someone who's had a profound impact on your life. It can be a close friend, family member or someone you've never met, like a celebrity, professional athlete or renowned entrepreneur. What mottos does that person live by? Have they been able to unlock extraordinary lives due to their positive thinking habits? Chances are, they use the power of positive thinking to find the success they seek - and you can, too. When you feel yourself falling into negative habits and can't quite seem to figure out how to think positive, pull up a quotation from someone you respect. Read it and determine how you can best embody it. You can even write it down and post it somewhere you'll see it often, such as the refrigerator or on the side of your computer screen. The person you admire doesn't have to be famous. The story of Jay and Fariha is a real-life example of how positive thinking can be contagious to our friends and loved ones. One of the first things Fariha noticed about Jay was his positivity - the "kick in his step." Jay was cultivating positive emotions on a daily basis thanks to Tony's philosophies. He shared those philosophies with Fariha and both attended Unleash the Power Within, where Fariha learned vital strategies she could use to change her mindset and start living the life of her dreams. If you have someone you think of as a mentor, even better. Get on the phone and ask them to share some positive thoughts. Tony often quotes his own mentor, Jim Rohn, when he says, "Every day, stand guard at the door of your mind, and you alone decide what thoughts and beliefs you let into your life." Will you give in to the temptation to think negatively and stagnate -- and then blame others when you don't reach your goals? Or will you guard your mind and only allow in positive thinking that propels you toward the life you dream of? It's up to you. Yes, positive thinking can change your life. Studies have found that positive thinking helps you live longer, reduces loneliness and more. But the most life-changing effect of positive thinking has to do with the law of attraction. This is the idea that what you focus on, you attract. As Tony says, "Whatever you hold in your mind on a consistent basis is exactly what you will experience in your life." When you focus on the negative, you'll experience more negatives. But when you focus on the positive, the whole world opens up to you. The first step to training your mind for positive thinking is to identify your bad habits and negative thought patterns. Once you've recognized these, you can replace them with positive habits and words that aren't as emotionally charged. If you find yourself spiraling into a thought pattern of worry and anxiety, ask yourself: What is this emotion really telling me? What am I really afraid of? Then make an action plan to overcome that fear. Keeping your mind positive is a series of actions you take every day. It doesn't always come easily, but experiencing the power of positive thinking in your life is worth it. One significant habit is to start your day with priming, or affirmations. Your morning ritual sets the tone for your day and puts you in the right mindset to take on all your tasks with positivity. 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