

New Workplace, New You!

The Power of Positive Thinking

Do you remember the last time you looked in the mirror? Did you think something positive about yourself, like how wonderful you look? Or did you think or say something negative? [What you say to yourself can have as much impact on your health as eating right and exercising!](#)

When trying to overcome stress, having a positive state of mind can change your life.

Positive thinking begins with your self-talk. Self-talk is the endless stream of thoughts that run through your head every day. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information.

If the thoughts that run through your head are mostly negative, your outlook on life is likely pessimistic. If your thoughts are mostly positive, you're likely an optimist — someone who practices positive thinking.

The Benefits of Positive Thinking

Researchers continue to explore the effects of positive thinking and optimism on health. Health benefits that positive thinking may provide include:

- ✓ Decreased negative stress
- ✓ Greater resistance to catching the common cold
- ✓ A sense of well-being and improved health
- ✓ Reduced risk of coronary artery disease
- ✓ Easier breathing if you have certain lung diseases, such as emphysema
- ✓ Improved coping ability for women with high-risk pregnancies
- ✓ Better coping skills during hardships
- ✓ Better outlook on life

(Source: mayoclinic.com)

It's unclear why people who engage in positive thinking experience these health benefits. But one theory is that having a positive outlook enables you to cope better with stressful situations, which reduces the harmful health effects of stress on your body.

If you find that you are a negative thinker and tend to use mostly negative self talk, it does not mean you are doomed to be unhappy. Your negative self talk means that your misperceptions, lack of information and/or distorted ideas have overpowered your capacity for what is really going on. Once you begin to recognize the types of self-talk you may be using, it will be easier to realize when you are doing it, and to switch your thoughts to something more positive.

Some common forms of negative and irrational self-talk include:

- **Filtering.** You magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all of the positive ones.
- **Personalizing.** When something bad occurs, you automatically blame yourself. For example, you hear that an evening out with friends is cancelled and you assume that the change in plans is because no one wanted to be around you.
- **Catastrophizing.** You automatically anticipate the worst. For example, one change in your daily routine leads you to think the entire day will be a disaster.
- **Polarizing.** You see things only as good or bad, black or white. There is no middle ground. You feel that you have to be perfect or that you're a total failure.

(Source: mayoclinic.com)

You can learn positive thinking and it's worth it!

Instead of giving in to these kinds of negative self-talk, weed out misconceptions and irrational thinking and then challenge them with rational, positive thoughts. When you do this, your self-talk will gradually become realistic and self-affirming — you engage in positive thinking. The more you do it, the easier it gets.

You can learn to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. The process is simple, but it takes time and practice — you are creating a new habit, after all.

Periodically during the day, stop and evaluate what you're thinking. If you find that your thoughts are mainly negative, try to find a way to put a positive spin on them.

Start by following one simple rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else.