

8052 - Staying Positive

Did you know that your thoughts form your character, how you operate in the world and how far you travel mentally, physically and spiritually? You've heard the phrase "you are what you eat" but did you know that you are what you THINK, too?

Some studies show that personality traits such as optimism and pessimism can affect many areas of your health and well-being. The positive thinking that is associated with optimism is a key part of stress management and effective stress management is associated with many health benefits. If you tend to be pessimistic, it isn't too late to learn positive thinking skills and reap the health benefits that come with optimism!

The Science Behind Positive Thinking

Every thought releases brain chemicals. Being focused on negative thoughts:

- Saps brain of positive forcefulness
- Slows it down
- Dims your brain's ability to function
- Creates depression



Thinking positive thoughts decreases cortisol and produces serotonin, which creates a sense of well-being and helps your brain function at peak capacity.

Happy thoughts and positive thinking, in general, support brain growth, as well as the generation and reinforcement of new synapses, especially in your prefrontal cortex (PFC). Your PFC serves as the integration center of all your brain-mind functions. The PFC is the only part of your brain that can control your emotions and behaviors and help you focus on your goals and living life the way you decide!

The Health 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:

- Increased life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Lower levels of distress
- Greater resistance to the common cold
- Better psychological and physical well-being
- Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
- Better coping skills during hardships and times of stress



One theory on how having a positive outlook impacts your health is that positivity allows you to cope better with stressful situations, which reduces the harmful health effects of stress on your body. It's also thought that positive people tend to live healthier lifestyles – they get more physical activity, follow a healthier diet and don't smoke or drink alcohol in excess.

Identifying Negative Thinking

Not sure whether your thoughts are harmful? Here are some common forms of negative self-talk:

- **Filtering.** You magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all the positive ones. Example: Your boss praises your quarterly report but points out an item that was missing and you spend all evening fretting about your oversight.
- **Personalizing.** When something bad occurs, you automatically blame yourself. Example: Friends cancel a night out and you assume it was because they didn't want to be around you.
- **Catastrophizing.** You automatically anticipate the worst. Example: Traffic is bad on Monday morning and you immediately take it as an omen for a terrible day ahead.
- **Polarizing.** You see things in only black or white. Example: You start a healthy eating program and give up after one cookie, deeming yourself a failure.



Negative Self-Talk	Positive Self-Talk
There's no way it will work.	I can try to make it work.
I'm not going to get any better at this.	I'll give it another try.
I've never done it before.	It's an opportunity to learn something new.

Positive Affirmations & Self-Talk

Repeating positive statements/declarations, also called affirmations, is a self-talk method for changing your attitude and developing positive habits. You can reap the benefits of what your conscious mind sows into your subconscious by using this method and following these basic instructions:

- Always phrase your affirmations in the present.
- Use only positive & constructive words.
- Be specific – tell your mind exactly what you want.
- Keep affirmations short and easy to remember.
- Include strong feelings and desires. Feelings and emotions give life to your words.
- Repeat affirmations aloud, mentally or by writing them down.

Some examples of great positive affirmations...

I may not understand the good in this situation yet but it is there.

I choose to find hopeful and optimistic ways to look at this.

I refuse to give up because I haven't tried all possible ways.

My thoughts are my reality and I am thinking of a bright, new day.

I let go of my fears & worries that drain my energy for no good return.

All that I need will come to me at the right time and place in this life.

I am deeply fulfilled with who I am.

Sources: www.mayoclinic.com, www.prolificliving.com, www.psychologytoday.com, www.successconsciousness.com