

EMBRACE HEALTHY THOUGHTS

The Power of Positive Thinking



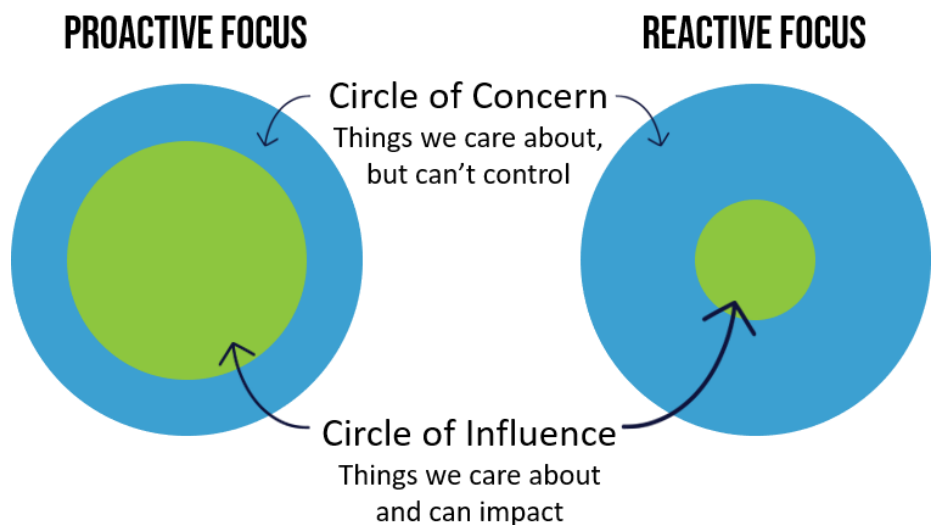
Positive thinking is the ability to stay motivated, hopeful, and optimistic even when our life experiences are not quite what we'd like. But is it science or just wishful thinking? **Psychoneuroimmunology** is the study of the interaction between psychological processes and the nervous and immune systems. Research shows that what we think and believe can affect the biochemical makeup of our bodies and the function of our immune system.

Are You Proactive or Reactive?

Your *circle of concern* includes a range of things in the world and in your life that matter to you – things like your health, family, finances, the environment, the economy, etc. Everything within this circle concerns you, and everything outside of this circle is of little or no concern to you. The challenge is that some of these things that you care about are outside of your control. On the other hand, in some cases, there are ways that we can impact the things that we care about. That's where your *circle of influence* comes into play. It exists within your circle of concern and defines the things that you can do something about.

When we are faced with change, we either *react* to the situation or choose to *respond* to it. When we effectively embrace change and accept it as a normal part of life, we can focus our time and energy on the things we actually have some control over.

Approaching a situation with positive energy allows us to expand our circle of influence, while negativity reduces it. There is definitely some power in being positive!



The Benefits of Positive Thinking

Research continues to point to the benefits of optimism on our health and well-being, which may include:

- ☺ Increased life span
- ☺ Lower rates of depression
- ☺ Stronger immune system
- ☺ Better cardiovascular health
- ☺ Better psychological and physical well-being
- ☺ Better coping abilities during times of stress

Building a More Positive Mindset

If you tend to have a negative outlook, you can't expect to become an optimist overnight. With practice, however, you can train your brain to move in a more positive direction. Consider these tips and tactics that can help change your mindset to be more positive.

1

Adopt a morning gratitude practice.

Practicing gratitude is always a good idea, but making a point to do it in the morning starts your day on a good note. As soon as you wake, take a moment to think of at least 3 things for which you are grateful. Gratitude doesn't need to be grandiose or deep. It simply needs to point the mind in a more positive direction.

2

Take care of your physical body.

Nurturing our bodies is an important aspect of living a positive life. Our thoughts can affect how we feel physically, and our physical well-being can influence how we think. For example, a restless night may leave you feeling tired, irritable, and apathetic. Exercise, fresh air, quality sleep, and a balanced diet help increase your energy levels and motivation.

3

Work on your self-talk.

Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to someone else. When a negative thought enters your mind, evaluate it, and respond with words of affirmation. For instance, if you think "It's going to be another one of those days" respond with "Today will be another great day. I'm happy, healthy, and ready to enjoy what life has to offer."

4

Be kind – to yourself and others.

Kindness is a big mood-booster. Look for ways to care for yourself and take advantage of opportunities to bring a smile to someone else. A positive mindset also includes acknowledging the many emotions that we feel. A positive person will still feel sad, mad, or lonely at times. Accept where you are and what you feel and determine what you need to feel better.

5

Find your sense of purpose.

Research shows that having a meaningful purpose is associated with contentment and happiness. Your purpose provides you with a positive foundation even when faced with challenges and difficult situations. It keeps you focused and inspired. Having a sense of direction means you're less likely to let negativity derail you along life's bumpy road.

6

Have a growth mindset.

Believing in your ability to grow and adapt helps fuel positivity. Change your view of challenges and mistakes and see them as opportunities for growth and progress. Take part in activities like journaling and goal-setting. Be open and willing to learn and try new things. See weaknesses and imperfections as opportunities for self-improvement.

7

Grow your resilience.

A resilient attitude makes all the difference when facing a challenge. It's about accepting challenges as part of life, maintaining hope, and being able to focus on finding a solution rather than letting fear and worry take over.

8

Audit how you spend your time.

Be mindful of the activities that fill your days. Reflect on these activities and whether they bring joy and positivity into your life. Who you spend your time with is also important. Emotions are contagious, so surround yourself with people who inspire you and bring out your best.

Sources www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950
www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/the-power-of-positive-thinking | Images from Freepik.com