

Developing a positive mindset for better performance and an easier life!



Is your glass half-full, or half-empty? When life gives you lemons, do you add water to make it easier to swallow or do you find yourself sucking up the bitter taste, perhaps spluttering a bit on the way?!

When asked to do a new task or given a new challenge at work do you find yourself thinking, 'GREAT, **yes I can** do this – what an opportunity', or is your response more 'great, yet **more** work!'

If you find yourself thinking the latter (or something similar), then you could benefit from developing a more positive mindset and this article can help you in doing just that – if you want it!

'But...', I hear you say, 'why would I need to think more positively, it makes no difference to me or anyone else how I think...' WRONG! Countless studies, brain scans, health statistics, performance AND PROMOTION statistics all agree that it DOES make a difference to us whether we think positively or negatively.

Did you know that people who actively think positively generally live longer than those who fail in this skill? There are a number of theories and studies around this, many of which focus on the physical impacts of how we cope with stress – the fight/flight/freeze response in our immune systems. There is even proof that people with higher risk of cardiovascular disease are less likely to suffer the ill effects of this if they think positively, crazy right!

On top of this massive positive bonus of being, well, more positive, people who are solutions motivated rather than 'moany motivated' are far more likely to get promoted at work, people who are moany motivated may well find themselves more likely to get ditched!

And, people who actively seek positive outcomes have greater performance (and therefore rewards) than those who come across more negative in mindset.

THE POSITIVITY SCALE

So, let's see how you measure up on the positivity scale.

On a scale of 0-10, how positive are you? (0 being not at all, 10 being totally positive)

Now, just for fun(!), answer the following questions, yes or no – there’s no in-between.*

1. I love a new challenge	
2. I like people asking me for help or advice	
3. When I’m asked to take on a new job or task, I think ‘I can do this’	
4. I am rarely in a bad mood longer than five minutes	
5. I encourage people to think about the good things	
6. I am interested in other’s views and perspectives	
7. I recognise the good things in my life	
8. I see critical feedback as an opportunity to improve myself	
9. I am self-motivated	
10. I actively seek out the positives even in difficult or negative situations	

*this quiz no scientific background!

How many did you say YES! to?

Now, does that help you answer how positive you are on a scale of 0-10? How did those ratings match up?

Score any less than 7 and you may be struggling to achieve your full potential in life. Score any less than 4 and there’s a likely change you’re even pulling others down around you.

So, what are you going to do about it? Stay that way, after all what’s the point in changing, growing, being better, having a better life or attitude to life?

OR

Decide today’s the day you’ll learn a better way, a more productive, engaging, happier way. A positive way!

THE TRUTH

A positive mental attitude takes work, it often doesn’t come naturally. We all need to work on it daily. It’s easy to be negative, to criticise, judge others, moan and groan – especially when we’re surrounded by negative news 24/7. But that will never make you or those around you feel good, and don’t you want to feel good?

Think about it, do you like to be judged? Do you like to spend time with people who moan and see the negatives in everything? Probably not. Well let me share something quite astonishing, neither do most other people!

So, let’s quit judgement, let’s quit being negative – yes, be realistic, but keep it positive real.

To help us along the way, here are six steps to positive thinking.

SIX POSITIVE STEPS TO A LIGHTER OUTLOOK AND HAPPIER LIFE

1. **SMILE** – yes, I KNOW, it's soooo simple! Studies have shown that even fake smiling helps reduce stress and can pop you over that negative hump and plopp you firmly down into the positive pile! Make faces at yourself in the mirror (works for me – I feel such an idiot I find myself laughing), dance to your favourite music like no-one's watching, watch funny clips on the internet, read motivational quotes, jokes etc. Or simply take your mind back to a time in your life you were super happy. Be nice to someone, just because you can – their response will undoubtedly make you smile and at the same time you'll improve their day too, or share funny meme's with friends or colleagues... all to make you, and others, smile.

ACTION: Spend a few minutes smiling to yourself. How has that impacted your mental state?

2. **REFRAME NEGATIVE THOUGHTS** – if you find yourself on the more negative side of 'great, yet more work' thinking, try reframing those negatives to be more positive – is it a new task and therefore more challenging? Remember that changing things up a little makes life more interesting, when we do the same thing day in day out, we can get bored, but being given different tasks to do revitalises our life – so 'great, yet more work' becomes 'GREAT, different work!' 'I don't want to...' becomes 'I want to...', 'I'm not sure about...' becomes 'I'll try it out and get better with practise'.

ACTION: Try thinking back to your most recent two or three negative thoughts. Have a go at reframing them to be more positive.

From my negative thought:	To my positive reframe:
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How does that feel? Pretty easy when you actually do it hey!

3. **BUILD RESILIENCE** – now, we know that stress is impacting us more and more, as the world becomes smaller, competition gets fiercer, time gets tighter and we place higher expectations on EVERYTHING. We need to take time out to build resilience. Resilience is a skill, it CAN be learned, as with all (or at least a lot of) these things, it's about training our mind and managing our mindset better.

Reframing negative thoughts is a resilience skill, a tool to help us cope better. Learning about mindfulness (and mindful moments) is also a tool and a very useful one to help combat overwhelm when the pressure hits. Look up the Circle of Influence too, another great tool to help let go of the things that we actually have no control over – it takes a weight off anyone's shoulders I can tell you, just three of the awesome and learnable skills in building resilience.

4. **HAVE MORE FUN** – find something fun in everything you do, even the vacuuming can be fun if you think about how it burns calories, cleans the house, removes the dog/cat... errr guinea pig? fur and makes the place feel so much better. Chase your child, partner etc with the vacuum, make it a game... watching my son mow the lawn at 5 years old is enlightening to how much fun it can be, running around the garden making patterns in the grass! It's fun to watch too, him doing my chores and enjoying it so much!

Take time out to do the things you find fun, the things you love doing, make the most of life and what it has to offer – it WILL make you happier, I promise.

REFLECTION: What's fun about your next task? What will you do to make it fun? What will you do today that's 'time out' and fun for you?

5. **THREE POSITIVES BEFORE A NEGATIVE** – this is similar to reframing; it's about managing our thoughts. Sometimes we just need to accept that things aren't perfect. But what we can do to alleviate the negatives is find positives around it. Yes, 'I have more work to do, and I have no idea how I can fit it all in, but on the plus side...'
- i. ...doing this work mixes up my tasks / day'
 - ii. ...doing this task will get me noticed/recognised as someone who works hard, achieves, is reliable etc.'
 - iii. ...I will learn new skills / meet different people and may even find new opportunities if I do this work'.

By finding positives we can better accept the negatives in any situation. By better accepting the negatives, we become more successful, happier and healthier human beings.

ACTION: Consider the task or job that you are looking forward to least today. What are three positives around this task?

6. **POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS** – you **CAN** do this! It's such a simple thing, but how often do you do it? I mean, tell yourself you can do it? I recall a close friend whose and actor, when I was young, helping me overcome some personal challenges, a typical teenage issue of 'I don't like myself'. She shared an acting technique with me and told me to stand in front of a mirror every morning and say to myself 'I love you' ten times.

At first, I felt like an absolute fool! But gradually I got used to it, then I got comfortable with it, then I miraculously found myself comfortable with **myself**... very odd, almost magic, oh how the human brain can trick us into both positive and negative experiences!

This also works with positive statements about achievement, good days and so on. Try telling yourself 'today will be a good day' ten times before you even properly wake up in the morning, tell yourself 'you can do this', 'you are brilliant' etc. What ever your negative thoughts, create positive affirmations about them. Pop a positive statement on a post it and stick it to your mirror so you read it when doing your teeth or write it in the bathroom mist on the mirror or shower screen, so each time you shower you're reminded of it...

Positive quotes can have a similar impact in drive to achieve and get up and go each day.

These are just six ways you can work at hosting yourself a happier and more positive life. Other ways can be to help others – random acts of kindness create positivity all round and reduce negative impacts (such as household clutter, negative people around you etc.) in your life...

Let's get a positive vibe going. Please freely share this article with others, along with your own tips on what's worked for you in developing a more positive mindset in this unpredictable world. Good luck – remember, you can do this! From us here at Thirst4 Learning.