



POSITIVE THOUGHTS; POSITIVE PEOPLE; POSITIVE ACTIONS

by Leigh Wallinger

Think positive thoughts

Most people will probably agree that being “positive” is a whole lot better than being “negative”. Being an optimist means you expect the very best to happen in your life. You are bursting with energy and will be driving yourself forwards, with a spring in your step. Life seems full of good things and opportunities. You are positive about your situation, your prospects and your future.

Contrast this to a negative person, the pessimist. Being a pessimist means you expect problems to occur. You might even feel that everything you try will go wrong and that everyone is against you. Every day will be littered with obstacles and problems and you will tend to blame others for your circumstances. There is certainly no spring in your step, everything is an uphill battle and life gets you down.

Are you an optimist or a pessimist?

Where do you sit on this spectrum from optimist to pessimist?
Why are you at that point?

How is it that the same event can cause people to react in completely different ways?

For example, imagine you are travelling to a distant city for a meeting the following day. At the last minute, your flight or your train is cancelled. The next departure is not for another 2 hours. How would you react?

Optimists would quickly accept the situation and assess how to get the best out of circumstances for which they have no control. They would readily accept this time can be used to tackle more tasks on their to-do list. Even when travelling light, this time could be used for reflection, planning and reviewing. They would make the best of the circumstances and look to gain some value from the delays.

Pessimists would moan about the cancellation and probably become very agitated. They would be inclined to go and look for somebody to blame, feeling it was yet another example of how everything goes wrong for them. Their anger and negative emotions mean that they would not use the delay to any benefit. This time, this opportunity, is lost forever.

It is fascinating to watch how people react in such different ways to the same set of circumstances, even when it is obvious that the events are completely outside their control.

Learn to take responsibility

Look at the word responsibility – response+ability – the ability to choose your response [from ‘The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People’ by Stephen Covey]. Positive people recognise this. They do not blame circumstances, conditions or their upbringing for the way they behave.

Nature is neutral. It is only humans who have the ability to respond to events, either positively or negatively. The key point to remember, should you ever find yourself feeling angry, victimised or stressed, is you have chosen to respond to the event in the way you do.

You could decide on a different response. So, how do you become a more positive person?

Answer: Feed your mind with positive thoughts and think only about the things you want.



Read books or listen to CDs by people that tell you how you can, not why you can't. Try material from Dale Carnegie, Ken Blanchard, Stephen Covey, Wayne Dyer, Brian Tracy, Jeffrey Gitomer, Tony Robbins and Harvey Mackay for starters.

Mix with positive people

We looked earlier at some of the differences between positive and negative people in terms of how they respond to situations. Look to surround yourself with as many positive people as possible. Associating with positive people will make you more positive, optimistic and upbeat.

According to Brian Tracy, you should choose your friends and associates very carefully indeed. Winston Churchill once said, "the pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty". The minds of positive people will focus on solutions and being around them will encourage your mind to do the same.

One of the biggest pitfalls for positive people, because they are optimistic and solution oriented, is for them to think they can help a negative person to become more positive. For some reason, this rarely works out. These negative people often seem to respond positively at first but over time they plant the seeds of doubt in the mind of the positive person. In fact, the negative person eventually drains away all the energy from the positive person, who gradually becomes tired, lethargic and pessimistic.

You must be extremely selective and avoid associating with negative people.

One way to benefit from other positive people is to form a Mastermind group that meets regularly to network, share information and help one another. This group of positive people will be invaluable to you when you do have some seeds of doubt put into your mind. There can be lots of energy when a group of positive people get together which makes activities like brainstorming incredibly productive. If you do decide to form your own Mastermind group, take it slowly at first and get everyone in the group comfortable with each other. It is only when each member can be inter-dependent of the others will the full benefits be realised.

Take positive actions

Undoubtedly, everyone has a huge to-do list - so there's plenty of opportunity to take action. In fact, you've probably got far more to do than you have the time in which to complete the tasks. It is important to find a way to sort out the key tasks, the high-value tasks, from the rest. Many people spend all their time dealing with low-value tasks giving them the feeling of "running to stand still".

Several techniques exist which can help you. Firstly, Stephen Covey makes distinctions between Urgent and non-Urgent; Important and Unimportant tasks. Typically, Urgent tasks force us to react and non-Urgent tasks require some proactivity. You need to focus on dealing with tasks that are Important – both Urgent and non-Urgent. You must use all your skills to minimise the number of Urgent tasks that appear on your to-do list (through planning etc) so you can spend more of your time on the non-Urgent (less stressful) tasks.

Firstly write down your to-do list. Separate the tasks into Important and Unimportant. Then take the Important tasks and separate them into Urgent and non-Urgent. As you have more tasks on your list than you could possibly complete, just leave the Unimportant tasks on one side.

The Important / Urgent tasks are the deadline driven tasks that need your immediate attention.

Take action straight away to deal with them. Hopefully there won't be too many in this category, so prioritisation is unlikely to be needed.



For the Important / non-Urgent tasks, give each of them a target completion date. You use this when managing your to-do list to ensure you complete the task before it switches from being a non-Urgent into an Urgent task, which will increase your stress levels. Next, prioritise your Important / non-Urgent tasks and work on the most important one until it is completed (or you reach a point where further progress can't be made), then move on to the next highest priority.

Review your to-do list daily to ensure priorities are always up to date and you know what your highest value task is for that day. This is taking positive action and getting some momentum behind these important tasks will add to your motivation. This in turn will help you to maintain positive thoughts in your mind.

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