



## Positive Thinking

Is your glass half-empty or half-full? How you answer this age-old question about positive thinking may reflect your outlook on life, your attitude toward yourself, and whether you're optimistic or pessimistic — and it may even affect your health.

Studies show that personality traits like optimism and pessimism can affect your health and well-being. The positive thinking that typically comes with optimism is a key part of effective stress management. If you tend to be pessimistic, don't despair — you can learn positive thinking skills.

### Understanding positive thinking and self-talk

Positive thinking doesn't mean that you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations. It means that you approach unpleasantness in a positive and productive way. You think the best is going to happen, not the worst.

Positive thinking often starts with self-talk, the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Some may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information.

### 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.

It's unclear why people who engage in positive thinking experience these health benefits. 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. It's also thought that positive and optimistic 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 if your self-talk is positive or negative? Here are some common forms of negative self-talk:

- **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.
- **Catastrophizing.** You automatically anticipate the worst.
- **Polarizing.** You see things only as either good or bad.

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"We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses." — Abraham Lincoln

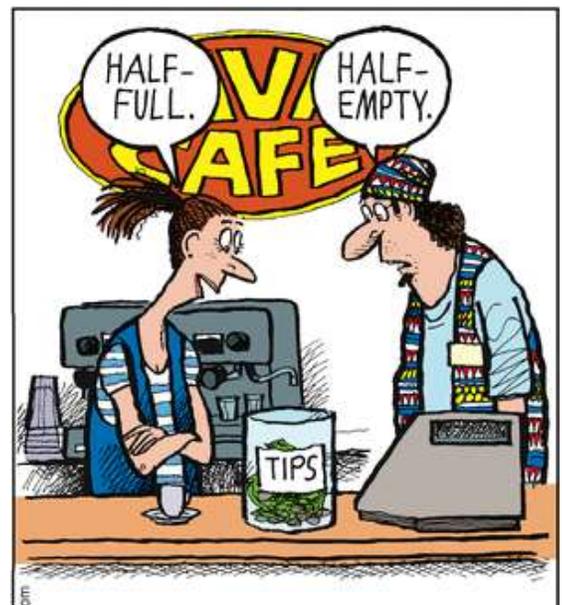
## UICS NEWS

Positive thinking can be easy in the summer. With sunny warm days, and family holidays planned for many, it is not such a challenge to focus on the "bright side". So this may be the perfect time to develop the "habit" of positive thinking. Even if you are not a natural-born optimist, there are things you can do to learn how to think positive. Positive thinking can take effort in the face of challenging situations. Like any goal, the key is to stick with it for the long-term. Even if you find yourself dwelling on negative thoughts, you can look for ways to minimize negative self-talk and cultivate a more optimistic outlook.

This summer, UICS will be planning an EFAP Training workshop, promoting health, safety, and wellness in the workplace, for September. We are encouraging all our members to have representatives attend this free workshop. Having a strong EFAP component in your worksite benefits everyone. Watch for more information throughout the summer and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

*Garth Greatheart, MSW RSW*  
Executive Director

Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.  
~Winston Churchill



## Focusing on positive thinking

You can learn to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. The process is simple, but it does take time and practice — you're creating a new habit. Here are some ways to think and behave in a more positive and optimistic way:

- **Identify areas to change.** If you want to become more optimistic and engage in more positive thinking, first identify areas of your life that you typically think negatively about, whether it's work, your daily commute, or a relationship. You can start small by focusing on one area to approach in a more positive way.
- **Check yourself.** 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.
- **Be open to humor.** Give yourself permission to smile or laugh, especially during difficult times.
- **Follow a healthy lifestyle.** Exercise at least three times a week. Follow a healthy diet to fuel your mind and body. And learn techniques to manage stress.
- **Surround yourself with positive people.** Make sure those in your life are positive, supportive people you can depend on to give helpful advice and feedback
- **Practice positive self-talk.** Start by following one simple rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else. Be gentle and encouraging with yourself. If a negative thought enters your mind, evaluate it rationally and respond with affirmations of what is good about you.

## Practicing positive thinking every day

If you tend to have a negative outlook, don't expect to become an optimist overnight. But with practice, eventually your self-talk will contain less self-criticism and more self-acceptance. You may also become less critical of the world around you.

When your state of mind is generally optimistic, you're better able to handle everyday stress in a more constructive way. That ability may contribute to the widely observed health benefits of positive thinking.  
.... Mayo Clinic Staff



## Couple's Corner

Couples will always experience some conflict and negativity in their relationship. But how you deal with conflict can be influenced by your negative or positive thoughts. If you continually think of your relationship in a negative light, it is more difficult in the middle of a conflict to find productive and positive ways to deal with the conflict. But if you can bring up positive thoughts about your partner and relationship even when in the middle of a conflict, you may be more likely to find positive ways to deal with the conflict. By training your mind to replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts, you can increase the positive behaviors and feelings in your relationship.

### Activities to help you increase the positive:

- In a journal, list three things that you like about your partner.
- List three activities that you enjoy doing with your partner.
- List three reasons why you are with your partner.
- List three things your partner does that make you feel cared for and supported.
- List three things that you could do to help your partner feel cared for and supported.
- Think of other areas in your relationship that you have positive experiences and thoughts about.
- Make it a habit to share at least one positive thought about your partner or relationship with him or her each day.

....Purdue University Extension

## Welcome New Members

We are pleased to welcome the employees and family members of Campbell River Fibre Ltd.



## Leave stress behind with mindful walking

There are dozens of strategies you can use to deal with stress: meditation or breathing exercises for example. But perhaps the most effective tool is mindful walking. Although remarkably simple to do, it's a very powerful form of walking meditation that can defuse stress within minutes.

Mindful walking relaxes the body by channeling anxiety and nervous energy into physical activity and calms the mind by promoting focused awareness. It's like pushing your reset button, and you can do it in as little time as it takes to walk to the bathroom.

The goal is to use walking meditation to gently shift the focus of your attention from worrying about the past or the future, and to focus on what is actually happening in the present moment. All too often, we're thinking about where we're going, and what we'll be doing when we get there. Mindful walking is about being in the present—paying attention to the thoughts, feelings, and sensations we are experiencing right now as well as the ground underfoot and the feeling of the sun or the wind on your face. Even if you're not in an outdoor setting, the act of walking and putting yourself in the present moment can indeed reset your mood and release your stress.

Mindful walking can also clear your mind and make you more creative and productive in your day-to-day work. You come back to your desk or computer screen with a fresher mind—and often with new ideas to try out. Like “sleeping” on a problem, part of your mind seems to keep working on a quandary while you're walking, even if you're not consciously aware of it.

### Here is a simple mindful walking exercise you can practice whenever you need it:

- 1: While walking, pay attention to your breathing. Use this focus on the breath as an anchor to stabilize your attention.
- 2: Next, allow yourself to notice any sights, sounds, or physical sensations that may come up as you walk. Rest your awareness for a moment on that sight, sound, or sensation, then return your awareness to your breathing.
- 3: If persistent thoughts distract you from your mindful awareness, simply notice them, then return your awareness to your breathing.

Jeffrey Rossman, PhD