Positive Thinking: 10 Tips That Will Help You to Overcome Pessimism and Negativity
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https://www.positivityblog.com/positive-thinking

One of the most powerful habits that I've picked up in the past 10+ years is to think in a more optimistic and constructive way.
It makes life feel lighter and not so burdensome. It opens up new paths towards where you want to go and it helps you to more easily overcome setbacks (and often get something good out of them).
You'll feel less worried and sorry for yourself and more motivated to keep taking action.
But how do you adopt this habit?
Well, learning to think in a more positive way may sound a bit vague so in this week's article I want to break it down into 10 practical tips and smaller habits that you can start using today.

1. Start replacing the negativity in your surroundings and life.

What you let into your mind during your regular day will have a big effect on how you think and feel.
So start questioning what you let into your mind.
You can do that by asking yourself:
What are the top 3 sources of negativity in my life?
It could be someone close to you or at work or in school. A website you visit often. A magazine, TV-show, podcast, music and so on.
Then take out a piece of paper and or an empty document on your smart phone and ask yourself:
What can I do to spend less time with these 3 sources this week?
Come up with ideas and action-steps for doing that on your piece of paper or in your phone.
If you can't come up with steps for doing that with all 3 right now then focus on doing it with just one of the sources.
And then, during the next 7 days, spend the time you've now freed up on the most positive sources and people in your life.

2. When you're in what looks like a negative situation, find what's good or helpful about it.

One of the biggest differences between an optimist and someone who lets negative thoughts cloud his mind is how that person perceives a setback or obstacle in life.

I used to, for example, feel like giving up and going home when I stumbled into a negative situation. It felt like it was permanent place I got stuck in and that whatever I did it would not make much of a difference anyway. And so my mind filled up with pessimistic thoughts and I often beat myself up for whatever I had done.

These days I go about things a differently. When I find myself in a situation that looks bleak or negative I ask myself questions that will empower me and help me to grow.

Questions like:

- How would my best friend or parent support and help me in this situation?
- What's one good thing about this situation?
- What's one thing I can learn from this?
- What's one thing I can do differently the next time to likely have a better outcome?

3. Work out regularly.

When I have a tough time thinking myself out of negative thoughts then a short 20-30 minute workout with free weights can help me to change my headspace.

It is time well spent because it releases so many inner tensions, worried feelings and makes me feel stronger again. It focuses my mind and when I'm done with the workout then I'm in a much better place to handle what is going on in my life right now.

Working out several times a week on a regular schedule also helps me to prevent getting stuck in a negative funk in the first place.

4. Stop making mountains out of a molehill.

This used to be one of my biggest issues. I blew up small or medium-sized issues or challenges into monsters in my mind.

Not a good habit if you want to take action to move forward or if you don't want a lot of worries and fear in your daily life.

The easiest way to ground yourself in a situation where you start to sense that you may be making a mountain out of a molehill is in my experience to zoom out a bit on your life by using a question like:

Will this matter in 5 years? Or even 5 weeks?

I have found that answer for me is almost always that it honestly won't.

5. Be grateful for a few of the things you may often take for granted.

When your lens that you view your daily life through is tinted in a negative way then it's easy to miss the things you can actually be grateful for. The things you have that many, many in the world do not have or things you may take for granted.

Take a minute as you get out of bed in morning or get into it in the evening and put your attention on a few such things. A handful of the ones I most often come back to are:

- Three steady meals a day.
- A roof over my head during the rainy days and long, cold seasons here in Sweden.
- As much clean water as I want.
- The kind and helpful family and friends I have in my life.

This one is also a great way to change your perspective when you have a setback or a failure. Take a minute or more then to reflect on what you can be thankful for.

6. Come back to this moment (and stay here).

When you're on the train of negative thoughts then you're often thinking about something that happened.

You're reliving it. Thinking again and again about what you could or should have done or said.

Or you're thinking about something that could happen.

Or maybe a mix of the two of them as a past experience or two build a monster in your mind about what the future may bring.

To get out of any of those places snap back into this moment. To what is right here, right now.

If you make this a habit and try to spend more of your day in this present space then you'll have a fewer negative thoughts and be more focused on what is good and what you can do in this very moment in time to move forward.

So how do you do it practically? A couple of my favorite ways to bring myself to back to being mindful and into this moment are:

- **Spend 1-2 minutes on just taking in the world around you.** Take a very quick break and just focus to 100% on what is around you right now. The sights. The smells. How the sun warms your skin or how your clothes feel. The people walking by your window and the sounds of the kids playing a little further away.
- **Spend 1-2 minutes on just focusing on your breathing.** Take a little deeper breathes than you usually do. Make sure you breathe with you belly and through your nostrils. During this short break only focus on the air going in and out of you and nothing else.

7. Let it out.

If you let negative thoughts bounce around in your mind then they'll drag you down. A workout can help you to release them. Or you can use questions that promote optimistic thinking as described above.

Another thing that works really well is to just let it out.

To talk the situation over with someone close to you.

Venting for a few minutes can really help to find a new and more grounded perspective on the situation. As the other person listens you can figure things out for yourself and what you want to do about it.

Or you may want more active help. If the two of you have a conversation about the situation then you can together find a more helpful perspective and perhaps even the start of an action-plan for what you can do to make things better.

8. Bring the positivity to someone else's life.

When you get stuck in negativity or victim thinking then one of the simplest ways to get out of that and out of your own head is to bring the positivity to someone in your life.

By adding it and seeing him or her light up and become happier you'll feel better about yourself and more optimistic again.

Here's three ways you can do that:

- **Be kind.** Give a genuine compliment about her great taste in music or his cooking, hold up the door or let someone into your lane while driving your car.
- **Help out.** Give some good advice that has worked well for you when you've been in the same situation that your friend or co-worker is in right now. Or help out with setting up your friend's party this weekend or as he's moving to a new apartment next week.
- **Just be there.** Listen as she vents. Or talk her difficult challenge or situation over to help her to start finding her way out of it.

9. Go slowly.

When I go too fast, when I think, talk and move around too fast then things don't go that well.

Stress builds up and it becomes harder to think clearly and level-headedly. Negative thoughts start to swirl around in my mind more often and it's tough to handle or put a stop to them.

If I on the other hand slow down then my mind and body calms down too. It becomes easier to once again find the optimistic perspective and a constructive way forward towards what I want.

10. Get a positive start to your day.

The first few things you do in the morning often set the tone for your whole day.

If you get off to a negative or pessimistic start then it can be quite hard to shake those feelings or perspective. But if you get your morning off to a positive start then it becomes a lot easier to stay with that emotion and the optimism all the way to when it's bedtime.

A couple of simple ways to get your day off to a positive start is:

- **A quick reminder on your bedside table or bathroom mirror.** It could be a quote that truly inspired you or your most important focus or dream right now. Write it down on a piece of paper and put it where you'll see within the first 1-3 minutes after you wake up.
- **Get some positive information or conversation flowing into your mind:** You can do that by listening to a podcast or some of your favorite music, by reading an uplifting blog post or a chapter in a book that makes you laugh. Or you can have a fun or motivating conversation with your kids, partner, co-worker or friend over breakfast or as you ride the bus to school or work.