

Positive Thinking for Better Living



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Positive Self-Talk: How Talking to Yourself Is a Good Thing

Take a minute and think about what you have said to yourself today. Was it critical? Or was it kind and helpful? How did you feel after you engaged in this inner discussion? Your thoughts are the source of your emotions and mood. The conversations you have with yourself can be destructive or beneficial. They influence how you feel about yourself and how you respond to events in your life. They influence your **POSITIVE ATTITUDE!**

What is self-talk? -Self-talk is something you do naturally throughout your waking hours. People are becoming more aware that positive self-talk is a powerful tool for increasing your self-confidence and curbing negative emotions. People who can master positive self-talk are thought to be more confident, motivated, and productive.

How does self-talk work? -Although positive self-talk comes naturally to some, most people need to learn how to cultivate positive thoughts and dispel the negative ones. With practice, it can become more natural to think good thoughts rather than bad ones.

Self-talk is your internal dialogue. It is influenced by your subconscious mind, and it reveals your thoughts, beliefs, questions, and ideas.

Self-talk can be both negative and positive. It can be encouraging, and it can be distressing. Much of your self-talk depends on your personality. If you are an optimist, your self-talk may be more hopeful and positive. The opposite is generally true if you tend to be a pessimist.

Positive thinking and optimism can be effective stress management tools. Indeed, having a more positive outlook on life can provide you with some health benefits. For example, one 2010 study shows optimists have a better quality of life.

If you believe your self-talk is too negative, or if you want to emphasize positive self-talk, you can learn to shift that inner dialogue. It can help you be a more positive person, and it may improve your health.

How to Get Started- Listen and learn-Spend a few days listening closely to your inner dialogues. Are you supportive of yourself? Are you critical or negative? Would you be comfortable saying those thoughts and words to a loved one? Are common threads or themes repeated? **Write down important or frequent negative thoughts.**

Think it through-Ask yourself the following questions about each of the thoughts you have listed:

- Am I overreacting? Is it really that big of a deal? Is it important in the long run?
- Am I overgeneralizing? Am I coming to a conclusion based more on opinion or experience than facts?
- Am I mind reading? Am I assuming others have specific beliefs or feel a certain way? Am I guessing how they will react?
- Am I labeling myself harshly? Do you refer to yourself using words like “stupid,” “hopeless,” or “fat?”
- Is this an all-or-nothing thought? Am I viewing one incident as either good or bad without considering that the reality is rarely black or white? The answer usually lies in the gray area between the two.
- How truthful and accurate is this thought? Step way back and consider the accuracy of the thought as a friend might.

Switch gears-Now that you have a better idea of how your inner thoughts are skewed, it is time to switch gears and learn a new approach to self-talk. Look back at the thoughts on your list and reword them in a kinder, more positive light.

Why is self-talk good for you?

Self-talk can enhance your performance and general well-being. For example, research shows self-talk can help athletes with performance. It may help them with endurance or to power through a set of heavy weights.

Furthermore, positive self-talk and a more optimistic outlook can have other health benefits, including:

- increased vitality
- greater life satisfaction
- improved immune function
- reduced pain
- better cardiovascular health
- better physical well-being
- reduced risk for death
- less stress and distress

It is not clear why optimists and individuals with more positive self-talk experience these benefits. However, research suggests people with positive self-talk may have mental skills that allow them to solve problems, think differently, and be more efficient at coping with hardships or challenges. This can reduce the harmful effects of stress and [anxiety](#).

How does it work?

Before you can learn to practice more self-talk, you must first identify negative thinking. This type of thinking and self-talk generally falls into four categories:

- **Personalizing.** You blame yourself for everything.
- **Magnifying.** You focus on the negative aspects of a situation, ignoring any and all of the positive.

- **Catastrophizing.** You expect the worst, and you rarely let logic or reason persuade you otherwise.
- **Polarizing.** You see the world in black and white, or good and bad. There is nothing in between and no middle ground for processing and categorizing life events.

When you begin to recognize your types of negative thinking, you can work to turn them into positive thinking. This task requires practice and time and does not develop overnight. The good news is that it can be done. A 2012 study shows even small children can learn to correct negative self-talk.

What are some examples?

These scenarios are examples of when and how you can turn negative self-talk into positive self-talk. Again, it takes practice. Recognizing some of your own negative self-talk in these scenarios may help you develop skills to flip the thought when it occurs.

LEADER---Have participants read negative statements on slips of paper; ask for positive responses. Handout #1

Negative: I will disappoint everyone if I change my mind.

Positive: I have the power to change my mind. Others will understand.

Negative: I failed and embarrassed myself.

Positive: I am proud of myself for even trying. That took courage.

Negative: I am overweight and out of shape. I might as well not bother.

Positive: I am capable and strong, and I want to get healthier for me.

Negative: I let everyone on my team down when I did not score.

Positive: Sports are a team event. We win and lose together.

Negative: I have never done this before, and I will be bad at it.

Positive: This is a wonderful opportunity for me to learn from others and grow.

Negative: There is just no way this will work.

Positive: I can and will give it my all to make it work.

ASK: How do we use this daily?

Positive self-talk takes practice if it is not your natural instinct. If you are generally more pessimistic, you can learn to shift your inner dialogue to be more encouraging and uplifting.

However, forming a new habit takes time and effort. Over time, your thoughts can shift. Positive self-talk can become your norm. These tips can help:

- **Identify negative self-talk traps.** Certain scenarios may increase your self-doubt and lead to more negative self-talk. Work events, for example, may be particularly hard. Pinpointing when you experience the most negative self-talk can help you anticipate and prepare.
- **Check in with your feelings.** Stop during events or bad days and evaluate your self-talk. Is it becoming negative? How can you turn it around?
- **Find the humor.** Laughter can help relieve stress and tension. When you need a boost for positive self-talk, find ways to laugh, such as watching funny animal videos or a comedian.
- **Surround yourself with positive people.** Whether or not you notice it, you can absorb the outlook and emotions of people around you. This includes negative and positive, so choose positive people when you can.

- **Give yourself positive affirmations.** Sometimes, seeing positive words or inspiring images can be enough to redirect your thoughts. Post small reminders in your office, in your home, and anywhere you spend a significant amount of time.

You can only win-Banishing your inner critic and learning how to have productive, positive inner conversations has no downside. Some people may find it easier than others to adopt positive self-talk. Others may have to give it more time and put more effort into it. Either way, it is a worthwhile step toward bettering yourself and improving your sense of self-worth.

Self-Talk Worksheet- Handout #2

Discuss the sheet and ask participants to use it to further their work in learning to use positive Self-talk

When should I seek support?

Positive self-talk can help you improve your outlook on life. It can also have lasting positive health benefits, including improved well-being and a better quality of life. However, self-talk is a habit made over a lifetime.

If you tend to have negative self-talk and err on the side of pessimism, you can learn to change it. It takes time and practice, but you can develop uplifting positive self-talk.

If you find you're not successful on your own, talk with a [therapist](#). Mental health experts can help you pinpoint sources of negative self-talk and learn to flip the switch. Ask your health care provider for a referral to a therapist or ask a friend or family member for a suggestion.

Discussion: Think about the best thing that has ever happened to you, or a time when you have accomplished something of which you are extremely proud. Share if you would like. NOW think about your individual qualities that helped you accomplish that. Write those down on the cards provided.

Handout # 3- Power Cards-Discussion

Please write a positive thinking statement in each square. Place these cards somewhere where you will see them daily to help affirm who you are and what you can accomplish.

Leader-

If there is time distribute Handout #4 and go over the Positive Thinking Exercises and Activities extra material

Participant Handout #1-

Cut these statements apart; keep each negative and positive together and distribute to some of the participants. Use as a discussion

Negative: I'll disappoint everyone if I change my mind.

Positive: I have the power to change my mind. Others will understand.

Negative: I failed and embarrassed myself.

Positive: I'm proud of myself for even trying. That took courage.

Negative: I'm overweight and out of shape. I might as well not bother.

Positive: I am capable and strong, and I want to get healthier for me.

Negative: I let everyone on my team down when I didn't score.

Positive: Sports are a team event. We win and lose together.

Negative: I've never done this before, and I'll be bad at it.

Positive: This is a wonderful opportunity for me to learn from others and grow.

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SELF-TALK-Work Sheet-2 pages

Identifying, Challenging, and Changing

Your self-talk, whether you are aware of it or not, either sabotages (negative) or supports (positive) you. Negative self-talk can result in unnecessary stress, anxiety, depression, self-doubt, etc. Positive self-talk encourages self-confidence, effective coping, achievement, and a general feeling of well-being. So, ask yourself, "Is my self-talk building me up or tearing me down?" "Is my way of thinking helping me or is it hindering me?"

Identifying your Self Talk

Instructions:

1. Think of a recent time when you were experiencing negative or unhelpful thoughts.
 - a. What was the situation?

 - b. How did you feel?

 - c. What did you do?

2. Now, use this step-by-step guide and see if changing the way you think could possibly bring a better result.

Changing Your Self-Talk

- **Catch it.** Recognize when you are having negative or unhelpful thoughts.
- **Control it.** Stop! When you find yourself thinking negatively say STOP to yourself (silently) to stop the downward spiral of thoughts leading to sadness, guilt, anxiety, self-doubt, hurt, etc.
- **Challenge it.** Challenge what you are saying to yourself using the various questions below.
- **Change it.** Change the negative messages you are saying to yourself to more realistic/positive ones to bring about more pleasant and helpful emotions.
- **Cherish it.** Enjoy the moment and the feeling you have just created!

Challenging Your Thoughts

- Is this thought helpful? What is a healthier thought?
- What would I tell a friend in this situation? (Perhaps follow this advice)
- What evidence do I have that what I'm thinking is true? What is the evidence against it?
- Is there any other reason this situation could have occurred?
- Is there another way of looking at this situation? What are some other points-of-view?
- What is the worst/best/most likely outcome? If the worst did happen, how could I cope? Would I live through it?
- Is there anything I can do about this right now? If yes, take appropriate action. If no, accept and move on.

3. Given what you have learned here, what is one thing you are willing to start doing that can help you better manage your negative thinking?

Power Cards

Reflect on powerfully positive thinking and create I AM statements.

I **AM** (a statement of who you are)

I **CAN** (a statement of what you can achieve)

I **WILL** (a statement of self-belief)

I am...

I can...

I will...

Participant Handout #4

Positive Thinking Exercises & Activities-This is not meant to be a comprehensive list, but rather, a very good starting point that will lead to even greater discoveries.

Tip #1 – Listen to Your Favorite Music

Tip #2 – Expressing Thankfulness/Gratitude

Tip #3 – Remember to Breathe

Tip #4 – Don't Live According to a Label

Tip #5 – Check your Internal Dialogue

Tip #6 – Engage in Positive Activities

Tip #7 – Take Back Control

Tip #8 – Go Easy on Yourself

Tip #9 – Pay Attention to your Diet

Tip #10 – Embrace Change

Tip #11 – Experience What You Need to Experience

Tip #12 – Open Your Mind and Enjoy Your Life

Tip #13 – Let go of the Past

Tip #14 – Laugh as much as possible

Tip #15 – Give and Receive

Bottom Line...Making positive thinking a habit in your life, can indeed be one of the most rewarding experiences and discoveries that you could ever have. However, this is not the easiest thing to do and we can all experience failures from time to time. Regardless of how hard it may seem, just by following these simple, but yet powerful exercises and activities, you will change your life and nothing will be the same like before. Period! Therefore, don't just read, and listen to this discussion and think that you've changed something. You must step into action and DO what this this suggests you do if you want to feel the real benefits in your life. So, cheer up, put a big smile on your face and know deep down, that positivity will be your new lifestyle. I know you'll do well!

Extra Material for discussion: Positive thinking exercises and activities

Hopefully in this discussion you will discover some great positive thinking exercises and activities that will help you immensely in your life.

Mastering these exercises isn't the easiest thing to do. However, there are certain positive thinking exercises which can dramatically help you to improve your thought patterns without a tremendous effort. If you really take them seriously and put your heart and soul into them, you WILL change your attitude!

Positive Thinking Exercises & Activities-This is not meant to be a comprehensive list, but rather, a very good starting point that will lead to even greater discoveries.

Tip #1 – Listen to Your Favorite Music

Music has been and it will always be an excellent positivity booster. Nothing can replace the emotions you get when listening to some really good piece of music that's authentic to your personality.

This doesn't have to be a meditative and relaxing music (although these help a lot), but rather, any genre that simply puts a smile on your face while you listen to it.

You can afford to go wild and create movies in your mind while listening, imagine good positive outcomes and scenarios for your life and this will surely boost your entire positivity and vibration

Tip #2 – Expressing Thankfulness

All the struggles and problems in life stop and disappear, in the moment when gratitude starts to take place. Remember that sentence! The grateful mind never experiences troubles and regardless of all the obstacles in life, it continues to be positive by creating a phenomenal vibration.

Be constantly and consciously thankful for all the blessings in your life. Keep a notebook and write down all the things that make you feel good. Start from the ability to be able to see, to smell, to walk, to talk and move all the way to the relationships, the material possessions and spiritual enlightenment. Also, don't forget to be grateful for all the good things that are yet to come into your life. This will surely put you on a good track and will make the positive thinking automatic in your life.

Tip #3 – Remember to Breathe

Given that breathing is such a natural part of life, and it happens without any conscious thought, we tend to underestimate its power. Yes, breathing has immense power and just by paying attention to it when you are in a bad mood will prove it to you. Anger, anxiety, stress, fear, all these emotions cause shallow and quick breaths, whereas calm and happy situations generate deep and slow breathing patterns. The opposite is true, your breathing can influence your emotions. So, start to breathe deeply on your belly, and turn this into a habit.

Tip #4 – Don't Live According to a Label

Make no mistake about it... labels can come from other people and yourself. Although it's easier to blame others for placing you under a certain class or type, it's you that gives power to that label. It's also understandable that being called "something" enough times, it starts to sink in.

These labels surface during youth and come from various sources, but it's important not to empower them. We are not our jobs or feelings, our self-worth cannot be measured by money and we don't have to stay within the confines of other people's perceptions. You are an individual and no amount of labels can ever describe who you are.

Tip #5 – Check your Internal Dialogue

Apart from breathing, this is another important activity that goes by unnoticed. Do we really take note of our inner voice? Do we ever blame the negative internal dialogue for keeping happiness at bay?

Our consciousness is the biggest "**Trickster**" and the biggest "**Enemy**" we have, and the one we will ever have! It's the source for all the problems and negativity and it is never the outside world! It is always our inner voice, regardless of how hard it is for you to accept this fact. It is not the situations and events that take place in our lives that are the problems, it is our perception and interpretation of those circumstances that produces the negative emotions and feelings. Always remember that when something becomes a habit we forget how it affects our lives. There is a reason why reprogramming internal dialogue is one of the most important positive thinking exercises out there. Make a point to channel positive affirmations and do it regularly. Meditate and control your thoughts.

If you don't have anything good to think about yourself, then at least don't think badly and negatively. This is the source of self-respect, confidence and happiness, so master it as quickly as possible.

Tip #6 – Engage in Positive Activities

It would be easy to recommend meditation and yoga as positive activities, because they are among the best. But the truth is you need to find something that gets your happiness flowing so-to-speak.

Not everyone is comfortable with the silence and slow pace connected with yoga and meditation. If this is the case for you then go out and explore your options. Many people find that going to the gym a couple of times a week has a dramatic effect on their mental health as well. Maybe you like to play golf or swim? Or you might be more of a practical person that likes to build things... How about hiking or walking in the park?

In plain terms, it doesn't matter what you do, if the activity has a positive outcome on your body and mind. So, engage in any activity that makes you feel good and positive, it's as simple as that!

Tip #7 – Take Back Control

Everyone can take a tip from the AA sessions, more specifically the “*prayer*” at the end of every session. It comes down to taking control of things you can change and accepting those you can’t.

Even though there are several things we cannot change, like the weather or the loss of a loved one, we can control how we feel about it in addition to how we react. There is nobody in this world that can take this power from you and simply by realizing this, your life can change for the better.

It might not always be easy, because heaven knows it’s difficult to get your heart and your head in the same room. But it’s definitely possible if you believe it. So do everything you’ve got to take back control over your life and your attitude, and please, refuse to be controlled by outside circumstances!

Say out loud right now: *“I am responsible for my life and for every result I get! I am in full control over my consciousness and over my feelings and I am immune to all the negativity in the world!”*

Tip #8 – Go Easy on Yourself

One of the best ways to learn something new is by failing. Unfortunately our perception of failing is directly linked with “not good enough” or even the feeling of shame.

The important thing to remember is that we are human and placing pressure on ourselves for not getting something right the first time isn’t the end of the world. We are allowed to fail, because otherwise we would never really learn anything.

But what is a failure? The best definition I know is this: “Failing occurs only and ONLY when the individual quits!” You will never fail in anything, except if you decide to quit...

So regardless of how many times you’ve failed in the past, make a decision today that you will never stop trying and never quit! Go easy on yourself, you deserve it, you are better than what you think you are!

Tip #9 – Pay Attention to your Diet

You will never find a moment when the body and mind are not connected. If you ever do find this moment then you are not among the living anymore. Changing your attitude from negative to positive will always involve your body. Consider how you feel after eating a greasy hamburger that was too big in the first place? Now consider eating smaller portions of a well-balanced meal.

It might not always taste fantastic, but your body will enjoy every minute. In turn, your mind will follow. So regardless of how hard it may seem to be, decide that you will break your habit (*and that’s exactly what it is, it’s just a habit!*), and that you will start to take care of your health.

Tip #10 – Embrace Change

It is natural for us to find comfort in things that are familiar and close to us, whether it’s relationships, work situations, living space or the cushions you sleep with at night.

Unfortunately, the comfort starts to cloud our judgment. We reach a point where it doesn't matter if the comfort is good or bad. Spouses stay married through domestic violence, years of working in the same position creates fear of applying for something better and you still sleep with that cushion which causes your neck to ache in the morning.

These are all examples of bad comfort zones. Stepping outside of your comfort zone won't just open your eyes but liberate you. Happiness can't find you if you are hiding in your comfort zone.

Tip #11 – Experience What You Need to Experience

Life isn't just about feeling happy. Your body and mind come with such a complex nature that they need to go through various stages in order to function.

To break this down in more understandable terms, if you feel like you want to cry then have a good cry. If you feel like you need half a day to sit and sulk then by all means do it. If we were happy all the time we would forget how good happiness feels.

However, don't get stuck in those experiences. Give yourself time to experience what you need to experience and move on to bigger and better things. Emotions are strong and beautiful elements that give life meaning, so enjoy all of them. As long as you remember that you are in control.

Tip #12 – Open Your Mind and Enjoy Your Life

With all the latest technology and findings science has yet to unlock the mysteries of the mind. Just the way our bodies function is an unexplained miracle. We have the gift of both these things and it's also our gift to enjoy them.

Don't overlook the simple pleasures, such as tasting good food, feeling blades of grass between your toes or staring at the stars at night. Treat every experience as if it is new to you and open yourself to all the great things that still have to come your way.

We all have a limited time with these gifts so make the most of them.

Tip #13 – Let go of the Past

Letting go of the past doesn't just involve bad memories. It also includes childhood dreams of becoming someone special. For many of us these dreams become more stressful as the years go by. We find ourselves striving towards a life we imagine is perfect and in turn we become negative and sad for what we have.

There is no shame in letting the dreams slide. In fact, it will take a lot of pressure off your shoulders when you do. Just because you stopped living those dreams in your mind doesn't mean they won't come true, but if you are unhappy on your journey, then the journey is not worthwhile in the first place.

So let go of the past, and start a new beginning. Create new and exciting dreams and go for them, and never lose hope for the ones from your childhood! Life is an exciting adventure and you never know with certainty what it brings you...

Tip #14 – Laugh as much as possible

There is scientific evidence that proves the fact that laughter increases quality of life. In other words, laughter is truly the best natural medicine and the best way to do this is by surrounding yourself with positive people.

Friendships that are rooted in misery, judgment, depression and even the use of drugs are like leeches of happiness. Take stock of the friends you have and how they really impact your life. Once you are in the company of friends who care for your well-being then laughter will naturally follow.

After all, you can laugh even without the right friends! Simply work on your attitude and train yourself to find good in everything and anything. See only the bright side and learn to be more humorous.

If all previous fails, make a habit to watch a good comedy movie every Friday night! Pick the best of the best and really laugh until tears start rolling down your eyes.

A good belly laugh will never fail to increase your positivity, so use it more often!

Tip #15 – Give and Receive

Few things are as gratifying as placing a smile on the face of someone else. A selfless gesture will make you feel connected to something bigger than yourself.

You should also be able to receive a selfless gesture, because the same feeling you get when you help someone will be bestowed on the person that helps you. This is the natural chain of life so don't break it with pride. Remember, every time you give, the Universe rewards you tenfold! It will all come back, it's a law, so don't hesitate to give BIG.

Bottom Line...

Making positive thinking a habit in your life, can indeed be one of the most rewarding experiences and discoveries that you could ever have. However, this is not the easiest thing to do and we can all experience failures from time to time.

Regardless of how hard it may seem, just by following these simple, but yet powerful exercises and activities, you will change your life, and nothing will be the same like before. Period!

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