



POSITIVITY PLAYBOOK

The game plan
you need to thrive

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The Game Plan You Need To Thrive

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Introduction

The call to think positive has echoed through the self-help and self-improvement industries since people first began to seek out improvement from within. Professional people who already appear to be successful and productive in their lives can still struggle with doubt, discomfort, and darkness inside of them. These things may begin in childhood or appear after a certain situation occurs when you are older. They can also become apparent for no particular reason whatsoever.

No matter what holds you back and keeps you from realizing a positive and powerful life, you can learn to counter it and develop more emotionally intelligent and productive ways to move forward. Before you understand techniques and look at examples you can try your own life, understand that the focus is on positivity.

The gulf between optimism and pessimism may leave you in a static state where you cannot make considerable strides forward in your life. You need to find a way to break out of that, right? You need a new game plan, a way to learn how to thrive.

What is Positivity?

When you look up the definition of positivity, you find that it means both the action or habit of being optimistic and presence of a certain condition rather than the absence. While the second meaning has more to do with things like medical tests and chemistry, it also indicates the presence of good things in your life. For example, your life may test positive for happiness, productivity, and success. If you lack those things, you are more likely to have a negative attitude as well.

Positivity goes far beyond the dictionary definition, however. Its presence may seem impossible when an individual suffers from depression and other mental disorders, but it is equally as challenging when negative things seem to happen to people who lack a diagnosis. Sometimes, the world seems fueled by negativity, and it can be difficult to present a positive face when everyone around you seems immured in a darker attitude. Some people even say they find optimism annoying.

Despite these challenges, you can adopt a lifestyle full of positivity to help you achieve your goals, feel mentally, emotionally, and physically better, benefit others around you, and thrive.

Positivity Facts to Help You Flourish and Thrive

In a professional sense, things like perseverance, a strong work ethic, dedication, and a competitive attitude have long been considered important factors in the future success. If you work hard and keep your nose to the grind stone, you will succeed. It has not been that long in the past few decades that people have become more interested in the psychological and emotional factors that feed into these traits.

One of the most popular research studies associated with positive thinking was completed by Barbara Fredrickson at the University of North Carolina.¹ It remains one of the most often referenced studies about both negative and positive thoughts as they pertain to the pass of someone's life and abilities.

A lot of other research has focused on negative emotions such as anger, fear, and doubt. If something potentially dangerous present itself to you, you have an automatic fear response that narrows your focus to that dangerous thing. Even in your work life, you have probably experienced this. Now, no lions have burst into the office, but the sudden appearance of your manager may elicit the same response. When they walked through the door, everyone quickly focuses on the task at hand. You basically go into survival mode.

You may have also experienced something similar while driving down the highway. The moment you see a police car on the side of the road, you slow down. Your attention becomes laser focused on your speed and driving ability.

These may seem like positive responses to a negative thought or experience. After all, you should be working on your project or driving at an appropriate speed. The problem, however, is that you may focus on something that is not truly what makes sense at the moment.

In the Fredrickson study, five groups were shown images that made them feel joy, contentment, no emotion, fear, and anger.² Then, they were asked to write down a list of things starting with the phrase "I would like to..." As demonstrated by the above comments about negativity and focus, the two latter groups who experienced fear and anger had a much shorter list than those who experienced joy and contentment.

Positivity increases possibilities. It makes your mind expand and your thought processes increase. This benefit definitely helps in settings where creativity, agility, and flexibility matter. Triggered by the original positive emotions and attitudes, your brain develops new pathways and abilities, which in turn translates into increase skills in all areas of your life. Being positive is not just about making yourself feel good for the short term. It is about a continuous promotion to the type of productive, influential life you need to thrive at work, in school, with your family and friends, and personally, as well.

This "broaden and build" philosophy that Frederickson's study found represents an equation for a life full of purpose and achievement. You feel good, your mind expands into new possibilities, you take action, you achieve, and you feel even better as a result.

Positive Thinking vs. Positive Psychology

Positive thinking is something that an individual does in order to increase their optimism, make themselves happier and more content, increase their efficacy and productivity in all aspects of their life, and better enjoy happy emotions and circumstances. Positive psychology is the study

of these things and everything else that goes into a valuable life.³ Although many people think that psychology is all about how you feel, it is really a process of scientific discovery that includes feelings, thoughts, and behavior. As demonstrated in this book, positivity also influences all of these things.

Some of the foci of positive psychology studies over the years have included:

Happiness and joy

Gratitude and appreciation

Compassion toward others and selflessness

Resilience and adaptability

Self-esteem, confidence, and a sense of self-worth

How all of these things affect individual lives, communities, organizations, and workplaces.

One of the forefathers of positive psychology was a researcher named Martin Seligman, who began his work back in the 1960s. He recognized focus on negative characteristics and disorders in the psychology field, and thought that the doctors and other scientists should change their focus to a more positive one. He believed that people suffered from a type of "learned helplessness" that lead to depression and lack of satisfaction in their lives.⁴

His early studies showed that people and animals would simply give up when they did not believe there was a way to escape negative consequences. They learned that they were helpless and stopped trying to make their lives or situations any better.

You may feel like this yourself sometimes. Perhaps you are involved in a negative relationship that you feel difficult to get away from. Perhaps you are stuck in a dead-end job and have no idea how to break free and truly thrive in your life. So, you accept the unpleasant situation and languish in pessimism and depression. Other negative side effects relate to this experience. Many people who reach the point where they simply give up trying have extremely low self-esteem and do not feel like they could possibly make any positive change on their lives or the world at large.

Thankfully, positive psychology has also shown that there are definitely ways to turn this process around and escape from the negative feelings that hold you back. One of the most important things to do when you are learning how to add positivity to your playbook and thrive in the game of life is to recognize what types of changes will work for you best.

Problems With a Positivity Mindset

As mentioned above, some people find overly positive individuals annoying or unrealistic. While you may be naturally upbeat and cheerful, adopting the type of positivity that results in becoming

some type of happiness caricature will not help you or the people around you. Your goal is not to be perky or energetic all the time. Instead, it is to cultivate a solid sense of optimism so you can avoid negative things. Sometimes, perky cheer is a mask that hides something worse underneath.

This potential problem with a positivity mindset flies in the face of the self-help adage "fake it till you make it." While this provides benefits for quite a few things, it can be difficult to fake positivity in an effective way. If you truly feel that everything is bad, you are not going to succeed, and your future looks hopeless, pasting a smile on your face will not help.

Positivity is not about creating a false sense of accomplishment or happiness magically out of nothing. If you have pessimistic attitudes and negative thoughts already operating in your subconscious, simply laying optimistic ones on top may not get you the outcome you desire. Besides dealing with your problems in some active way, choosing a different type of positive focus makes sense.⁵

In order to improve your positive mindset in a truthful and effective manner, consider:

Do you have evidence to support the positive thoughts you try to fill your mind with?

What do you expect to happen if you manage to think these things?

What will actually happen?

Is there anything in my thoughts, feelings, or external reality that conflicts with the positive thoughts?

Although you can make changes in your life to focus on positive things more, optimism itself is not some Band-Aid for feeling low or failing to thrive. These ideas represent a lack of understanding about what positivity is. The definition includes both optimism and a presence of some characteristic or truth. If you act happy but do not feel it, that shows a lack of presence. The good news is that you can begin to fill up your life with better things by using the 15 tips outlined later in this book.

Benefits of Positivity

No one would argue that having a more positive outlook would help them feel generally better every day. Even though some people seem to enjoy them, negativity and pessimism do not bring happiness or satisfaction. If you or someone you know always complains, whines, and focuses on the things that do not work as intended, this person probably gets less done, has fewer accomplishments, and suffers from more headaches and fatigue than someone on the other end of the spectrum.

The benefits of positivity go far beyond your mood, however. From both anecdotal evidence and in-depth scientific research, the world now understands that optimism has considerable effect on your physical, mental, and emotional health.

Improved Physical Health

Would you believe that you can reduce your risk of heart disease, strengthen your immune system, lose weight, and extend your lifespan simply by adopting a more positive mindset? Several long term studies that pit optimism against some of the physical health issues of the 20th and 21st centuries show remarked improvement in various ways. Feeling good can actually lead to good health.

Anyone who has paid attention to health news or any information coming out of the medical community in the past decade or more understands that stress is one of the leading causes of many dangerous conditions that affect millions of people all over the world.

Stress comes in different forms. There is short-term stress which can actually improve immunity and other health factors by stimulating your nervous system. There is also long-term, chronic stress that does exactly the opposite. The second type, which involves pessimism and negative thoughts quite frequently, can minimize the efficacy of your immune system, contribute to heart disease, develop into psychological problems like depression and anxiety, and cause other illnesses.⁶ Therefore, maintaining positivity in your life can actually protect you from disease and disorder.

An interesting study conducted in the 1990s at the University of Kentucky measured the longevity of a group of nuns against their early life journals. Those who had recorded more positive experiences and displayed high degrees of optimism lived longer.⁷ This scientific finding definitely supports one of the 15 great ways to increase positivity in your life listed near the end of this book. Writing in a journal or keeping a hand written account of events and emotions in your life help improve overall positivity and health.

A similar study conducted at Harvard and published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* revealed expected results. The researchers looked at data collected from 70,000 women during an eight year period. They compared optimism with things like blood pressure, level of physical activity, and disease percentiles. The results were quite impressive with the top 25% of optimistic women reducing their risk of death by 30% or more.⁸

From reducing stress to staving off death, a positive mindset has true scientific support as one of the most beneficial and effective ways to thrive throughout your life. When you adopt a different mindset and follow some of the positivity protocols that have been shown to work, you can change a lot of things that affect every other part of your life.

It is not just about getting healthy. It is also about avoiding things that contribute to negativity and that feed into a spiral of mounting complaints and bad experiences. Your attitude functions in an exponentially growing feedback loop that feeds on itself and can get out of control.

Increase Energy and Productivity

Too many people look at a positive mindset as the result of good things that happen. In truth, positivity comes before you can reach your goals and realize your dreams. It is possible, of course, to just slog forward miserably and still get things done in the end. However, when you have set goals for yourself or formulate a plan for moving forward in your personal or professional life, a positive "can do" mindset will help you achieve more.

The concept of the happiness emotion truly has to do with the release of endorphins, serotonin, and dopamine in your brain. These "feel-good" chemicals give you energy and increase productivity on their own. In fact, they are so powerful that research has shown a 180% energy increase for happy employees than ones who do not have such a positive outlook.⁹

You have undoubtedly noticed this yourself. When was the last time you were happy at work? Perhaps you have never been happy at your job, but you can think of a time where you worked on another project with a positive attitude. Did you get more done than a time when you felt low and negative?

Besides feeling productive, a positive attitude also helps you work more efficiently because your brain becomes energized when you smile. The molecules that facilitate communication between nerve cells are stimulated when you express a positive emotion. You feel less pain, feel less fatigue, and are able to think more clearly.¹⁰

Needless to say, if you work on a team project, your attitude will affect everyone around you. If you smile and act in a positive manner, people will mostly follow your lead. Surely you understand that you get a lot more work done when everyone gets along and no one grumbles. Happiness allows your brain to think about more things at once, which can make group work much more pleasant and effective.¹¹

Boost Your Creativity

In both your professional and personal life, the ability to think creatively can bring considerable benefits. For example, if you work on a product development team, it makes sense that coming up with new ideas or using an agile thought process to strengthen a system will help. When you can suggest things like this, you not only reduce the stress of a difficult project but also feel much better about yourself.

Even if you work in a less creativity-focused field, you can improve your working situation or the task at hand with a bit of flexible thinking. A physician may come up with a more efficient way to give sufficient attention to more patients in the same amount of time. A pizza delivery person can use creative techniques to present the meal to buyers in order to get a higher tip.

How does positivity improve creative thinking? One study published in *Psychology Science* and conducted by Rahel Rabi and John Paul Minda, found that students could configure and remember a creative graphical pattern better when they had experienced uplifting music and a video of a laughing baby as opposed to those who were subject to depressing music and scenes from a natural disaster.¹² Thus, the researchers concluded that happy, positive thinking individuals have a much more creative and agile mind than those stuck in a swamp of negativity.

This process has to do with the same concept of negativity narrowing your focus and positivity broadening it. If you feel down or pessimistic, you can only focus on one possible outcome to a problem or way to manipulate whatever it is you are working on. When you feel up or optimistic, your mind is able to handle many different ideas and hypotheticals at the same time.¹³

If you want to use the psychology of moves to maximum advantage, you may even want to purposefully manipulate how you feel based on what you need to get done. This does not mean you should depress yourself or wallow in horrible thoughts and feelings. However, if putting on some upbeat music and watching a funny video can get you in the mood to create, why not take advantage of the idea? When it comes time to focus strongly on a single task instead, switch over to a dramatic movie score or something with less frivolity. You can even try this when working

with a team at work or for some other type of project. They will not feel manipulated. They will just feel more creative at the right time.

Every positive change you can make in your life will reflect outward and other people you work, live, or socialize with. This is not, however, the goal of your quest for optimism. Focus instead on what changes you can make to transform your life into one that forges forward in new directions, triumphs over obstacles, and truly allows you to thrive on your chosen path.

This book represents much more scientific information about positive psychology and the benefits to physical, mental, and emotional health. As you continue through the remaining sections, you can learn how to apply these principles to your life and enjoy all the possible benefits.

Positivity Fundamentals

The PERMA Principle

Originally formulated by Martin Seligman, forefather of positive psychology and researcher who studied the learned helplessness characteristic, also developed something called the PERMA Principle.¹⁴ This acronym reveals the five different parts necessary to have a happy life and an optimistic look at reality and the future.

It covers most things that you probably think about with an emotional response. As revealed earlier, positivity can affect every aspect of your life from work to relationships to your own sense of self-worth. These PERMA Principle factors all influence how you feel and whether you thrive successfully or not.

P -- Positive Emotions

It seems almost ridiculously obvious to state that in order to feel good, you need to feel good. The truth about this pillar of the PERMA model is that simply feeling good is not the goal. You naturally experience emotions based on situations, how other people treat you, and even based on transient things like a laughing child or a delicious cookie. These include things like satisfaction,

joy, love, hope, gratitude, and a boost to your self-esteem. You can cultivate these feelings by watching funny videos, mixing playtime with more serious pursuits, stopping and smelling the proverbial roses, and just reminding yourself to smile.

How do you create positive emotions in your life?

Discover your talents and explore them more fully

Hang around with people who make you happy

Redecorate your office with things that make you smile

Schedule some fun time into your daily routine

E – Engagement

Some people call this part of the happiness equation flow state. When you become so wrapped up in a particular task or pastime that you do not notice what is going on around you, you are truly engaged or in the flow. This is one of the pillars of happiness because all of the experiences you receive in the state are positive. You are obviously doing something that you enjoy or feel a strong sense of accomplishment about.

How do you support engagement in everything that you do?

What activities have propelled you into flow state in the past?

Get rid of distractions so you can focus more fully

Pick up the physical hobby that releases endorphins

Try new hobbies or pastimes until you find something that works

R – Relationships

Whether you believe the frequently mentioned concept that human beings are tribal or social animals, you have undoubtedly noticed that good relationships in your life increase the opportunity to feel positive and optimistic. Love is definitely the strongest of these. Two people in love getting married may call it the happiest day of their lives. Other people reserve that moniker for the day the child was born. Even simple friends and pleasant acquaintances exist as positive forces that support the relationship pillar of your overall optimistic life.

How do you ensure that all your relationships are positive?

Analyze all existing relationships to see if they bring positivity to your life

Remove yourself from any toxic or negative relationships that bring you down

Consider counseling to transform important relationships for the better

Make an effort to connect with people at work in a more positive way

Get involved in networking, social, or activity groups that align with your interests

M – Meaning

People may spend a large part of their time searching for meaning and purpose in their lives. Some go on journeys of discovery to "find themselves," while others simply try out a lot of different hobbies or even jobs in their quest to find fulfillment. Positivity that comes from meaning comes from something outside of yourself. You need to feel like you matter to the world or at least to other people around. This is why people volunteer, support causes, and simply try to make a difference.

How do you find a sense of meaning and purpose in your life?

Discover your passion or the thing that makes you emotional

Think about causes that may affect the people you love

Align yourself with the motivation of a group at work or elsewhere

A – Achievement or Accomplishments

Growth and the effort it takes create a positive response that helps you thrive mentally and emotionally. When you work hard to learn something new, it does not just open up additional career opportunities or allow you to impress your friends with a cool guitar solo. It also gives you a sense of accomplishment that translates into a self-esteem boost and increased positivity.

How do you use achievements and accomplishments in a positive way?

Recognize and appreciate when you do something worthwhile

Beware of pushing yourself too hard to accomplish things when that is not the goal

Make sure your achievements matter to your overall life goals

Do not allow accomplishments to over inflate your ego

Once you are aware of the five building blocks of this PERMA Principle, you can begin to focus on them in your life. This is what makes the quest for positivity so important for each individual. You may adopt different methods than any other person on Earth. As long as the end result is positive, which it will be if you focus on these things, you will thrive on every level.

Flow and the Benefits of Optimal Experiences

The concept of engagement and flow state mentioned above is one of the more powerful positivity lessons that can help you transform your life. However, it is possible to achieve flow

state even when doing something negative or damaging. How many times have you zoomed out in front of the television with a bag of snacks only to discover it empty hours later?

Flow state is about being completely engaged in a certain situation in a way that negativity cannot infiltrate. Therefore, it is one of the most positive experiences that a person can achieve even if you are not conscious of those positive emotions at the time. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi first discovered this state and wrote about it in *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*.¹⁵

Instead of any type of protracted joy, optimal experiences or flow state create contentment and satisfaction. You understand that feeling fulfilled at your job creates more long-term positivity than a quick joke or a short humorous video that is over and done with quickly. Flow combines positive experience of doing something you like and are good at with a sense of accomplishment at the end of the process.

Various studies have shown teenagers who achieve optimal experiences more frequently have better self-esteem and are more likely to achieve future goals. People of all ages who do this are able to alleviate stress more effectively. They also perform better at work and can come up with more creative and flexible ideas and solutions to problems. They are usually have better work ethics because they can stick to a job by sinking into it and minimizing distractions. Flow releases those feel-good brain chemicals like dopamine, which naturally contribute positivity in a massive way.

Achieving flow depends on various circumstances that you may or may not be able to affect:

The task before you has clearly defined steps or processes

It engages your skills yet presents intriguing challenges

Your awareness melds with the actions you take automatically

You are able to ignore distractions

All self-doubt, self-consciousness, and anxiety vanishes

You lose track of time easily

The task itself is as important as the goal

You have undoubtedly experienced flow state before. Perhaps it was at work when you were busy programming, designing, or researching a tricky legal precedent. Perhaps it only happens when you are engaged in your favorite sport or hobby. Many people lose track of time while they are shooting hoops or painting a picture. These optimal experiences exist as a type of mindfulness meditation you are not precisely aware of.

In order to achieve flow and thus increase your ability to perform in the optimum state of positivity and productivity, there are several steps you can take. The most important is to choose an activity that you truly enjoy doing. It is very difficult to achieve flow with some tedious task you hate. Remove as many distractions as possible: eat some food, turn off the TV and your phone, abandon the idea of multitasking, stay rested, and just dive right in.

Positivity Ratio

For the mathematically minded, using numbers to quantify positivity may help imagine how to use it more effectively to create a more productive life. A concept called the positivity ratio was developed by Barbara Frederickson, PhD in psychology from Stanford University, who has conducted research about positive psychology and other things for more than 15 years.

In 2009, Dr. Barbara Frederickson had a book published titled *Positivity*.¹⁶ which eliminated the concept of a 3 to 1 ratio that people should strive for in order to thrive in whatever pursuits they choose to make. The idea behind the book was to test yourself to see how positive your life was and whether that level was sufficient to reap all the physical, mental, and emotional benefits that positivity and optimism brings.

The positivity ratio is a measure of how much your good moods and feelings related to the bad ones. She chose a 3 to 1 ratio meaning that you should feel good three times more than you feel bad. Once a person achieves this level, the book states that they reach a situation in their life where is their perspective drawings, their mind works optimally, and they can identify more possible opportunities and situations than if they fall below this level.

There are two ways to improve your ratio: have more positive experiences or reduce the negative ones. Ideally, you should strive to do both at the same time your life. Some of the 15 great ways to introduce positivity described below can help you achieve this goal.

3 to 1 Ratio Transformed to 5 to 1

While being three times or positive than negative seems to make quite a bit of sense, other scientists have stepped in to state that the ratio should truly be 5 to 1 instead of 3 to 1. Nick Brown, graduate student, and Alan Sokal, physics professor at NYU, teamed up to show that there was no intrinsic proof established that would make the 3 to 1 ratio effective across-the-board.¹⁷

The two men were so convincing with their mathematical and physical examination of the principle that Frederickson and Losada, who created the original framework for the argument, either retracted their idea or declined to comment.

Regardless of the actual numbers involved, common sense would decree that the more positive thinking and experiences you have and the fewer negative ones, the better your life will be overall. When you accept this truth, you are ready to move forward into the more practical examination of how you can create a plan that will help you get all the benefits outlined above.

Series about optimism and scientific research about the health and well-being benefits of a positive mindset may convince you to forge ahead. However, if you do not have the practical knowledge necessary to make effective changes, none of this information will help you in any tangible way.

Positivity Playbook

The time has come to put everything together into a cohesive and actionable game plan that you can use to improve your life and your mindset going forward. You undoubtedly have goals, interests, and plans you want to pursue. Why not do that while feeling your absolute best?

The everyday practice of positivity not only helps you feel better immediately but also boosts productivity, creativity, efficiency, and more for long-term action that gets results. You can use any of these techniques to facilitate more advancement in your career or personal life. No matter what your goals, they come to fruition with more surety when you follow this positivity playbook.

Take Care of Your Physical Health and Well-being

You may think it most important to focus on what is going on inside your when it comes to optimism and positivity. While your thought processes and attitudes matter, your overall physical health is both affected by your mindset and contributes to a better one.

If you have ever struggled with excess weight, fatigue, or chronic health problems in the past, you understand how they negatively affect your attitudes and actions. Make an effort to maintain a proper weight and fitness level, give up tobacco use, excess alcohol, and any other mood-altering or addictive things. Eat plenty of antioxidants and ensure a proper balance of nutrients.

Besides basic health tips, various studies have shown surgeon supplements can help improve how well your mind functions and feels.¹⁸ For example, omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin D, and vitamin B complex have all been shown to elevate your mood. As endorphins are released with exercise, it makes sense to schedule some activity into every day.

Create a Positive Full-Day Routine

Surprises will happen, but if you begin every day with a set routine in mind, you will find it easier to have optimal experiences peppered with mood-boosting moments. It all starts with a good night's sleep. Wake up promptly, but take a few minutes to set your mind in a positive

fashion. Express gratitude, though over your plan, or use some positive affirmations to give your attitude a positive boost.

Minimize stress and the potential for negative outcomes by using a planner or scheduling app so you never miss something important. This removes a high degree of worry from your life, which makes it much easier to maintain optimism. Both the good feeling and the organization results in higher productivity and a greater chance of future advancement.

Maintain Positivity Awareness

Too many people simply drift through their day with no real focus on how they feel. You undoubtedly stay on track work enough to make your boss happy. You may get along with people around you well enough to keep the label "team player." However, when you stay aware of your positivity level, you can propel herself closer to that magical ratio that tips you from still trying to triumphing.

Learn to identify problems thoughts that infiltrate your mind automatically. These can trigger from certain situations, comments that particular people make, or even from expectations developed in the past. Remember the learned helplessness experiments? If your efforts have proved ineffectual in the past, you may become trapped in the idea that any future ones will end up the same way. These automatic thoughts distort reality in very negative ways.

In order to reframe the automatic thoughts and negativity that infiltrate your days, transform the ideas and comments that make you unhappy into ones that do. You must foster optimism in order to achieve it. For example, if you find yourself thinking "I never do anything right!" after a mistake, you can't reframe it as "I can fix my mistake and do better next time." Or when your mind fills up with "This job stinks. I'll never get anywhere" you can either simply tell yourself that it is true or switch it around to say "This job is teaching me things I can use to advance in the future."

Most negative self talk depends on emotional impact rather than rational truths. No one has done something wrong 100% of the time. Everyone has the ability to switch jobs or advance at some point in their career. Pessimism is like a swamp inside your subconscious that wants to make

everything above it noisome and unhealthy. If you remain aware and work hard enough at restructuring your cognitive responses, you can fill in the swamp with healthy positivity and watch your future grow.

Set Goals and Make Plans With Positivity

If you know anything about self-help techniques intended to increase productivity and improve your chances of success, however you define that for yourself, you understand the importance of setting smart goals and formulating specific plans to reach them. While some goals may focus on the avoidance of a particular pain point or negative outcome, when you switch to a positivity mindset, attempt to reconfigure them with that in mind.

Goal-setting becomes an exercise in recognizing your qualities and traits that can facilitate a more beneficial outcome. Instead of stopping the forward progress by focusing on obstacles or weaknesses, you can strive forward with a greater understanding of the steps needed along the way.

Start by defining your actual goal. These exist in every aspect of your life. Perhaps you want a high managerial position at the office or to lead your own project team. Your interests may turn toward entrepreneurial freedom instead and include starting your own company or succeeding with some type of freelance career. Goals can exist in anything from your relationships to homeownership to playing a particular sport at an advanced level. Pull out your journal and write down what it is you ultimately want to do.

Many people suggest that the next step is to identify potential obstacles or requirements that you do not need yet. While understanding the nitty-gritty of your goal progress matters, it makes more sense to maintain focus on positivity for now. After all, optimism broadens your perspective so you can think of more creative ways to reach your goals than if you introduced pessimistic ideas at this time. The moment you start saying "I can't, won't, don't" is the moment you start narrowing your focus and failing at establishing a viable goal you can reach.

Next, determine why you want to reach your goal. Ideally, the things you want to accomplish should align with the five positivity pillars of the PERMA Principle: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. Will your goal results in good feelings? Does it align with the best possibilities for an optimal experience? Does it include

involvement with or the support of beneficial relationships? Does it have meaning that reaches beyond yourself? Will you accomplish important things that you can feel good about along the way?

The concrete plan should already start to form in your mind. Chop every goal you make into smaller, achievable parts. This fuels the optimism that you should feel along the way if you want to stay focused and utilize all those mental and emotional benefits that positivity brings you.

Take action. No one ever achieves a goal sitting back and merely hoping that something good happens. Make a plan, and stick to it. Anyone can feel a burst of positive energy once, take some grand action, and achieve something. However, if you want to create a reality filled with the powers of positivity, you need to establish a habit of beneficial action on a regular basis.

If things get rough along the way, remember these truths:

- Surround yourself with positive people, and you are more likely to stay positive.
- Stay conscious of negativity creeping into your mind and habits. Reframe or reject.
- Seek out flow state whenever possible. Minimize distractions.
- Remember that perfectionism is the enemy of progress.
- Focus on the present and what you are supposed to do now rather than waste energy on the past or the future.
- Incorporate some of the following 15 ways to improve your optimism every day.

15 Ways to Add More Positivity To Your Life

In the quest for all of these and other benefits, you may have already decided to imbue your life with more positivity. It makes sense from a personal and professional perspective. Although there are many small things you can do throughout the day to remind yourself to practice

optimism instead of pessimism, the following 15 ways will help you truly transform in a more holistic way.

1 – Start Every Day With a Gratitude Routine

When the alarm clock buzzes first thing in the morning, many people default to smacking the snooze button or grumbling negatively as they pull themselves out of bed to get ready for work, school, or whatever the day holds. Instead of succumbing to negativity from the start, take a few moments to relax in your comfortable bed and set your mind firmly in a more positive direction.

Gratitude or the practice of expressing thanks affixes positive things about your life or yourself in mind.¹⁹ Create the habit of thinking about at least three things to be grateful for. What could these include?

Depending on your particular life and circumstances, consider the following:

A career you enjoy or a job that helps you support your family

People who are there for you when you need them or it simply make your life more fun

Your good health whether physical, mental, or emotional

Some financial gain, debt payoff, or a better circumstance than in the past

A particular ability or interest that brings you happiness such as a hobby or sport

For more mental benefits, right down the three things you are grateful for. Science has shown over and over that the act of handwriting your thoughts, goals, and to-do lists gets them stuck in your mind more effectively than if you just think about them or use an app on your smartphone.

2 – Engage in Mindful Meditation

Although originally rooted in Zen Buddhist traditions, people from all walks of life and belief systems can practice mindfulness and meditation²⁰ to improve the positive quotient in their life. Being mindful is the practice of training your focus on what is happening at any given moment. Instead of worrying about the past or fretting about what may happen in the future, you exist at one point of time and deal with anything that is happening right now. While this seems like it could benefit simply based on the removal of certain stresses from your life, it also has more far-reaching effects on your physical and mental well-being.

Maintaining a mindful attitude or actually meditating on the present allows you to release strain and distraction caused by thoughts that filter in from elsewhere or another time. Have you ever been busy on a project at work but you could not stop thinking about the last one you did that the boss did not like very much? Perhaps you are so caught up in the idea that they would not respond well to a future presentation that you failed to pay sufficient attention to what you are doing. This lack of mindfulness could directly influence the quality of your work and how efficiently you get it done.

Four main techniques will help you use mindfulness meditation every day:

Get comfortable, breathe easily, stay quiet, and focus on your breathing or a soothing image or phrase.

Become aware of physical sensations and take stock of your whole body as it relaxes.

Notice things around you that you experience with your five senses. When you notice a feeling, sound, or scent, simply realize it is there and then move on.

Recognize thoughts and emotions as they naturally come into your mind and that let them drift back out again by refocusing on your breathing, image, or mantra.

This process does not have to go on for a long period of time. It is a great way to help remove negativity, refocus your mind, and even improve health by doing things like lowering your blood pressure and reducing the cortisol response.

3 – Create Track Of Positive Forward Motion

When a small child gets the gold star sticker on their school or chore chart, they feel a sense of accomplishment and positivity. Although you may not respond as well to a sticker or small prize, your brain naturally associates a visual representation of accomplishment with a positive feeling. Use a phone app, computer program, or a physical journal to create your schedule or to-do lists. Then, when you finish something, cross it off.

This method of boosting your positivity throughout the day works best if you cut your responsibilities into small bits. You can include something as simple as "eat a healthy breakfast" or "throw out the garbage." For larger tasks, such as a multi-day project at work, writing down

"finished project" may cause more stress because it seems overwhelming. Stress is a negative feeling, and you want to avoid that. Instead, fill your list with things that are more easily and more quickly accomplished.

4 – Write Down Positive Experiences

Manually writing down experiences, thoughts, and emotions in a journal on a regular basis affects your mental health and attitudes. Interestingly enough, you do not have to only write about positive things to get a benefit. In various studies conducted over the last few decades, people who wrote down negative situations showed a reduced need for therapeutic help and fewer long-lasting negative feelings and thoughts.²¹ It represents a way to create order in your mind about a possibly chaotic situation.

However, if your intention is to introduce more positive attitude into your life and reap all the other benefits, it makes sense. This book is not about overcoming horrific circumstances or moving on from trauma. Professional help makes sense in those cases. The process of increasing productivity and thriving in every aspect of your life still needs a powerful system that you can adopt yourself.

Not only does writing help you keep events and situations more organized and manageable in your mind, it can also increase the value of seemingly everyday things. Positivity is about creating an optimistic mindset even when amazingly great things do not happen to you. It is simple to be upbeat if you get a promotion or win an award, after all. It is not as easy on any ordinary day.

Studies have shown that recording your everyday events and listing things you accomplished actually create a more positive impression after a period of time.²² How can you use this truth to improve your life? Get a paper journal, a comfortable pen, and sit down for five or 10 minutes every day to record what you accomplished, positive things that happened, and how you felt about it.

5 – Reward Yourself and Accept Compliments

Too many people have been conditioned to respond to a compliment with "Oh, it was nothing" or any similar phrase.²³ You downplay your accomplishments because anything else either puts an uncomfortable spotlight on yourself or feels like bragging. Always going for a default negative response, however, does not allow your mental and emotional centers to experience the truth of the situation. Everything gets covered up, and you may end up feeling worse than before.

Of course, you do not want to go around showing off or shouting about the great things you did. If you walk up to people at work and say, "Hey, I really nailed that presentation, didn't I?" the negativity that will reflect back at you must taint your attitude. However, if someone else gives you a pat on the back and a, "Great presentation!" you should accept the compliment. Instead of, "Oh, it was nothing" try out a, "Thanks. I worked hard on it." Do not pass it off as good luck, some kind of cosmic mistakes, or anything less than what it really was.

Remember that positivity is the presence of some characteristic as much as it is a sense of optimism. That characteristic can definitely be a sense of self-worth and pride due to a job well done.

6 – Give Recognition and Appreciation to Others

As important as it is to acknowledge your own accomplishments and efforts, it is equally important to recognize how well other people do. This is a combination of focusing on more positive things and expressing gratitude. They both help your mind expand and push away any negativity and stress plaguing you about a particular experience or process.

Articles and coursework that teaches managers how to increase productivity and improve employee satisfaction frequently touch on making sure they know how much you and the company appreciates their efforts. When you win a big contract or finish a tough project, the manager may even hand out awards or buy doughnuts for everyone.

There is no rule saying that only managers can do these things. A study from Berkeley found that 90% of respondents understood that expressing gratitude to others makes for a better life, but fewer than 15% of the same people said they bothered to say thanks to anyone at work.²⁴ This does not mean you have to spring for lunch every time someone handles some paperwork or finishes an assignment that affects you in some way.

Consider these simple ways to appreciate and express gratitude to others:

Focus on individuals rather than the team. Positivity spreads more easily if people feel appreciated for themselves rather than just another cog in the machine.

Set yourself a quota for appreciative comments. This helps make sure you say something when you would usually default to staying silent. Do not make this too frequent, however, or it ends up sounding insincere.

Get specific. A "Nice job!" feels good, but a "You really did great work on that design. Thanks for making it so intuitive for the rest of us." works so much better.

Do it in front of other people, but do not make a production out of it. No banners or announcement necessary, but do not sneak around to give recognition.

7 – Practice Compassion For Yourself

Not every day will go as planned. There will be times when you cannot maintain a positive attitude. Nobody is perfect. One technique to remind herself includes writing a self-compassion letter. Remember that things get stuck in your mind more when you write them down longhand. Writing a letter to yourself helps you face your thoughts and feelings in a slower and more measured way.

Expressing compassion with yourself is a way to take care of your psyche. When you have a particularly trying day, and you are having a difficult time reframing negativity into more positive comments, take a quiet 15 or 20 minutes at the end of the day to write a letter. Let yourself know that you understand how hard things are. Make sure you understand that everyone has these problems sometimes. Also, gently explore the truths of the negative statements your mind is trying to tell you. Chances are, the process of writing this letter will help you realize that you can yourself away from the dark thoughts.

8 – Give Yourself A Three Minute Breather

Life gets hectic sometimes. It can be quite difficult to hold onto positivity when your team leader is complaining, you failed to get any strikes at the bowling alley, a project did not come out as you intended, and the kids are whining again. No matter what problems you have, they contribute to the possibility of entering negative headspace. You start thinking bad things automatically. From reading the information above, you understand how important it is to flip the switch from bad to good or from negative to positive as quickly and effectively as possible.

One way to do this is by giving yourself a three minute break anytime you need one. As soon as the automatic thoughts start thrumming in your brain, stop, take a mental step back, and ask yourself three questions.

Where am I?

How am I?

What am I thinking?

As on as these questions might sound, they actually have a powerful ability to stop rampant negativity in its tracks. You stop laser focusing on the problem in front of you and spanned your mindset to include your surroundings, feelings, and your thoughts. The answers to these questions will also appear automatically. The final step in your three minute breather involves practicing mindfulness of your physical self.

9 – Take a Personal Vacation Every Day

Unfortunately, this does not mean you can call out of work and hop a plane to a tropical island for relaxation. Your daily vacation has nothing to do with travel, does not cost anything, and can take as little as 10 or 15 minutes. This is a time set aside for you to relax, rejuvenate, and increase the ratio of positive experiences in your life.

Some ideas for a mini personal vacation include:

A rejuvenating walk around the neighborhood or even your work campus

Lounging on your couch and cuddling with your pet for 10 minutes after work

Taking a bubble bath with your favorite rubber ducky

Having a meaningful conversation with a friend or loved one

10 – Envision Your Best Possible Self

Visualization is a powerful tool for establishing goals and affirming positive progress toward your future. One technique helps you boosts optimism and particularly your opinion of yourself is taking time to envision your best possible self. This concept touches on the law of attraction because you formulate an image in your mind of your dream future self in your desire circumstances.

Having this type of image firmly fixed in your mind can truly help you maintain a higher degree of optimism about the possibility of reaching that reality. This is a very helpful exercise to do in conjunction with setting goals and action plans to achieve them. You can do this in your mind or write down the process and all the dreams you desire.

11 – Meditation For Love and Kindness

Loving yourself and treating yourself with kindness is one of the most beneficial ways you can express positivity in your own life. If you have a significant other, a child, a close family member or dear friend, you may already cherish them with this type of attention. There is nothing weak or unseemly about treating yourself with tender benevolence as well. While you engage in this type of meditation, you can extend your interest in positive things outside of yourself to everyone you care about or even the world of large.

This is about becoming your own loved one or friend. Some people may reject this idea because it sounds too mushy or rather self-centered. In truth, being kind to yourself and showing compassion are excellent ways to combat subconscious negativity and attacks.

While you are sitting or lying down in a comfortable place, focus on your breathing and relaxation of your body. Instead of mindfulness meditation when you are aware of everything going on around you and inside your body, this version has more direct purpose behind. The goals include attention, emotion, intention, and connection. They are manifested by focusing your attention on certain phrases that expressed kindness, allowing the free flow of positive emotions, giving power to the intention of happiness and success, and connecting to your heart and the world at large.

Sentences to repeat silently to yourself during this love and kindness meditation include:

I am filled with kindness and love.

I am safe from all danger without and within.

I am well physically, mentally, and emotionally.

I am happy, peaceful, and content.

If these sentences do not resonate with you, you can certainly come up with your own. Just remember that doing this positivity exercise should open your mind to the understanding that you are worthy of all these things and that they are possible.

12 – Pop Pessimism Balloons

Despite all the relaxation, meditation, mindfulness, and reframing and redirection of negative thoughts, feelings, and words, they probably will still show up from time to time. Perhaps you would prefer a more direct approach with an active component. When self-criticism starts rising up from the dark place inside of you, imagine that it is some horrid helium balloon trying to float into the clear sky of your optimism.

Then pop it. This is an excellent opportunity for you to use your imagination and creativity to really visualize the process happening. As a negative thought balloon rises up into your consciousness, imagine popping it with a pin, your finger, or a glowing magical sword of truth. Anything that works for you is fine.

As the negative thoughts explode out from the punctured balloon, do not give them the opportunity to darken your optimistic viewpoint. Instead, quickly replace them with positive thoughts. You might want to envision flashes of light, beautiful fireworks, or even peaceful clouds drifting away into the distance. The point of this positivity exercise is not to see how creative your mind can get, although you know it could go far with your new optimism outlook, but to practice reframing the negative into positive.

13 – Remind Yourself of Your Strengths

Consultant Matt Driver²⁵ developed a system of awareness that he called the Strengths Wheel. The general format is of a circle divided into slices like a pie. Around the edge, list your particular strengths. Remember to focus on positivity during this exercise. Concentric rings from the center point all the way to the outside represent a scale of 0 to 10. For each strength, make two marks on these rings. One should reveal how much you use your strength already, and the other should show how much more you could use your strength if you tried.

This method for increasing positivity allows you to make subjective determinations focused on your strengths. When you approach the activity with an optimistic mindset, you can see that the differences in each pair of points is closer than you may think. It also indicates your ability to expand your reach and thrive at whatever goal you want to set that aligns with your capabilities

14 – Build a Positivity Support System

No one is an island, and trying to make it completely alone in this world is one of the major sources of negative emotional energy. Sometimes you need outside help to keep your positivity running strong. One of the best pieces of advice is to surround yourself with positive people. Get rid of toxic relationships and avoid others who simply like to whine and complain. After all, both positivity and negativity rub off on the people around you.

Unfortunately, it is usually impossible to avoid all problem people. You may have to deal with them in a project team at work, or you may even work for them directly. When you feel their negativity affecting you, take some time to contact a friend, loved one, or family member to boost your spirits again. Another option is to find an online community focused on a positive mindset and read some of their posts or even look at a few happy memes to reset your mind.

15 – If At First You Don't Succeed...

One of the most important things to remember about this playbook for positivity is that the same plans and methods will not work only one time. There is no magical solution that will transform you from a pessimist into an optimist like flicking on a light switch in a dark room. You need to adopt the right methods and repeat them regularly if you want to make a considerable and positive change.

Throughout this process, remember to relax, forgive yourself for any slowdowns, bumps, or blocks along the way, and always improve your proficiency at getting back to the plan. You can thrive, succeed, and feel great doing it. Creating beneficial habits through repetition is the only way.

Conclusion

Positivity has long been part of the playbook for living a happier and more successful life. While many self-help plans talk about how important it is, very few present a comprehensive look that proves its importance and shows how to achieve its benefits. You may have already achieved great things in your life, but there is always room for more. At the very least, the methods described in this book will help you feel better about your current situation. Positivity and the quest for optimism goes far beyond minimizing discomfort, doubt, fear, and anger. When you recognize these and other negative things inside of you, you know you need a change.

Ultimately, it does not matter what gets in the way of living a more optimistic lifestyle. If you want to change and empower your life through positivity, all you have to do is understand the principles and take action. By expanding your emotional intelligence and adopting simple yet powerful techniques, you can reap the benefits of a changed mindset. Pessimism can destroy hopes and dreams, minimize your chance of success in the future, and make you feel miserable every day. It can even contribute to physical illness and a shorter lifespan.

With the power of positivity on your side, you will expand beyond your perceived limitations and forge forward into a future where you can thrive. Best of all, the entire journey will benefit you in ways you may have never imagined before. Take charge of your life so you can enjoy it and feel great about yourself in the process.

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¹³ <https://hbr.org/2015/08/the-emotions-that-make-us-more-creative>

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¹⁵ <https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi/>

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