

Don't worry -
Be Happy!



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For some people positive thinking is a real challenge. Many people feel their thoughts are out of their control and are often swamped with worry. Fortunately there are some wonderful 'tools' that help to retrain the brain and develop the habit of positive thinking very quickly.

When we develop optimism and make positive thinking more predominant than negative thinking, every aspect of life changes for the better!

Happiness becomes our natural state. We become healthier and are able to enjoy the fun things in life to a much greater extent. Positive thinkers are more successful in all areas of their lives including relationships, careers, finances and they are usually more creative and far more motivated than negative thinkers.

People with positive mindsets are even better looking! Yes, it is true! This is because when you are thinking positively and feel happy you are holding less stress in your body. Your facial muscles relax, your skin tone improves and your eyes begin to sparkle.

Using a Gratitude Journal every day is a great way to begin developing a more positive mindset. This activity assists the mind to recognise and focus on the positive aspects of our lives that are real and in the here and now.

All you need is a note book and pen. Then you simply make entries into the journal at least once a day, listing all the things you are grateful for in your life. For some people, who are heavily entrenched in negative thought processes or have lots of problems, this can be quite difficult to begin with. In some cases it is necessary to start off small and get bigger as the habit of focusing on the positive develops. On the first attempt we might try to make 4 or 5 entries each day.

Each entry would begin with ...I am grateful for.... this may be followed with my good health, or that I have a great job, or the love of my dog; anything at all the person considers a good thing in their lives. Another method is to just start writing a list

of all you are grateful for until you run out of things to list. It is fine to list the same things every day. For example if you are grateful for your relationship with a particular person you might want to include that in your list every day. As time passes, recognizing positives in your life will become easier and the list will begin to grow.

Often gratitude lists start out to reflect very internalized feelings and personal situations but over time the lists expand to encompass the outer world. Through using this method every day, a person who struggled to find anything to feel good about in their lives will often start feeling grateful for living in a free country or the birds in the trees outside their window for example. This development is an indication that the habit of focusing on positives instead of negatives is forming.

The second part of using gratitude journaling to develop positive mind sets is to reflect on the entries made in the journal. At different times throughout the day check your emotional barometer. This simply means consider what emotions you are feeling in that moment. If you recognise negative feelings (example: anger, sadness, loneliness, etc) then your emotional barometer is telling you that you are functioning from a negative mind set. To switch back to a positive mindset simply take a moment to start reflecting on the things you wrote about being grateful for in your journal.

Focusing on the positive is not about ignoring problems that are real and need fixing. However, if worry fixed anything no one would ever need to

come up with a solution to any problem ever again. We could just all worry the problems away! There is a difference between recognizing and working toward resolving a problem and worrying about problems. Worry is negative: unproductive and unhealthy. Developing a positive mindset requires us to learn to spend the majority of our time focusing on the positive.

Still, facing the reality of negative situations, problems and issues that need to be overcome is important; our lives would soon fall into chaos if we simply refused to think about our problems at all. After all, we are not trying to create a sugar coated world of denial here... we are working at developing optimism and reducing worry (reducing stress.)

When we have a positive mindset for the majority of the time (when we are optimistic) our minds are clearer and we are better able to function 'in the now'. Therefore we are better equipped to deal with problem solving in a proactive rather than a reactive manner.

The third aspect of the Gratitude Journal method for developing positive mindsets is to allocate 15 minutes every day to problem solving. This means we take 15 minutes to sit down with a note book (a separate book from the gratitude journal – as that is dedicated only to positives) and work through our worries.

The problem solving sessions begins with us making a list of the things we might be worried about. For example we might have a bill we don't know how we are going to pay, so we would put

this on the list of 'problems' along with any other 'worries'. During this 15 minute session we go over the things we are worried about and try to come up with ideas to solve them. Problems that are worried over all day sabotage our ability to enjoy the rest of our lives, they consume us. They don't get solved because we are drowning in them.

However, when our minds are clear, positive and relaxed we are in a far greater position to come up with innovative solutions to most of our problems. During the day (all times outside worry time) as soon as we recognise ourselves worrying about a problem, we simply delegate it to worry time. If there is nothing we can do about it right then, we choose to deal with it later, in the appropriate time space. If it is a new worry, we could make a note of it and decide to address it during our next worry time session. Similarly if we have come up with an idea regarding solving a worry we could make a note of it and decide to address it in its delegated time slot.

Once the worry has been acknowledged, noted (either mentally or on paper) we switch the worry off by consciously revising the things we are grateful for. This revision of gratitude can almost become a personal mantra and in many ways is a form of Meditation. We are blocking out all thought, other than those that involve the things in our life that we are grateful for...that make us happy.

If you use this three step method over the next two weeks you are sure to notice some huge differences in the way you are feeling about life. You will be enjoying a much more positive

mindset. You will certainly be happier, you will probably feel healthier and you will find many of the problems you have been worrying over have been solved!

Our brains love habit. Using the gratitude journal and worry time will develop the habit of positive thinking and create some order and discipline when it comes to thinking about the things you are not so grateful about. Eventually you will start to notice you just don't worry anymore...You will acknowledge problems and delegate them to worry time where you can sit down and look for solutions.

Namaste
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