

Creating a **POSITIVE LIFE**

Because Positive Thinking
Can Only Get You So Far



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INTRODUCTION

Whether you've read Norman Vincent Peale's classic book on The Power of Positive Thinking or one of the thousands of books, articles, blogs, and other resources on the importance of mindset, you probably already have a good understanding of the role positivity plays in accomplishing your goals in life.



No one can deny that your mindset is a crucial element to your ultimate success. But, thinking positively is never going to be enough to help you realize everything you have ever dreamed in life. In fact, positivity, while a necessary component in your success equation, is only part of the formula. Without action that leverages that optimistic mental attitude, your dreams will always be unrealized plans and nothing more.

Learning to take charge of not only your attitude but also your actions are both required when seeking to be successful in life. You have to learn to harness the energy of your thoughts into actionable steps that will help you achieve what you want. While your positive thoughts form the basis of your beliefs and values, it is ultimately what you do to realize those ideas that will help you achieve your dreams.

Keep reading to learn about creating the right positive mindset, the dangers of relying solely on positive thinking, and how you can leverage your attitude to turn your dreams into reality. We'll share practical strategies for improving your mindset as well as how to build actionable steps that help you attain your goals. We'll even share all the ways positive thinking and action can change your life for the better.

START WITH A POSITIVE MINDSET

Your thoughts and outlook are what guide everything else in your life. When you have a positive outlook, you believe that good things can happen, you make choices that allow those positive outcomes, and you encourage more positive thoughts and actions to manifest themselves.

Your mindset guides nearly everything your conscious mind does, and it has a significant impact on your subconscious mind, as well. Your outlook is the very foundation of your character and informs the circumstances in which you find yourself as well as your beliefs in your own abilities to persevere and overcome challenges.



Others have made the analogy that your mind is like a garden. When you cultivate it with care and attention and provide the right environment, beautiful and healthy things can grow. When you neglect it and allow your thoughts to run wild without focusing on what is needed for your well-being, thoughts and ideas will still grow.

They will likely not be very healthy or useful, though. Whichever route you take, your mind will always expand. But, it's the foundation you lay with your mindset that dictates what your mind will bring forth.

Negative Begets Negative

As humans, we are predisposed toward negativity. We are much more likely to focus on our negative or darker emotions, like pain and disappointment, than to concentrate on our contentment and joy. Why is this? Well, our brains are actually hard-wired this way.

Your circumstances and emotions play a large role in how your brain learns and the connections it makes every time you experience something. The more often you experience something, the

more times your brain will connect those memories to other neural connections. Emotions and sensory input are two factors that increase these types of neuron connectivity.

For example, olfactory memory, or your ability to remember smells and associate them with specific incidences in your life, is very strong. Perhaps you loved your grandmother very much, and when she would hug you, you could always smell gardenias, which were part of her perfume.

Every time you smell gardenias now, you likely remember your grandmother. You associate gardenias with positive memories and feeling loved. Your neurons have been programmed to fire when you smell gardenias, and these synapses are connected to feelings of love and safety.

More potent than these positive associations, though, are ones that remind us of pain, suffering, and sadness. These negative emotions create more connections in our brains, and we are more likely to recall misery and negativity than we are happiness or other positive emotions.

If, for example, your grandmother has passed away, the smell of gardenias also likely makes you sad, as well. Your brain pushes past all the positive emotions you usually associate with the scent and focus on the loss of someone you love.

Rewire Your Brain

You can utilize a combination of strategies to rewire your brain to focus on the positive and fixate less on the negative. Meditation is an excellent way to accomplish this, as it teaches you to clear negativity from your mind and focus on the positive.

Meditation techniques have been shown to change the way your brain works, allowing you to concentrate on what is important and learn to ignore the other negative distractions.



Practicing daily mindfulness and gratitude is another way to ground yourself in positivity. When you focus on your gifts and blessings, you flood your brain with dopamine, which makes it easier to ignore the negative emotions and anxiety they cause. Spend a few minutes each day focusing on that for which you are grateful and try to be mindful as much as possible of the present moment, not the past or present.

Being kind to others also changes the way your brain works. When you are kind to others, you are also more gentle with yourself. Kindness makes you feel more positive about the world in which you live and provides you with motivation and hope for the future.

Daily affirmations are another way to focus your brain on the positive aspects. Positive self-talk is a way to overcome a negative self-image or other issues with self-esteem. Give yourself a daily pep talk to keep your focus on what is good and positive in your life.

Now that we know how the brain works, and why positive thinking is essential, the next step should be just to think positively, and everything will work out, right? Unfortunately, it's just not that easy. Next, we'll explore the dangers of relying on positive thinking alone to make your dreams come true.

THE PITFALLS OF RELYING SOLELY ON POSITIVE THINKING

The mantra that positive thinking creates positive results is one we hear over and over in our lives. But what is often missing from this advice is the understanding that positive thinking alone does not guarantee success. In fact, your positive outlook can sometimes interfere with your ability to fulfill your dreams.

Because thinking positively is more of a mental effort than believing the negative to be true, when we work hard to think positively, we are, in a way, tricking our brains into thinking we've already done the heavy lifting when it comes to actually turning your goals into reality.

When you think positively, it has a positive effect on your physical wellbeing, and you enjoy lower blood pressure, less stress, and other biological markers that tell your brain it's okay, everything is

all right. If you aren't careful, this can lead to you putting forth less energy and having lowered motivation toward actually achieving your dreams. Your body and your brain think you've already made it to the finish line!

So, you have to actually work harder to keep a positive attitude while also putting in the work needed to attain those goals. Therefore, you need some reliable strategies for intermixing your positive mindset with a dose of reality.

So, what's the best way to keep a positive attitude while still keeping your feet firmly planted on the ground, all while making continue progress toward your dreams? We've compiled some successful strategies to help you do just that.



STRATEGIES FOR TURNING ATTITUDE INTO ACTION

Once you've mastered the positive attitude, it's time to turn that mindset into actionable steps. Wanting a dream and actively working toward it are very different, and there are some simple strategies you can use to make progress toward achieving everything you want in life.

Some of these are also good for keeping your mindset positive in the face of obstacles and setbacks. Here are a few of our favorites.

Use Your Positive Mindset to Create Focus

One way to leverage your positivity is to turn it into extreme focus toward action. When you use that optimistic mindset to focus on what it is you want to accomplish, it becomes a motivating factor by itself. When you wake up each day with the knowledge that you can accomplish your goal, you then need to ask yourself, "What am I doing today to get me one step closer to reaching that outcome?" Turning your outlook into consistent action is key.



When you have a positive mindset and leverage that into focus, action becomes self-propagating. You see success each day, which engenders more action, which leads to more success. You can create a cycle of action and success fueled by your focus and positive outlook.

The opposite is true of this, so be careful. When you focus on the negative, it tends to create fear and inhibit action. When your focus is driven by anxiety, you can become paralyzed to attempt anything new, and your progress dies out. So, use the power of positive thinking in your favor.

Practice Visualization

One technique that is particularly powerful when it comes to realizing your dreams and putting positive thought into action is visualization. Learning to vividly see what it is you are trying to accomplish can serve as motivation for your hard work. Creating a clear mental picture of how your life will feel and look when you achieve your dreams provides you with something concrete toward which you will want to work.

Visualizing your future helps you feel that what you are doing is possible and also just a few steps away from being achieved. It helps if you can actually experience parts of your final goal in real life, so have some experiences on which to base the visualization of your ultimate dream.

Walk through a potential dream home, take a virtual field trip of someplace you'd like to travel to someday, or make a list of the first



three things you will buy when you achieve your financial goals. Make your visualization as real as possible by seeing yourself in this future. How will you feel? What problems will be resolved when you attain your goal, and what do you hope to learn along the way?

Some people find images very helpful for visualization. Cut out photographs that represent your ideal dreams come true and place them in places where you can see them regularly. Like positive thinking, visualization is not enough on its own, but it can serve to fuel your actions and provide motivation for the hard work of actually making your dreams come true.

Allow Others to Inspire You

Looking for inspiration, motivation, and even guidance from someone who has already achieved their dreams is another excellent strategy in your quest to attain your own goals. It's much easier to turn your positive thinking into action when you see examples of people you admire who have

also accomplished this feat.

There are many resources available online to listen to inspirational talks and interviews with famous and influential people who have worked hard to achieve their goals. These can serve as food for thought whenever you are contemplating your own dreams or wondering how to continue forward. Find people who have met goals similar to yours. Learn about their history and to what they attribute their success. Find out how they overcame obstacles.

Beyond looking to strangers, though, find role models in your real life, as well. Having a mentor who can provide you with guidance and advice when needed is highly beneficial. It does not necessarily have to be someone who has attained a similar goal to yours but perhaps someone who has overcome similar obstacles as you or who has a positive outlook or mindset you wish to emulate.



Keep an Eye on Your Negativity

Being mindful of your negative thoughts and actively working to keep them at bay can help you achieve your goals. The negative thoughts you have about your future can lead to stress, fear, and anxiety, which can derail your progress and halt your efforts in their tracks.

Negativity can come from regrets about your past, anxiety about the future, or a host of other fears and concerns that plague our psyches. Staying mindful of your negative thoughts is the first step toward controlling them. When you start to hear your inner voice begin to question, to wonder about the what-ifs and the should-haves, then you know it's time to start paying close attention to your outlook.

While it is true that negative thoughts are to be expected, and we all have fleeting worries that come and go, it's when we allow them to stick around and set up camp that we need to take action. These negative thoughts can quickly take over, kill your motivation, dampen your spirit, and keep you from achieving your dreams.

Developing a daily mindfulness practice will be critical for monitoring your thoughts and paying attention to when negativity starts to creep in. Daily meditation, as mentioned earlier, is an excellent strategy for this and can be highly effective for monitoring your mindset.

When you start to feel negative, ask yourself from where those thoughts are originating? Have you experienced a setback recently, is there a basis for your fears, or are you just sad? Then, you need to do something to get back on track.

Make progress, take some actionable steps, or set a new goal, but do something! Don't just wallow in your negative thoughts.

Focus next on replacing the negative thoughts with positive ones. What are you looking forward to in the future? What is something you have already accomplished for which you are proud? What are your strengths and how can you build upon those? Reverse the negative thinking and move forward.

Be Persistent

Doing something every day, no matter how little or insignificant, is essential for leveraging your positive thinking into action. Anything worth doing is going to come with its share of difficulties, but when you are persistent, you can accomplish anything toward which you set your mind.



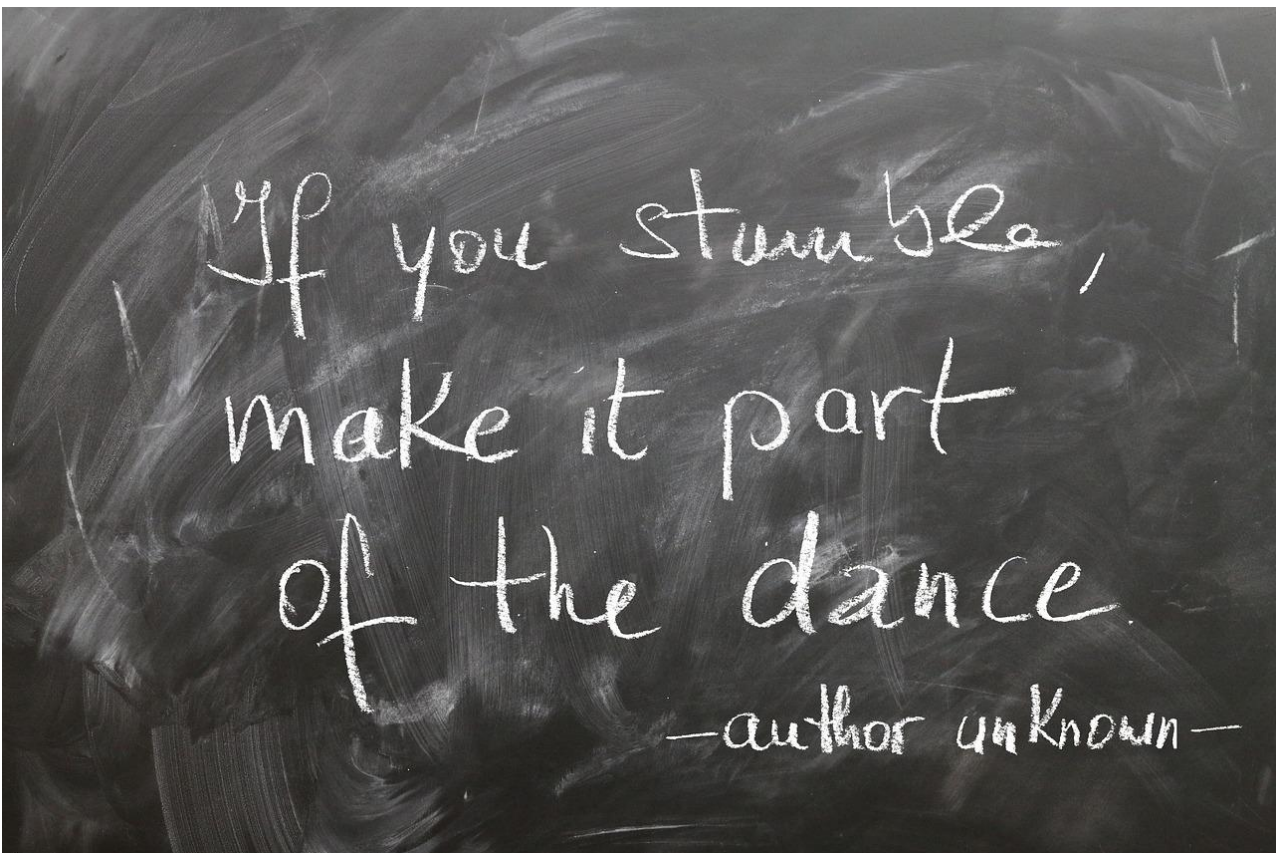
Use your positive thinking to remind yourself why you are working hard. Allow that positivity to be your light when things get rough, and when things are hard, positive thinking helps you see how far you have come.

A positive outlook is a foundation upon which you build daily habits of mind. It serves as the bedrock for your mindfulness, gratitude, visualization, and focus activities you do every single

day. These habits become second nature, and you soon realize you are doing them even without thinking about it. And persistence becomes built-in, as well.

One way positivity can help you persevere is to allow you to shrug off the naysayers and ignore those who believe you will fail. By being a role model, showing them how you believe in yourself and your dreams and pushing away the negative energy they bring to your life, you can refocus your efforts and prove them all wrong.

Your positive thinking is what will sustain you over the long haul and see you across the finish line. It will serve you well throughout your entire journey, so don't let anyone, especially yourself, try to extinguish that fire inside you.



HOW POSITIVE ACTION CAN INFLUENCE ALL AREAS OF YOUR LIFE

There are many ways that positive thinking, as well as action, can benefit your life besides just helping you achieve a goal. The power of positivity has been shown to provide many significant side effects, including to your health and for the benefit of others.

Cope with Stress More Effectively

If you are optimistic, you are more likely to handle stressful situations better than those who think pessimistically. Positive thinking tends to help you find alternative solutions to problems, which means you don't worry so much that things won't work out when there is a problem.

Thinking positive also means you are more likely to ask for help from others or to devise a plan of action to deal with a problem. Negative thinking often leads to a defeatist mentality that has you believing nothing you do matters, so why bother.

Negativity by definition creates more stress, as it focuses on what is wrong or could go wrong, whereas positivity focuses on outcomes and solutions. When your mind tends toward the negative, therefore, you are placing yourself into a stressed state of mind that you must then battle back from.



Better Health

Those who have a more positive outlook in life are less likely to have certain medical conditions, including depression and cardiovascular disease. Those who think positively often lead healthier lives, as they see the benefit in taking care of their bodies and practicing healthy habits regularly. They also have lower levels of blood pressure, perhaps due to less stress or better ability to respond to stressful events.



Handle Pain Better

Those with a positive outlook are more likely to be able to tolerate pain. While none of us wants to suffer with occasional pain, injuries and illness can occur. Optimistic people are more likely to be able to feel less discomfort and pain than those with more pessimistic perspectives.

Boost Your Immune System

The mind plays an influential role in your body's overall health and wellbeing and keeping a positive outlook can actually keep you healthier over time. Researchers have identified a stronger immune system response in those with a more positive outlook.

Those who had optimism toward a specific future goal were more likely to overcome illness quickly than those with negative outlooks. Negative emotions were more likely to lead to a weaker immune system response to the flu vaccine, as well.

Live Longer

Those with a more positive outlook live, on average, ten years longer than their more pessimistic peers. This is likely due to the additive effects of these many health and wellness benefits already described, as well as lowered incidence of depression and other mental health problems that can lead to premature death.

Be More Resilient

Resilience is your ability to bounce back from setbacks or effectively cope with problems. When you have resiliency, you are more likely to be able to identify potential solutions, to believe that there is a positive outcome that is possible, and to continue working toward your goal.

A positive outlook can increase your ability to believe all of these things. Optimism means you are always looking for a way to solve a problem, while pessimism means you don't believe there is a way to make things better. Your positive thinking contributes to your coping skills and makes you more likely to continue trying, even in the face of tough situations.

Form Stronger, Healthier Relationships

Those with a positive outlook are much more likely to find a life partner, to stay married longer, and to feel more satisfaction in their relationships. A positive outlook means people will feel more comfortable with you and want to spend time with you, helping you create better friendships as well as easier working relationships with colleagues. Those with a negative attitude make others uncomfortable or force people to avoid them because they don't want that type of negativity in their lives.



Healthier Habits

Positive thinking contributes to your hope for the future, which means you are more likely to make better decisions about habits such as drinking, smoking, diet, and exercise. You are also more likely to be socially aware of how your behaviors influence and are perceived by others. A positive outlook helps you resist social pressure to engage in unhealthy habits, which means you make better decisions for yourself and your health.

You Are More Likely to be a Leader

A positive attitude can help you not only get hired for better jobs but also place you in leadership positions. You are more likely to be recognized as a leader when others see you as a positive force in the workplace, and research indicates that others are more likely to follow you when you have a positive outlook.

Raise Your Self-Esteem

Your self-esteem is directly connected to your outlook in life. When you think more positively, you will naturally have more confidence in your ability to succeed. This starts a cycle of success that leads others to believe in your abilities, as well, which will enhance your own sense of self. It's a cycle that can be self-perpetuating when you keep your outlook positive.

Enjoy Great Life Satisfaction

When you think positively, you are more likely to have a better overall enjoyment of life. Positive people are more outgoing, interact with more people, and find gratification and joy in many different aspects of life.



EXERCISE: CREATING POSITIVITY IN 7 KEY LIFE AREAS

Consider your life areas below to evaluate just how positive each area of your life is. This exercise focuses on identifying negative elements in your life and planning to make changes towards the positive.

Personal Development

This includes developing and ensuring your emotional and psychological health, assessing and developing skills, qualities, and personal goals in an effort to maximize their potential. Some key activities involved in personal development are: self-awareness, working through personal issues, eliminating any and all roadblocks and deficits that prevent a high quality of life and personal fulfillment and to realize dreams and aspirations.

List all the negatives in this area	Consider how you can make changes towards the positive

Social/Friends/Family

List all the negatives in this area	Consider how you can make changes towards the positive

Finances/Wealth

List all the negatives in this area	Consider how you can make changes towards the positive

Romantic Life

List all the negatives in this area	Consider how you can make changes towards the positive

Health and Fitness

List all the negatives in this area	Consider how you can make changes towards the positive

Recreation/Relaxation/Fun

List all the negatives in this area	Consider how you can make changes towards the positive

Career/Professional

List all the negatives in this area	Consider how you can make changes towards the positive

Spiritual Development

List all the negatives in this area	Consider how you can make changes towards the positive

FINAL THOUGHTS

While having a positive attitude will serve you well in life, it's what you do with that outlook that means more when it comes to achieving your dreams. A positive outlook can be leveraged into actions that will help you attain your dreams and reach whatever goal you set for yourself.

The positivity you have cannot only help you achieve whatever you set your mind to, but it can also help you be a healthier, happier person. An optimistic outlook improves your relationships, helps you attain more professionally, and can allow you to cope more effectively with whatever life throws your way.

While having a positive attitude isn't always easy, it is worth it to cultivate this mindset. The effort you put toward thinking positively will help you attain many of the best rewards in life.

STAY POSITIVE AND TAKE CARE!

