

It's Time to Think Positive



Picture a rose bush in full bloom. What did you notice first: the roses or the thorns? A rose bush has plenty of both. But if you focused on the roses and overlooked the thorns, you were thinking positive.

There is a lesson here.

Thinking positive is a choice. It's a decision to appreciate the roses in your life (loved ones, favorite activities, and relaxing moments) while letting go of the thorns (stresses, disappointments, and losses).

This doesn't mean pretending to be happy when you're not. If you're upset, it's important to deal with and talk about your feelings. Thinking positive means choosing to fill your mind with positive thoughts. Your reward will be a calmer, more hopeful attitude.

The benefits of staying positive

"A positive outlook is necessary to prevent depression, to get along with others, and to feel better about yourself and your life," says psychologist Norman Abeles, Ph.D., past president of the American Psychological Association and an expert on mental health in seniors.

If you have health problems, it's important not to get stuck down in the dumps. "A negative attitude makes you feel worse physically. It increases your stress, which worsens your pain and drains your energy," says Dr. Abeles. On the other hand, "a positive attitude helps you relax and feel more



competent" when dealing with everyday challenges.

Dolores Gallagher Thompson, Ph.D., director of the Older Adults and Family Center at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Palo Alto, CA, says older adults dealing with health problems become sad that they can't do everything they used to. At that point, some decide they can't ever be happy again.

"I call thinking that starts spiraling downward 'pre-depression,'" she says. "When you start to feel this way, it's time to change your thinking. If you don't, eventually you will become depressed."

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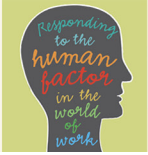
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How to change your mind

If you tend to count your worries instead of your blessings, it's time for a fresh approach. Here's how to start thinking more positively.

- Reason with facts, not feelings. Changes in your life can make you feel uncertain and anxious. You may then fear the worst. "Step back and get the facts," says Dr. Gallagher Thompson. "Talk to an expert, such as your doctor, and find out exactly what you can expect. Then ask yourself, 'If this was happening to somebody else, what advice would I give them?'"
- Stay connected. Keep in touch with friends and loved ones and be open to developing new friendships. Volunteering your time and keeping active in clubs or faith-based groups will help you focus on others more than yourself. "Spend time with positive people who are living active, fulfilled lives," says Dr. Abeles.
- Plan for your happiness. Schedule time for pleasant activities as often as possible. Having something to look forward to will keep your spirits up.
- Become a problem-solver. Don't just wish problems would go away. Take steps to solve them as quickly as possible, asking for support and help from others.
- Find the silver lining. Give yourself time to adjust to change or loss. Change can bring new opportunities: Be open to them. "Your life won't be the same, but it likely can be better than what you imagine," says Dr. Gallagher Thompson.

Challenge your fear about getting older

From the time we are young, many of us dread growing older.

This is partly because negative images of seniors — as grumpy, disabled, and forgetful — are everywhere, from greeting cards to TV commercials, says Becca Levy, Ph.D., a Yale University psychologist and researcher of stereotypes related to aging. If you accept these negative images as true — and apply them to yourself — you may start believing you're less capable than you really are.

To fight these stereotypes, Dr. Levy suggests asking, "Does this idea really apply to me — or are there examples of older people who are different?" She adds, "Think about positive role models for successful aging, if not in your immediate circle, then in books you've read or movies you've seen."

Likewise, if you make a mistake or forget something, don't dismiss it as "just old age," advises Dr. Levy. "These negative phrases stay with us. The real reason for what you are experiencing could be only temporary — such as tiredness, hunger, or having a lot on your mind."

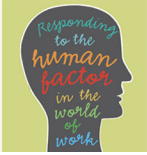
The bottom line: Question your deeply held beliefs about aging and screen out the negative. You are what you believe you are. Give yourself credit for the wisdom and maturity you've gained through the years.

Krames Staywell

Claremont EAP distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance.

You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

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Balance:

Key to a Successful Fitness Program

Fitness experts are saying what nutritionists have been telling us for years: The key to better health is balance. Just as a balanced diet provides all the nutrients the body needs, a balanced fitness program keeps muscles and joints in top condition.



“We’re getting away from chemical rehabilitation, where we have a physical problem and find a pill or drug to solve it,” says Mark Madole, strength and conditioning director at the North Dallas Athletic Club in Dallas. “Instead, we are looking more at exercise and diet as a means of maintaining good health.”

Mr. Madole suggests that inactivity is like waiting for the other shoe to drop. “That ‘shoe,’” he says, “may come in the form of a heart attack, back problems, stroke -- any number of conditions.”

A sensible start

Get an accurate assessment of your physical condition before starting a fitness program. In a perfect world, you would go to a doctor for a thorough examination, then head to a gym or health club and train with a personal fitness coach. If you can’t do that, at least see a physician and ask for a personal fitness profile.

The profile will help you set goals for your fitness program; you may decide to lose weight or improve your muscle tone, endurance or cardiovascular health. It will also identify pre-existing physical problems that a fitness program may exacerbate or need to be designed around. These problems can range from cardiovascular conditions to chronic joint or tendon ailments.

The balanced program

The body’s muscles are made up of slow-twitch (aerobic) and fast-twitch (strength) fibers. “The key to a balanced fitness program is to do something that will challenge both muscle groups,” Mr. Madole says.

Claremont EAP can help with all of these choices!

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His ingredients for a balanced program are:

A total-body workout: “This is any form of exercise that combines resistance with cardiovascular movement,” Mr. Madole says. Weight training combined with running or walking is optimal, but exercising on a stationary bike that also works the arms is good, too.

Strength training: Using free weights or weight machines builds muscle mass, controls weight, builds energy and protects against injury. If weights aren’t available, try pull-ups, push-ups and other exercises that use the body’s weight to create resistance.

Aerobic exercise: Activities such as running, cycling and swimming burn excess body fat and promote cardiovascular health.

Flexibility exercise: Stretching before and after a workout prevents joint injury, relieves muscle soreness and maintains strength.

A balanced diet: An easy way to derail a balanced fitness program is to fuel the body with things it doesn’t need. Eat a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet high in carbohydrates and fiber.

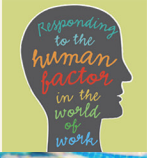
Don’t forget to have fun

Boredom is the greatest deterrent to a fitness program. Running endless laps around a track can eventually turn off even the most dedicated amateur athlete.

The cure for athletic boredom is cross training -- combining several kinds of workouts that enhance or complement each other. For example, runners may pound the pavement on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and swim on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Devotees of stair machines or step classes could try weight training on alternate days.

“The way you’re going to make it over the long haul is to establish a fitness program as a way of life,” Mr. Madole says.

“Most important, you need to engage the entire body. If you’re just walking, but not doing calisthenics or stretching, you may think you’re getting a full workout, but you’re not.”



Simple Summer Safety

Before you run to the beach or go to the pool, read these tips to help you stay safe this summer.

Sunscreen

Protect your children's skin from the sun. Use sunscreen to cut down their risk of skin cancer later in life.

Here are some tips:

- Limit children's time in the sun, particularly between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are at their peak.
- Get children to cover up with long pants, shirts and caps or hats.
- Put sunscreen on children, even on cloudy days. Use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Note: Children under 6 months should NOT wear sunscreen. Protect infants by keeping them out of the sun.
- Set a good example. Cover up and wear sunscreen yourself.

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Safety in water

Swimming is fun for the whole family. It's even great exercise. Although swimming is fun and healthy, you must take care because accidents can sometimes happen.

Follow these tips to help prevent drowning:

- Teach children to swim. If you can't teach them, enroll any child 4 or older in swimming lessons. Sign up for lessons yourself.
- If you have a pool at home, put a fence around the pool to keep small children out.
- Do not allow children to run around the pool at home or at a community pool.
- Watch children at ALL times. Don't do anything else while you are supposed to be watching the children. Don't talk on the phone, read or mow the lawn.
- Learn CPR, particularly if you have a pool at home.

Swimmer's ear

Swimmer's ear is an infection of the ear canal that can happen to children who spend a lot of time swimming underwater.

Here are some tips to help prevent a water-related ear infection:

- Wear earplugs.
- Clean the outer area of the ear but not the inside.
- Never put anything in the ear. This includes cotton swabs.

Talk to your doctor if your child complains about:

- Itching in the ears or a feeling of stuffed-up ears
- Pain, tenderness or swelling of the ears
- Fluid draining from the ears
- Hearing loss