

Opt for More Optimism

Positivity is a trait linked to better life satisfaction and happiness. While we can't always control what's going on around us, we can control how we view and respond to it. Remarkably our outlook, whether positive or negative, is a choice. Discover how improving your perspective can help you enjoy a more fulfilled life.

What it means to be optimistic

Optimism is rooted in positive thinking and outlook, which Verywell Mind describes as “making the most of potentially bad situations, trying to see the best in other people, and viewing yourself and your abilities in a positive light.” It’s maintaining a sense of hopefulness about the future or having confidence in the successful outcome of something.

The importance of positivity

Approaching life’s challenges with a positive outlook benefits our overall mental and physical well-being. Not only do optimistic people tend to be more resilient and better at managing stress, but they’re also inclined to have higher self-esteem, more positive relationships, and lower rates of depression. In addition, a 2016 study from the Harvard School of Public Health found evidence that having a general belief that good things will occur, may even help us live longer. Other research shows that the more confidence we have in our skills and talents, however improbable, the more successful we tend to be when applying them. In the same way, the less we believe in our abilities and proficiencies, the less likely we are to excel in those areas. As such, positivity can be thought of as a self-fulfilling prophecy, which is why choosing to invite more of it into your life is so important.

Finding more fulfillment

So how do we invite more positivity into our lives and adopt a more optimistic attitude? It’s easier than you might think and just takes practice and a bit of mindfulness. Here are some ideas to get you started:

– Seek out the good

No matter how bad, disappointing, or inconvenient a situation might seem, find something positive to focus on. Rather than getting upset when your flight gets delayed, be glad that you now have time to grab a bite to eat. Instead of dwelling on your frustration over having to step into the role of caregiver for a loved one following a surgery, concentrate on the opportunity to spend more time together.

– Give the benefit of the doubt

We sometimes find ourselves on the other end of someone else’s bad day – whether it’s a rude barista, an aggressive driver, or an uncharacteristically curt coworker. Remember that we can’t always know what’s going on in other people’s lives, so instead of getting angry or taking these perceived slights personally, consider possible reasons for their behavior that might lend you a bit of empathy. Maybe the barista got called in on his only day off, the driver’s wife is in labor, or your coworker just found out that a parent is very ill. It might also help to recall a time when you were the one having a hard day and channel the compassion that others may have afforded you.

– Practice gratitude

Find something to be grateful for each day – whether it’s catching a few green lights on your way to work, finding a babysitter at the last minute, or receiving an unexpected phone call from a friend. Acknowledge all the things, big and small, that made a situation or your day better. Remember to say thank you to those who contribute to your positivity in those moments; expressing a little gratitude to others furthers the optimism for both of you.

– Bookend each day with positivity

Begin and end each day with a positive affirmation. Give yourself a pep talk in the mornings before getting out of bed and envision yourself doing great things throughout the day. Or listen to your favorite music to get you up and moving or in a better headspace for the drive home. Before you go to sleep at night, recall the people you helped and what you did well that day.

– *Be open to change*

By design, we as humans tend to be averse to the idea of interrupting what's comfortable and familiar. Therefore, when it comes to changing our thinking patterns or processing new information, our brains typically become preoccupied with the ripple effect of change and disruption. As a result, we get anxious about what to do and worry over making the right choice. In these moments, consciously shift to a more optimistic stance by treating each decision as an opportunity. Think about the good that can come from a shift in trajectory or the new destiny that may await you.

Work on improving your optimism with the help of your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Consultants are available 24 hours a day to provide guidance, information, and resources to help you live a more positive, fulfilling life.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to eligible federal employees at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

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