

# Leveraging Positivity: Moving Beyond “Think Positive”

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## Positivity is...

- A mindset we can leverage to proactively respond to life’s events for greater life satisfaction
- A choice, action, practice, and skill
- Sounds like:
  - ◆ How can I make the most of this?
  - ◆ What can I learn from this?
  - ◆ How can I move forward productively?
  - ◆ What do I have control of?
  - ◆ Who do I want to become as a result of this?

## Positivity is not...

- For certain personalities or life experiences, a destiny, or naïve
- The opposite of negativity...that’s apathy
- The same as optimism

## Validation and Hope

This is hard. You've done hard things before and I believe in you.

I know there's a lot that could go wrong. What could go right?

All vibes are welcome here.

It's pretty normal to have some negativity in this situation.

It's probably pretty hard to be positive right now. I'm putting out good energy into the world for you.

Sometimes giving up is ok. What is your ideal outcome?

It's never fun to feel like that. Is there something we can do today that you'd enjoy?

It's probably really hard to see any good in this situation. We'll make sense of it

## Toxic Positivity

You'll get over it!

Just be positive!

Good vibes only!

Stop being so negative!

Think happy thoughts!

Never give up!

Just be happy!

See the good in everything.

**Positivity** → is a proactive mindset that gives me the...

**Optimism** → to believe I can handle what comes my way!

## Positivity and the Brain

**Neural Pathways:** Default settings our brains use to process the world more quickly and efficiently

**Negativity Bias:** Our brain naturally processes negativity more than positivity in an effort to protect us from danger

**Positive Psychology and Neuroanatomy** have found that it is possible to alter our neural pathways that have a negativity bias by practicing new habits and paying attention to the thoughts we allow.

- Only 10% of our long term levels of happiness can be predicted by our external world, 90% of our levels of happiness are predicted by how we process the world (Shawn Achor)
- Our thoughts are created by a tiny group of cells in the left hemisphere, designed to tell stories so that we feel safe in the external world. YOU ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS! (Jill Bolte Taylor)

## Thoughts on Positivity

- You have to be willing to see things differently, otherwise you won't (Oprah)
- Being positive in a negative situation is not naïve. It's leadership. (Ralph Marston)
- Your reaction determines your outcome. Don't act too quickly. (Wendy Jones)
- The only way to realize positive change in your life is by making choices (Kurt Carlson)
- Positive people have negative thoughts, they just don't let those thoughts control them

### 3 P's for Positivity

**Pause**—> Allow time to let the situation sink in. Do activities that will give you the space you need.

**Process**—> This is where you address barriers: Realize our choice and control in the matter, manage our expectations, regulate our self-talk and modify habits, and focus on solutions.

**Proceed**—> What is the appropriate or necessary response? What can you do about the situation? What is your desired outcome and who are your supporters?

### Daily Positivity

**Happiness Habits (Source: *The Happiness Advantage* by Shawn Achor):**

- **3 Gratitudes:** Write down 3 new things you are grateful for each day for 21 days-- rewire your brain for greater optimism
- **The Doubler:** Spend 2 minutes describing a meaningful experience from over the past 24 hours-- double the meaning in your life.
- **Fun Fifteen:** Add 15 minutes for a fun, active activity to increase your energy
- **Meditation:** Invest 2 minutes a day to train your brain to just watch your breath-- undo negative effects of multitasking
- **Conscious Act of Kindness:** Take 2 minutes to write an email, thanking 1 person in your social support network-- increase your greatest happiness predictor

**Kindness and giving:** Connect with others, get outside of yourself to see the bigger picture you are a part of

**Savor the small things:** Notice and enjoy the simple pleasures in your day to day life, teach your brain to see good

**Spread positivity:** Watch the affects of a positive word or act, it will change the way your brain sees the world

**Self-advocate:** Ask for what you need, be authentic to you rather than fulfilling the expectations of others

### Leveraging Positivity Reflection

- How do you currently implement positivity? How might you apply the 3 P's to a current or past situation?
- When things don't go as you expected or would like, how do you react? How would **Pause** help you to respond better?
- In what ways do you struggle with control, expectations and negative self-talk? How could you **Process** things differently for more positivity?
- What actions have you taken in the past that have helped you move through a negative situation? What mindset shifts and/or people in your support system would help you **Proceed** more effectively?
- Are there areas of your life that positivity comes more easily? How can you leverage that positivity to areas where it comes less easily?
- What would be helpful to stop doing or who would be helpful to limit your interactions with?
- What is one strategy you think you could implement this week and how?

## Notes and Reflection Space

## Resources and References

**Are you a Positive or Negative Thinker? assessment-**→ [mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS\\_89.htm](http://mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_89.htm)

### Positive Thinking and beyond:

- ***Still Not Happy? Why Embracing Painful Emotions Is The First Step To A Happier Life*** article-→ [forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2018/09/15/still-not-happy-why-embracing-your-painful-emotions-makes-people-happier/#56c9f9c827e6](http://forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2018/09/15/still-not-happy-why-embracing-your-painful-emotions-makes-people-happier/#56c9f9c827e6)
- ***Re-wiring your brain to positive*** article-→ [thepositivepsychologypeople.com/re-wiring-brain-positive/](http://thepositivepsychologypeople.com/re-wiring-brain-positive/)
- **Shawn Achor: Does Your Optimism Need a Reality Check?**-→ [youtube.com/watch?v=AWvMFq6Kavk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=AWvMFq6Kavk)
- ***Positive thinking: Stop negative self-talk to reduce stress*** article-→ [mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950](http://mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950)
- ***The Only Way to Make Positive Change in Your Life*** article-→ [psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-origin-choices/201403/the-only-way-make-positive-change-in-your-life](http://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-origin-choices/201403/the-only-way-make-positive-change-in-your-life)
- ***The science behind positive thinking your way to success*** article-→ [cnn.com/2013/10/11/business/the-science-behind-positive-thinking/index.html](http://cnn.com/2013/10/11/business/the-science-behind-positive-thinking/index.html)
- ***Forget Positive Thinking: This Is How To Actually Change Negative Thoughts For Success*** article-→ [forbes.com/sites/melodywilding/2016/08/15/forget-positive-thinking-this-is-how-you-actually-change-negative-thoughts](http://forbes.com/sites/melodywilding/2016/08/15/forget-positive-thinking-this-is-how-you-actually-change-negative-thoughts)
- ***Increase Positivity*** article-→ [takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/enhance-your-wellbeing/health/thoughts-emotions/increase-positivity](http://takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/enhance-your-wellbeing/health/thoughts-emotions/increase-positivity)
- ***How to be Happy: 4 Tips from Positive Psychology Researchers*** article-→ [goodthinkinc.com/today-show-how-to-be-happy-4-tips-from-positive-psychology-researchers/](http://goodthinkinc.com/today-show-how-to-be-happy-4-tips-from-positive-psychology-researchers/)
- ***How to Become a More Positive Person in 21 Days*** article-→ [health.com/mind-body/positivity-challenge](http://health.com/mind-body/positivity-challenge)
- ***How Positive Thinking Impacts Your Stress Level*** article-→ [verywellmind.com/how-does-positive-thinking-impact-your-stress-level-3144711](http://verywellmind.com/how-does-positive-thinking-impact-your-stress-level-3144711)
- ***5 Ways to Turn Your Negative Self-Talk Into a More Productive Inner Dialogue*** article-→ [inc.com/amy-morin/how-to-deal-with-your-negative-self-talk-so-you-can-stop-beating-yourself-up-dragging-yourself-down.html](http://inc.com/amy-morin/how-to-deal-with-your-negative-self-talk-so-you-can-stop-beating-yourself-up-dragging-yourself-down.html)

### Positive Psychology and Happiness-→ Shawn Achor:

- **TED Talk**-→ [ted.com/talks/shawn\\_achor\\_the\\_happy\\_secret\\_to\\_better\\_work](http://ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work)
- **Success Magazine interview**-→ [success.com/videos/shawn-achor-on-happiness](http://success.com/videos/shawn-achor-on-happiness)
- **Book**-→ The Happiness Advantage

### Brain Science-→ Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor:

- **TED Talk**-→ [ted.com/talks/jill\\_bolte\\_taylor\\_s\\_powerful\\_stroke\\_of\\_insight](http://ted.com/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_s_powerful_stroke_of_insight)

### Others-→

- **Positive Thinking Apps**-→ [verywellmind.com/positive-thinking-apps-4171906](http://verywellmind.com/positive-thinking-apps-4171906)
- **Mindset, Carol Dweck TED Talk**-→ [ted.com/talks/carol\\_dweck\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_believing\\_that\\_you\\_can\\_improve](http://ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve)
- **Empathy and Self Talk**-→ Brene Brown: Daring Greatly (book)

### Oprah's Super Soul Conversations (TV and Podcast):

- **TV and Podcast**-→ [supersoul.tv](http://supersoul.tv) and The Wisdom of Sundays (book)
- Shawn Achor, Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, Deepak Chopra, Joel Osteen, Dr. Phil, Mitch Albom, Michael Singer, Eckhart Tolle, Jack Canfield, Rob Bell, Maya Angelou, Brian Grazer, Tim Storey, Timothy Shriver, Thich Nhat Hanh, Wes Moore, Don Miguel Ruiz, Marianne Williamson, Elizabeth Gilbert, Bryan Stevenson, Steven Pressfield, Bryon Katie, Daniel Goleman