

# Positive Thoughts as a Stress Management Tool

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## **Abstract**

Today, we live in societies where stress has become a 'norm'. Managing stress has entered our daily routines and stress-free life only reminds us of our childhood fairy tale book. Can you think your way to a stress-free life? It is possible to reduce the amount of stress you feel by having positive thoughts about the things that happen in your daily life. Most of us have had someone say "Think positive!" or "Look on the bright side," when something didn't go quite right. As difficult as that may be to hear, there is some truth to it positive thinking can reduce your stress level, help you feel better about yourself (and the situation) and improve your overall well-being and outlook.

The only problem is that it's not always easy to be positive and some circumstances make it more of a challenge than others. The good news: With a little work on turning around your negative thoughts, you can become an optimist. The positive frame of mind are huge. Optimists enjoy better health, stronger relationships, are more productive, and experience less stress, among other things. This is because optimists tend to take more risks. They also blame external circumstances if they fail, maintaining a "try again" mindset.

Because of their Resilience optimists are more likely to succeed in the future and less upset by failure in general. Pessimists, on the other hand, tend to blame themselves when things go wrong and become more reluctant to try again with each negative experience in life. They begin to look at positive events in their lives as "flukes" that have nothing to do with them and expect the worst. In this way, optimists and pessimists both create self-fulfilling prophecies. When we understand how both outlooks view circumstances, it becomes clear how optimism and positive self-talk can impact our stress levels, as can pessimism and negative self talk. Negative events are less stressful when you see them as "not your fault" and less likely to recur.

Similarly, positive events are even sweeter when you see them as evidence of more to come and see yourself as the master of your own fate.

Because of the difference in behaviour, those who habitually practice positive thinking tend to experience more success, which can add up to a less stressful life. The reason that this is important is that many pessimists *think* they're optimists; however, optimism is defined by specific criteria. If you know where you lie on the optimism-pessimism spectrum, you'll have a better idea of what may need changing.

*Keywords -Positive thought, Negative thoughts, Optimistic, Resilience, self-fulfilling*

## Introduction

Once we understand our current way of seeing things, we can make a conscious effort to look at things differently as we're presented with situations. Now is the perfect time to practice different type of positive self talk and learn how to become an optimist.

We can reprogram ourselves and our way of thinking by using positive affirmation on a regular basis. This will help positive thinking to become more automatic. Over time, we will have to consciously think about it less as each new situation comes up. In simple words, positive thinking is a mental and emotional attitude of expecting good results. It doesn't mean you see the world in pink and ignore all the negativity. It simply means that you approach unpleasantness in a more positive and constructive way.

Many people confuse positive thinking with optimistic blindness. In reality, positive thinking is based on a critical approach to life situations where a more positive behaviour to problem-solving is prioritized.

Research has proven that the effects of positive thinking expand beyond good stress management. Numerous positive effects include but are not limited to:

- Less anxiety and depression
- Improved psychological balance
- Better capacity to manage stress and stress-causing events
- Better health and increased lifespan
- Healthier and stronger relationships
- Higher productivity
- The overall feeling of happiness

One of the theories why people feel all the health benefits when they practice positive thinking is because having a positive attitude enables people to cope better with stressful situations, which, in its turn, reduces the harmful effects of stress on one's health.

So what does positive thinking really have to do with stress management?

In general, positive people tend to take more risks in life because thinking positively helps the brain think more widely and consider more opportunities. When something goes wrong positive people tend to 'blame' the external factors for the failure, whereas negative people, or pessimists, tend to blame themselves in such situations. As a result, they shut themselves down to new opportunities and see only limited choices when a problem arises. To some extent, this explains why negative events are handled easier when a positive attitude is adopted.

There has also been scientific proof as to how positive thinking influences stress management. Studies by Andrews and colleagues (2008) have shown that women and men who are happier and have more positive thoughts and feelings usually experience lower levels of stress hormone *cortisol* (this hormone is also responsible for harming the immune system, among other things). So the results basically suggest that the way you think effects on how you manage stress.

People who think positively see failure as a set of unfortunate circumstances. Their answer to failure is the immediate reaction to fix the problem without limiting their own opportunities. In other words, they have a problem-solving mechanism that immediately starts working when something negative happens.

On the contrary, people who think negatively only see the negative pattern behind the problem and see no point in trying to fix it, as "It will anyway end negatively."

But can negative-thinking be transformed into positive-thinking?

It has been proven that by repeating certain tips continuously on a daily basis can help every person apprehend positive thinking and change the spin of negativity for good. Even if positive thinking does not come naturally to you, there are plenty of great reasons to start cultivating affirmative thoughts and minimizing negative self-talk.

### **How to Practice Positive Thinking?**

- **Stress Relief**

When faced with stressful situations, positive thinkers cope more effectively than pessimists. In one study, researchers found that when optimistic encounter a

disappointment (such as not getting a job or promotion) they are more likely to focus on things they can do to resolve the situation.

Rather than dwelling on their frustrations or things that they cannot change, they will devise a plan of action and ask others for assistance and advice. Pessimists, on the other hand, simply assume that the situation is out of their control and there is nothing they can do to change it.

- **Increased Immunity**

In recent years, researchers have found that your mind can have a powerful effect on your body. Immunity is one area where your thoughts and attitudes can have a particularly powerful influence. In one study, researchers found that activation in brain areas associated with negative emotions led to a weaker immune response to a flu vaccine. Researchers Segerstrom and Sephton found that people who were optimistic about a specific and important part of their lives, such as how well they were doing in school, exhibited a stronger immune response than those who had a more negative view of the situation.

- **Improved Wellness**

Not only can positive thinking impact your ability to cope with stress and your immunity, it also has an impact on your overall well-being. There are a number of health benefits associated with optimism, including a reduced risk of death from cardiovascular problems, less depression, and an increased lifespan.

While researchers are not entirely clear on why positive thinking benefits health, some suggest that positive people might lead healthier lifestyles. By coping better with stress and avoiding unhealthy behaviours, they are able to improve their health and well-being.

- **Better Resilience**

Resilience refers to our ability to cope with problems. Resilient people are able to face a crisis or trauma with strength and resolve. Rather than falling apart in the face of such stress, they have the ability to carry on and eventually overcome such adversity. It may come as no surprise to learn that positive thinking can play a major role in resilience. When dealing with a challenge, optimists typically look at what they can do to fix the problem. Instead of giving up hope, they marshal their resources and are willing to ask others for help.

Researchers have also found that in the wake of a crisis, such as a terrorist attack or natural disaster, positive thoughts and emotions encourage thriving and provide a sort of buffer against depression among resilient people. Fortunately, experts also believe that such positivism and Resilience can be cultivated . By nurturing positive emotions, even in the face of terrible events, people can reap both short-term and long-term rewards, including managing stress levellessening depression, and building coping skill that will serve them well in the future.

- **Positive Affirmations**

Once you have created new patterns for reacting to stressful or negative situations through repetitive practice, these patterns will become habits of thinking. These new habits will become a new core of inner-self learning. But how do we silence our inner critics? One of the simplest and most effective techniques is the use of positive affirmations. You can think of positive affirmations or statements as the voice of the good coach giving you confidence in your abilities and strength under pressure. These affirmations will support and strengthen the changes you are making in your behaviour. You might think of this process as a coach, calmly but firmly showing your inner critic way up to the cheap seats—where it will rarely be heard!



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