



The Power of Positive Thinking



WVNG Coffey Break

By Elizabeth Coffey

Break (brāk) definition *verb*: To interrupt or stop *break a habit*; *noun*: A respite or brief pause *taking a break*.

Welcome to the October 2010 edition of the WVNG Coffey Break, a monthly Wellness publication for all WV National Guard members and their families. The objective is to promote wellness, readiness and resiliency by providing information and resources on topics relevant to daily living.

This month's topic is the Power of Positive Thinking. Are you a person who sees a glass as half full or half empty? I realize that most of you are

already familiar with the concept of thinking positively. But, if I asked you to explain how it works, would you be able to do so? This article will provide a brief explanation of positive thinking, situations when it doesn't work, benefits of positive thinking, and steps toward applying it to your life. So please, take a few minutes to read the following article before hitting "Delete" on your computer.

What is Positive Thinking?

It's about choice! All of us have the power to choose how we react to situations in our lives and how we talk to ourselves about them. Negative thinkers use statements such as "I **always** lose" or "It will **never** work." On the other hand, positive thinkers use statements such as "I lost this time but...." or "It may work if I"

Positive thinking is about being aware of what you are thinking - not being an observer of your thoughts but taking control and choosing how and what you think. Positive thinkers focus on good thoughts and don't dwell on what they don't like. Positive thinkers are typically healthier since the body responds to the way you think.

By learning to replace negative distorted thoughts with positive realistic ones, eventually, your brain will learn to start doing the process automatically.

"The impossible can always be broken down into possibilities"
~Unknown Author

The mission of the National Guard Psychological Health Program is to advocate, promote and guide National Guard members and their families by supporting psychological fitness for operational readiness. For contact information regarding the Director of Psychological Health in your state or territory or other resources, go to:
www.jointservicesupport.org/

What Positive Thinking Isn't

Positive thinking doesn't mean you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations. It doesn't mean that you put a fake smile on your face and try to cover up what you're really feeling inside. It simply means that you approach difficulties in a more positive way.

"A loving person lives in a loving world. A hostile person lives in a hostile world; everyone you meet is your mirror."

~Ken Keyes, Jr.

Coffey Break



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“Happiness is an attitude. We either make ourselves miserable, or happy and strong. The amount of work is the same.”

~Francesca Reigler

10 Situations When Positive Thinking Doesn't Work

When you use it deny your fears or as a way to ignore reality. An example of this would be if you hear your company is facing a layoff and you say to yourself, “If I think positive thoughts, I won’t be the one to be laid off.” Positive thinking means that you hear the news and think about what positive action you can take to deal with it.

When you use it to cover up what you feel inside. If you feel that the world completely sucks, then telling yourself to think positive isn’t dealing with your real feelings. You need to look at what’s causing you to feel this terrible unhappiness and to learn to let some of it go.

You feel that if you think positive thoughts, good things will happen without you having to do anything for it. If this worked, we’d all just sit at home on our couches imagining a Fed-Ex truck is going to stop by and drop off a large packet of money. You have to take action to get what you want.

You focus on what you don’t want. This is still negative thinking. Try thinking about what you DO want.

You’re trying to prove positive thinking doesn’t work. If deep down, your belief is that positive thinking doesn’t work and that you’re just going to “try” this to see if it works or not, then your belief will create your own reality. You will be looking for the evidence that backs up your belief. You’ll see what you expect to see.

Your expectation that if you think positively, nothing will go wrong. Fact of life – obstacles will come. With positive thinking, you look for solutions and can see past the obstacles.

You believe that nothing bad will ever happen to you. This is similar to the item above. It doesn’t matter how positive you are. Unexpected things are going to happen. Delays will occur, people will get sick, and you won’t always get what you want. The trick is to realize that bad things aren’t always bad. Also, if bad things happen, it’s okay to be upset about it. With real positive thinking though, you’ll know that it’s just one day. It doesn’t mean that your life is always going to suck. It’s just temporary.

You really don’t know what you want. You just want “positive things” to happen. If you’re not clear on what you would consider a “good thing” to happen, then you may not notice when nice things do happen.

You expect others to take action on your behalf. Real positive thinking gives you the mindset in order to move forwards no matter what happens.

You’re only happy if things happen exactly as you wanted. Far better for you to take a look and see what worked, what didn’t and then take different actions based upon what you’ve learned. You need to be adaptable and flexible. It’s also keeping your focus on what you want. Something else might happen that’s actually much better than you originally planned.

Benefits of Positive Thinking

Stress management, stress management, stress management! We talk about it and we may often say we need to practice it. But, how many of us actually follow through with it? It’s easier to continue old, unhealthy habits than to change.

However, positive thinking can improve your health. Some studies show that these personality traits – optimism and pessimism – can affect many areas of your life and well-being. Positive thinking also is a key part of effective stress management.

Steps to Positive Thinking

Identify Negative Thoughts

Negative thoughts prevent you from looking on the positive side of life, according to the Mayo Clinic. Four types of negative thoughts exist. **Filtering**, where you focus only on the negative; **Personalizing**, where you blame yourself for accidents that occur; **Catastrophizing**, where you make an event out to be worse than it is; or **Polarizing**, where events are only negative or positive. By identifying negative thoughts, you can then discard them.

Start Your Day Positively

Negative thinkers tend to begin a day thinking something will go wrong. Instead, focus on the aspects of your day that could go right and what you are looking forward to about your day.

Live a Healthy Lifestyle

A lifestyle that emphasizes healthy eating and stress relief helps you to help your mood positively. According to the Mayo Clinic, exercising three times a week equals a more positive mood.

Say a Daily Affirmation

Affirmations are positive statements you say aloud to encourage yourself. Your affirmation can be anything from "I will have a good day today" to a favorite quote. You also may choose to think a positive thought about yourself and repeat it when negative thoughts enter your head.

Assess What Could Be Different

Sometimes, issues within your own life can cause you to think negatively. Identify what areas of your life you would like to change.

Find Positive Friends

Surrounding yourself with positive people can help you find the support and encouragement you need to live a positive life.

Seek Humor

Whether watching a funny movie, reading a book of jokes or seeing a stand-up comedian, laughing and being open to humor can help you feel more positive, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Do Something You Love

When you find something that makes you happy and continue to practice what you love, you feel uplifted. Whether pursuing a new hobby or creative outlet, try something you have always wanted to do and allow yourself to succeed. Do not think about the negatives or how you could fail.

Feedback on this article is welcomed. As always, if you have a concern about yourself or a family member, feel free to contact me. Services are free and confidential. I look forward to hearing from you. So.....Step back, take a Coffey Break, and Drink to Your Health!

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“You can give in to the failure messages and be a bitter defeat of excuses. Or you can choose to be happy and positive and excited about life.” – A. L. Williams



References

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**Next Month:
Holiday Spending : Scrooge vs. Santa Clause**

Elizabeth Coffey, Director of Psychological Health (DPH) West Virginia National Guard
elizabeth.coffey@ceridian.com elizabeth.coffey@us.army.mil
304-561-6690 (office) (mobile) 304-206-6137