A GUIDE TO POSITIVE THINKING

This guide contains a number of strategies, reflection questions and exercises to help you develop Positive Thinking. Positive Thinking improves mood, memory and mental health as well as productivity, clarity, communication and decision making. It's really good for you!

Sometimes a little conscious effort is required to build or rebuild patterns of positive thought. We can all do it. We all do it. Sometimes negative thinking can escalate and appear to take over. It's part of our nervous system trying to help. It isn't always helpful. It's good to strengthen and polish the good habits too.

The following strategies can be really helpful and make a big difference, sometimes in quite a short space of time. Start small, do some things regularly, and you might be amazed at what you can achieve and what you can enjoy, even in adverse circumstances.

The Eight Strategies

1. Positive Reflection (thinking about the past in positive ways)
2. Positive Forecasting (thinking about the future)
3. Positive Sensing (engaging the senses)
4. Gratitude and Compassion
5. Strengths
6. Strategies
7. Exceptions
8. Scaling (helps get a sense of perspective, direction and progress)

For all of the strategies, you can draw on your memory, your imagination and your senses and feelings. You can think of the answers in your head, write them in a journal, draw pictures, talk to yourself (people do! And find it helpful!) or discuss them with a friend or family member.

The guide is a work in progress - I'd like to make it more interactive for example. Any feedback or ideas are appreciated - please let me know.

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Positive Reflection

Take a few moments to reflect. If nothing comes, give it a moment. It doesn't matter how big or small the things are. It's the process that makes the difference.

- What's been good?
- List 3 things. When you're ready, list 10 things.
- What have you been pleased to notice about yourself?
- What has anyone else noticed?
- What else?

You might find that once you get going, things start popping into your awareness. This is a simple habit, and a very powerful one to build. It is sometimes surprisingly far-reaching and can make a difference far beyond the things on the list.

Positive forecasting

Make yourself comfortable somewhere and take a moment to reflect on:

- What do you want more of in your life?
- What will be like when problems have gone away?
- What are your best hopes for tomorrow? Next week? Next month? Next year?
- How will you know you have achieved your goal? Or even a tiny step in that direction?

Again, don't worry too much about the clarity or availability of the answers. Even asking the questions sends a powerful signal to your deeper awareness.

Positive sensing

It's surprisingly powerful to exercise your senses. It's what we're designed to do, after all.

- See
    - What beauty have you seen?
    - What positive images come to mind that represent happiness?
    - What do you see in your best imagined future?
    - What do you see in your dreams
- Sound
    - What have you heard that you were pleased about?
    - What sounds do you enjoy?
    - What would you like to hear?

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    - What does the voice of compassion sound like?
    - What other positive voices are there?
- Other senses
    - What other feelings do you enjoy?
    - What would you like more of?
    - Where do you have or have you had a sense of balance?
    - What's hot? What's cold?
    - Where do you feel pressure or weight, and where do you feel lightness and freedom?
    - Where and when have you tasted success?
- What other senses can you incorporate?

Gratitude and compassion

These ancient capabilities are exceedingly good for us. And like all the best things, they can be easy and powerful when they become a habit. Do this every day and you might find yourself more and more able to do it … all the time. Even in surprising circumstances.

- What are you grateful for?
- To whom are you grateful?
- To whom would you like to extend love and compassion?
- What about yourself do you love?

Strengths

Develop a strengths inventory. Ask others if you need some perspective!

- What are your strengths?
- What would anyone else say are your strengths? (often it's easier for them to see)
- What strengths will help you achieve your particular goals?
- The times when you successfully dealt with a similar challenge, what did you do?
- When has it been easier for you?

Positive strategies

Some things are undoubtably going extremely well for you. Even if it's just managing things that are hard.

- What's working?
- How are you managing?

- How are you coping?

Exceptions

There are always exceptions. And this can be very useful to notice. What we focus on becomes our reality.

- When do things go well for you?
- When have you succeeded, even despite challenges?
- When do you feel free?
- When are the problems not there?

Scaling

Scaling can help by objectifying things and making things easier to handle. Paramedics use it with pain, for example. It can also be really helpful for giving a sense of direction, and progress.

- Where are you now on a scale of 1 to 10, if 10 is where you want to be?
- What's the lowest you've been?
- What's the highest you've been?
    - When was that?
    - What was happening?
    - What was it like?

Imagine you were another step higher on this scale:

- What's the first thing you would notice?
- What small things would be different?
- Where and when would this be happening?
- What would others notice? Who else would be there?
- What would this mean to you?

Taking action

- What small steps might you take?
- What would you notice that tells you you already are moving in that direction?

Please let me know what you think of this guide - both positive thoughts :) and and ideas for improvement. Thank you!

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