WELLNESS TIPS
NURTURING A POSITIVE MINDSET

A positive mindset is characterized by positive-oriented thoughts, beliefs, values, and attitudes. Ackerman describes a positive mindset as the "tendency to focus on the bright side, expect positive results, and approach challenges with a positive outlook."   This approach encompasses recognizing your own strengths and abilities and trying to see the best in others.
While it can sound like a cliché, having a positive mindset does not ignore or avoid difficult or unpleasant situations, but influences how the situation is approached and dealt with, how the most can be made of it.

It is unrealistic to expect to always be positive, think "happy thoughts", and be optimistic; those emotions are not always warranted.   A positive mindset acknowledges that experiencing negative emotions is normal. We cannot control our emotions and cannot always control our immediate thoughts, but this acceptance of negative emotions tends to lessen their duration and intensity, allowing you to move on and more readily take charge of your response and how you are going to handle adverse events.   The goal is to not get bogged down by negative emotions.

People with a positive mindset tend to be more optimistic, mindful, and resilient. Research shows positive mindset is associated with many benefits, including overall better health, improved well- being, more effective coping with stress, decreased cardiovascular disease, and decreased rates of depression.

Strategies for Nurturing a Positive Mindset

1. Make an Effort to Focus on Your Strengths and Positive Qualities

-Challenge a pattern of dwelling on what you believe you do not do well, perceived imperfections, and past failures.
-Make a list of your strengths and positive qualities. Post it where you will see it frequently.

2. Practice Gratitude

-Identify and write down things you are grateful for every day in a journal.
-Small things count (same with strengths and positive qualities!).

3. Use Positive Affirmations

-Acknowledge your efforts, positive results, and successes.
-Make a practice of using positive words more often.
-Record positive things that happen each day.
-Post inspirational quotes or phrases that you find meaningful.

4. Practice Self-Care

-Do not berate yourself when you make a mistake. It happens to everyone.
-Take breaks, treat yourself, take care of your physical health, pursue hobbies, and participate in enjoyable activities to reinforce that you are worth it.

5. Focus on the Present

-Redirect thoughts from perseverating on the past or worrying about the future.
-Practice mindfulness, meditation, yoga.

6. Find Possible Solutions

-Focus on making changes when indicated.
-Accept when something cannot be changed and make a plan for coping.

7. Recognize Patterns of Unhelpful Thoughts

-Practice moderating to make them less negative. Shift from "I'm no good at this" to "I'll give it another try".
-Notice how different words make you feel.
-Ask yourself:
        -Would you speak to someone you cared about this way?
        -Is this a fact or an opinion?
        -How likely is it to really be true?
        -How will you feel about this in one week, 6 months, one year?
-Challenge all-or-nothing thinking, which allows for only two options.

8. Redirect Your Attention When You Find Yourself Engaging in Negative Thoughts

-Exercise, do word puzzles, listen to your favorite music.
-Fill a jar with slips of paper with positive comments, inspirational sayings, things you are grateful for. On more difficult days, pull out a slip to read.

9. Choose Situations to Practice Using More Positive Language

-Choose a low stake, neutral situation to practice desired changes.
-Make small changes that you can build on.
-Notice how others respond and how you feel. For example, make a point of smiling and greeting people you pass by.

10. Engage in Supportive, Encouraging, Uplifting Relationships/Friendships

11. Strengthen Your Sense of Humor

-Humor decreases levels of stress.

Developing a more positive mindset is a process. It can take time to make this shift and it is helpful to begin with small steps. But making changes can eventually add up to big results, which you will notice in yourself and others' responses to you. If you tend to be more negativistic, try some strategies, give yourself time, and target decreasing self-critical comments and increasing self-acceptance. It all begins with self-talk.

Ackerman, Courtney. "What is Positive Mindset: 89 Ways to Achieve a Positive Mental Attitude." Positive Psychology. October 12, 2020.

https://positivepsychology.com/positive-mindset/

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https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-happiness/202105/9-ways-cultivate-positive-mindset

D'Silva, Helen. "How to Cultivate a Positive Mindset (A Step-by Step Guide)." Lifehack.org. 1/12/21.

https://www.lifehack.org/814089/positive-mindset

Healthy Lifestyle. "Positive Thinking: Stop Negative Self-talk to Reduce Stress." Mayo Clinic.

https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950

Check the MSCC Website for past Wellness Tips:

https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources

If you would like to discuss questions or concerns, feel free to contact the MSCC to talk with a counselor or schedule an appointment.

Be proactive and stay well!

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