

What You Need to Know About Positivity and Health

At TotalWellness, we believe that everyone is healthy. That's right, everyone has existing healthy habits, whether getting eight hours of sleep, hanging out with friends or walking their dog.

We want you to figure out what healthy means to you and how you can build upon your healthy habits. So we created this series of I Am Healthy Guides to help you do just that. Because healthy is happy. It's more than just exercising and eating right. Healthy feels awesome.

Repeat After Us: I am healthy.

I AM

Two of the most powerful words; for what you put after them shapes your reality.

Medical Disclaimer

Please note that the material in this guide is provided by way of information. It is not a substitute, nor does it replace, medical or other professional advice, or treatment of health conditions.



It doesn't seem like a stretch to connect the dots between an optimistic outlook on life and your overall wellness. Having a positive attitude can help you cope with the stress of illness, injury and everyday issues with work, relationships and beyond.

When you focus on positivity, those feelings of happiness can be infectious, spreading to the rest of your office and your community.

Why does positivity matter?

Studies show that personality traits like optimism and pessimism can affect many areas of your health and well-being. The positive thinking that typically comes with optimism is a key part of effective stress management. And effective stress management is associated with many health benefits.



How does being positive affect my health?

Researchers continue to investigate the effects of positive thinking and optimism on health. The benefits of positive thinking may include:

- Increased life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Lower levels of distress
- Greater resistance to the common cold
- Better psychological and physical well-being
- Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
- Better coping skills during hardships and times of stress

It's unclear exactly why optimistic people experience these health benefits. One theory is that having a positive outlook enables you to cope better with stressful situations, which reduces the harmful health effects of stress on your body. It's also thought that positive and optimistic people tend to live healthier lifestyles — they get more physical activity, follow a healthier diet, and don't smoke or drink alcohol in excess.

How to Create a New Healthy Habit

- Make it fun. If you don't enjoy something, you won't stick with it. Find ways to make healthy living as enjoyable as possible.
- Make it convenient. The more difficult and time consuming it is to take an action, the less likely you will do it.
- Do it early. Exercise or meditate in the morning when your willpower is high and you'll reap the rewards all day.

What are some of the studies that demonstrate a link between optimism and physical health?

Although it can be difficult to prove a direct correlation, it is widely accepted among scientific researchers that positive thinking plays an important role in the health of the human body, mind and spirit. Here are a few examples:

- Researchers observed 6,044 adults involved in the ongoing Health and Retirement Study who had not previously had a stroke, WebMD reported. Optimism was rated on a 16-point scale, and with every point increase in positivity, people exhibited a 9 percent lower likelihood of having a stroke.
- A U.S. study looked at 6,959 students who took a comprehensive personality test when they entered the University of North Carolina in the mid-1960s. During the next 40 years, 476 of the people died from a variety of causes, with cancer being the most common. All in all, pessimism took a substantial toll; the most pessimistic individuals had a 42% higher rate of death than the most optimistic.
- A 2013 study published in *The American Journal of Cardiology*, found that middle-aged study participants who scored as optimistic on a test have higher levels of "good" cholesterol (high-density lipoprotein cholesterol) and lower levels of triglycerides.
- A 2006 study explored the link between emotions and viral infections of the respiratory tract. Scientists evaluated the personality style of 193 healthy volunteers, and then gave each a common respiratory virus. Subjects who displayed a positive personality style were less likely to develop viral symptoms than their less positive peers.
- A 2008 study of 2,873 healthy men and women found that a positive outlook on life was linked to lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol, even after taking age, employment, income, ethnicity, obesity, smoking, and depression into account. In women, but not men, a sunny disposition was also associated with lower levels of two markers of inflammation (*C-reactive protein* and *interleukin-6*), which predict the risk of heart attack and stroke. Other possible benefits include reduced levels of adrenaline, improved immune function, and less active clotting systems.

Quick Tip

Dealing with a negative coworker can make it difficult to remain optimistic throughout the day. If you're trying to engage with a pessimist, try the following tips to improve your working relationship:

- Listen patiently – sometimes they just need to vent and move on.
- Laugh! Share a funny video or personal story.
- Set an example of positivity; if they see you happy, they may be motivated to change.
- Keep a safe distance. You may not be able to alter their mindset, so avoiding spending too much time with them.
- Communicate. Talk to HR or higher-ups if the problem escalates or causes significant issues within your workplace.

*Your mind is a powerful thing. When you fill it with positive thoughts,
your life will start to change.*

How can I learn to be more positive?

You can learn to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. The process is simple and can easily be achieved with a little time and practice. Here are some ways to think and behave in a more positive and optimistic way:

- Identify areas to change. Take a look at areas of your life that you typically think negatively about, whether its work, your daily drive to the office or a relationship. Start small by focusing on one area to approach in a more optimistic way.
- Follow a healthy lifestyle. Exercise at least three times a week to positively boost your mood and decrease stress. Follow a healthy diet to fuel your mind and body. Learn techniques to manage stress in and outside of work.
- Check yourself. Occasionally during the day, stop and assess what you're thinking. If you find that your thoughts are primarily negative, seek out a way to put an optimistic spin on them.
- Surround yourself with positive people. Make sure the individuals in your life are supportive people you can depend on to give helpful advice and feedback.
- Practice positive self-talk. Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't want to say to anyone else. Be kind, optimistic and encouraging. If a negative thought crosses your mind, evaluate it rationally and respond with positive affirmations.
- Be open to humor. Give yourself permission to smile or laugh, particularly during hard times. Seek the humor in everyday life. When you can laugh at most situations, you will feel less stressed.

A few examples of positive self-talk:

Words of affirmation can be powerful forces in your day-to-day thoughts. Here are a few you can use:

- I am healthy.
- I communicate easily with everyone.
- I add positive value to the work I produce.
- I am full of energy.
- I am grateful for the job I have and all the possibilities it gives me.
- I contribute positively to the environment at work.
- It is easy for me to keep a positive attitude at my job.
- I release all my negative thoughts about my health.
- Every day I strive to make healthy choices.
- I appreciate all that I have learned through my job
- I have the power to have a positive attitude.

Questions about positivity and health?

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