



The Benefits of Staying Positive

By: Jacob Edwards

Recent research has been finding more and more evidence on the health benefits of optimism and positivity. Since positive thinkers generally cope better with stressful situations, the harmful effects of stress are diminished more quickly, in turn, lead healthier lives. People often disregard frequent headaches, insomnia, or increased fatigue as merely products of everyday life, when all these things can be directly related to increased stress levels.

This is generally easier said than done, but there are a few tips and tricks that you can keep in mind when trying to overcome negativity in your life.

- **Focus on the positive;** rather than dwelling or accepting negative situations beyond control, optimists generally focus on what they can do to overcome the situation – even with the most drastic of life changes. Taking control of your life in small, yet meaningful, ways can produce a larger overall effect, and help you to control the negativity in your life. The key to taking care of stress is to believe that you can, in the very least, change your attitude towards the situation at hand.
- **Remember the correlation between attitude and life events;** there have been numerous studies focused on the way in which a person explains bad events occurring around them. In one, [a 35-year long study performed by Harvard](#), social scientists collected open-ended questionnaires from 99 of their 1944-1945 graduating classmen. The study tracked the graduates all the way until age 60 and found that those who answered the surveys in a pessimistic way faced poorer health later in life.
- **Understand the negative effects of pessimism;** pessimism in early adulthood was found to be directly related to increased health problems in mid to late adulthood. Pessimism can be a result of stress, as those lacking in positivity generally have a harder time dealing with stressful situations. Stress, when left to fester, can cause great damage later in life; it produces the dangerous hormone cortisol, and the increased level of this hormone increases the risk of lower immune function and bone density, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and even diabetes.
- **Know how positivity can change you;** beyond relieving stress, positive thinking can make a person more resilient, both mentally and physically. Dr. Dennis Charney, Dean of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, [studied 750 Vietnam War veterans who were tortured](#). Among those who did not develop post-traumatic stress disorder or suffer from depression, optimism was at the top of the list of ten things that set them apart from other veterans who had similar experiences, but suffered mentally. Optimism was followed by selflessness, humor, and a belief in the meaning of life—all aspects of a positive outlook.

In terms of positivity lending to physical resilience, my father is living proof. Frightened as a little boy, I saw my father take medicine intravenously nearly every day of my childhood. Not until much later in life did I find out what he was treating. My father had always been sick—never fully crippled by his illness, but always at a disadvantage. He was diagnosed with Hepatitis C at age 30, a disease doctors said was ultimately incurable.

He never complained or even really spoke about it to those who knew him well, and the only reason I knew was because I saw him take his medicine at our house. With a good spirit, he put me at ease by telling me how the medicine would someday cure him and sure enough, 40 years later, my father is alive, well, and hepatitis free.

A lot of people aren't fortunate enough to be completely cured and if anyone asks him how he did it, he always says it was his ability to envision himself one-day healthy again. With so many benefits of staying positive, I'm sure you won't mind me telling you to look on the bright side.

Jacob Edward is the manager of Prime Medical Alert and Senior Planning in Phoenix Arizona. Jacob founded both companies in 2007 and has helped many Arizona seniors and their families navigate the process of long term care planning. Senior Planning provides assistance to seniors and the disabled finding and arranging care services, assisted living, as well as applying for state and federal benefits. In his spare time, Jacob enjoys dining out and supporting his alma mater Arizona State's Sun Devil sports teams. Jacob lives in Tempe Arizona.

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