

GETTING AND STAYING POSITIVE



Your attitude about life affects your social participation. In addition, a positive attitude helps you deal with everyday stresses and hassles more effectively.

Tips for Developing a Positive Attitude

➤ Avoid Using Extreme Words

- These are words that make things more dramatic than they really are.
 - Example: "If I don't get the newest cell phone, ***then my social life is over!***"
 - **Try this instead:** Ask yourself, 'Is it really true that your social life would be over?' Probably not. Remember, don't sweat the small stuff!

➤ Try Not to Overgeneralize

- Too often people use the words ***always*** and ***never*** or ***everyone*** and ***nobody*** in a negative or exaggerated way
 - Example: "***Everyone always*** has a better social life than me."
 - **Try this instead:** "My social life could be better but it could be worse!"

➤ Try not to make assumptions about other people

- Sometimes when we don't understand why other people are acting a certain way, we think the worst. Most times, the truth is actually very different from our worst thoughts.

- Example: If your friend doesn't say "Hi" to you at school, you assume that he or she is mad at you.
- **Try this instead:** Remember that there could be a lot of other reasons: he or she did not see you, is stressed about something and had other thoughts on his or her mind. Give your friend some time to say "Hi" back to you.

➤ Think Happy Thoughts

- We can't control everything around us, but we do have power over how we think about things. We can be our own best support by thinking happy thoughts. It is one way to being positive!
 - Example: "Nothing will make me feel better."
 - **Try this instead:** "I'm going through a difficult time but I have great people in my life who I can talk to. It will make me feel better to talk out my feelings."



Take a look at these happy, positive thoughts:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| ✓ I can complete these steps! | ✓ It's easier, once I get started. |
| ✓ I can solve this problem! | ✓ I can reduce my fears. |
| ✓ I'll be okay. It's normal to be nervous in a situation like this. | ✓ I just need to relax. |
| ✓ I can get help from _____ (e.g., friend, family, teacher) if I need it. | ✓ If I try, I can do it! |
| ✓ I'm proud of myself! | ✓ I just need to stay on track. |
| ✓ I won't let the worries creep in. | ✓ It's okay to please myself. |
| ✓ I can find something fun to do this weekend. | ✓ I can cope with this! |
| | ✓ I can hang in there! |
| | ✓ I can make my own choices. |

➤ Replace Negative Statements with Positive Statements

- All challenges in life can be viewed in a positive way or a negative way. The way you think about problems makes a difference in whether you give up or are motivated to keep trying.

Here are examples of turning negative statements into positive ones.



Negative statements	Positive statements
All problems are my fault.	Problems are just part of life.
There is no way I can solve this problem.	There is probably a solution and I will try to find it on my own or with help from others.
A "smart" person should be able to solve problems easily.	It takes time and effort to solve problems.
It's the end of the world when people say they can't do things with me.	It's NOT the end of the world when people can't do things with me. When you think about it, this problem isn't all that bad. I can do something with them on another day.
There is never anything fun going on.	There are fun things that are going on all the time, I just have to find them. I can look at local bulletin boards to find fun activities. I can plan something fun to do.
Parties are too stressful.	I usually have fun when I go. If I avoid the party, I won't get to have fun with people I know or want to know at school.

Your Positive/Good Self Statements

Now it's your turn. List three positive things you can say to yourself when you have a problem or when you're feeling bad. You can write down your favorites on a 3 X 5 index card and carry it with you as a reminder.

For example:

1. I am a good person
2. I am good at (you fill in the activity)
3. People like me because (you fill in the blank)

Remember to STAY POSITIVE!

Your attitude about an event affects how you feel and act.

- If you have a **negative attitude** you may give up and **miss out** on an opportunity.
- With a **positive attitude**, you may try harder and solve your problems and **reach your social participation goal**.

Consider this situation: You are interested in attending the school dance. You aren't sure if your friends want to go but you would like to go with them.

	Situation #1 NEGATIVE ATTITUDE	Situation #2 POSITIVE ATTITUDE
Thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No one will go to the dance with me.• No one will want me there.• I don't know how to dance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maybe my friends will go to the dance with me.• We can practice our dance moves together.• It might be fun!"
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your friends don't think you want to go so they don't ask you.• You miss out on going to the dance with them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You and your friends make plans to go to the dance.• You go and you have fun!

ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOU STAY POSITIVE

In addition to *thinking* positive thoughts, *doing* things that make you feel good are a way to stay positive.

➤ Laugh!



Humor is a great way to stay positive. Find ways to laugh:

- Watch a funny movie
- Read a funny comic
- Think of a funny memory

➤ Manage Your Stress

We are constantly surrounded by noise and demands from others. Many of the things that make our lives easier also make them more stressful.

Stress management is a very important step to **STAYING POSITIVE**. It is hard to stay positive when you are stressed out. Using strategies to manage stress makes it easier to avoid negative thoughts.

Different things work for different people. You need to find the stress management approach that works for you.



➤ What You Can Do to Manage Stress

Stress management is a skill. The more you practice it, the better you will get! Try each of the following stress management strategies and see what works for you. *Practice DAILY for best results.*

In addition, it may help to take a break and do something fun or calming such as hanging out with your friends, watching a funny movie, reading a good book, or taking a warm bath.

Continue reading for information on these relaxation exercises:

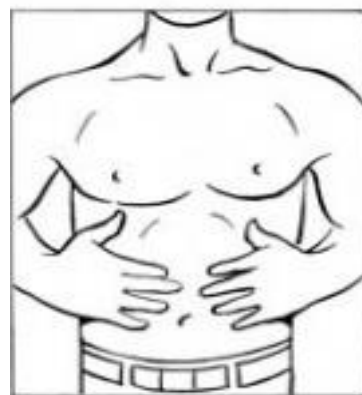
- A simple Breathing Relaxation Exercise
- A Belly Breathing Exercise
- An Active Relaxation Exercise

➤ Belly Breathing

- **Start by learning how to breathe deep.** Your diaphragm is above your stomach and if you breathe in deep the diaphragm pushes out your stomach.
- Put your hand on your stomach and practice making your stomach move as you breathe in and out.
- Slowly count as you breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Count and try to slow your breathing so that you are taking longer breaths. Can you breathe for a count of 3? How about 4? Work up to a count of 8-10.
- Practice daily and it will become easier.



BREATHING OUT (EXHALING) WITH THE DIAPHRAGM



BREATHING IN (INHALING) WITH THE DIAPHRAGM



➤ Breathing Relaxation Exercise

- Sit quietly in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
- Deeply relax all your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. Keep them relaxed.
- Breathe in and out through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out say the word “one” silently to yourself. For example, breath in ...out, “one”; in...out, “one”; and so forth. Breathe easily and naturally.
- Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm.
- When you finish, sit quietly for several minutes, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes open. Do not stand up for a few minutes.
- Do not worry about whether you were able to reach a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a positive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace.
- When distracting thoughts occur, acknowledge them and gently set them aside. Then, go back to focusing on your breathing and repeating “one”. With practice, this response should come with little effort.

Relaxation Exercises for Tense Muscles

If you only have a little time, try the following:

- Slowly take a deep breath in through your nose
- When your lungs are full, let the air out slowly through your mouth
- As you breathe out, let your shoulders go limp and let your forehead and mouth relax
- Tell yourself, "I can stay calm"

If you have more time – try the following:

When you get really tense, it may help to relax your body. You can try the following relaxation exercise by either reading it to yourself or having another family member read it to you.

1. Wear comfortable clothing.
2. Sit upright in a chair. Rest your feet flat on the floor.
3. Rest your arms by your side or lay your hands on your lap. Be sure to keep your hands apart.
4. **To begin, focus on your lower body:** concentrate your mind on your feet. Tense your feet by curling your toes up. Focus on the tension in your feet. You can feel the tension in your calf all the way up your legs.
5. Next, relax your toes and focus on letting go of the tension in them. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation.
6. Now tense your feet again by curling your toes up. Focus on the tension you are creating. Again, relax your toes and focus on the feeling of relaxation.
7. **Now to your arms:** Tighten your fists and bend your arms up in front of your chest. Feel the tightness and tension in your arm muscles. Now completely straighten and relax your arms and fists.
8. **Focus on your shoulder and neck:** Imagine you are a turtle. Shrug your shoulders up toward your head, like you are going to pull your head into your shell. Feel the tension in the top of your shoulders and sides of your neck. Tense your muscles tighter. Feel the tension in your neck.
9. Relax your muscles by letting go of the tension.
10. Once more now, pull your shoulders up toward your ears and study the tension that gathers there, hold it. Now let it go. You are creating the tension and now you can let it go. Observe the feeling of relaxation
11. As you begin to relax more completely, let your shoulders completely relax. Then relax your neck, your arms, and your legs. Imagine the tension flowing out. Allow yourself to feel limp and loose

12. As you breathe in, imagine saying the words, "I am" and as you breathe out, say "relaxed." Breathe in "I am," and breath out "relaxed."
 - Become aware of your whole body and check to see if there is any part of your body that is not fully relaxed. Take a deep breath in, "I am," and out, "relaxed," to remove any tension you might feel.
13. Keep taking slow deep breaths and picture yourself in a place that makes you feel very comfortable and safe. Continue to breathe in with "I am," and breath out, "relaxed".



Stay Positive & Relax!