

Why Positivity Matters for Your Career & 7 Ways to Get More

HOW DOES POSITIVITY HELP YOUR CAREER?

1. **Better problem solver** – Have you ever noticed that positive people take in more information and get a clearer picture of what’s going on? They see more options and identify creative solutions to resolve issues faster. Positive people are often “problem solvers”. This makes them valuable to every team and every organization.
2. **More resilient** – Work is full of challenges and changes out of our control. Being able to take them in stride gives us confidence, the ability to think on our feet, and the mindset that transforms setbacks into opportunities. Higher levels of positivity build our internal resources so we have the ability to bounce back faster, both mentally and physically when things get rough..
3. **More motivated** – When are you more motivated? When you’re stressed, upset, or frustrated? Or when you feel upbeat, optimistic and calm? Negativity drains our energy. We often feel more tired and less interested in our work. We may even *dread going to the office each day*. Positive people naturally have a higher energy level that allows them to tackle big projects, take risks and be more productive. They get noticed because of their can-do attitude and high efficiency.
4. **Achieve more goals** – When managers and leaders see an employee that gets things done despite challenges and setbacks, they want *that* person on their most valued projects. Being positive allows us to pursue our goals with tenacity and determination but also gives us the flexibility to look for other options when needed so we can bypass obstacles and overcome failures.
5. **Less stressed** – Do you ever feel overwhelmed at work? Maybe it’s because of being asked to do more and more with less or trying to adjust to constant changes. Higher levels of positivity allow us to take things in stride more easily. Just like resilience, this is related to our increased internal resources that provide a deeper reservoir of patience and calm and help us NOT get stuck in the negative.
6. **Nicer to work with** – When we’re upbeat and optimistic, people enjoy being around us and want us on their teams and projects. This opens doors to new opportunities. It also helps us build better relationships with our peers, which drives collaboration and effective communication.

7. **Healthier** – Not only does being more positive help us achieve our true potential, studies show it is good for our heart,^a our immune system^b and may even help us live longer.^c Other research found that the happiest employees take 66% less sick days than those who are least happy.^d With the rising cost of health care and time lost due to illness, companies are very interested in ways to make their employees healthier.

- a) Psychol Bull. 2012 Jul;138(4):655-91
- b) Autoimmun Rev. 2006 Oct;5(8):523-7.
- c) Psychosom Med. 2008 Sep;70(7):741-56
- d) Assessment & Development Matters Vol. 5 No. 2 Summer 2013

SEVEN WAYS TO BECOME MORE POSITIVE

1. **Remember positive moments in your day** – Have you ever noticed how easy it is to come home from work and vent about all the problems we had with customers, colleagues, traffic, etc.? This is common because our brains naturally focus on the things we don't like. However, we can train our minds to get better at noticing the good things by creating a routine of intentionally taking time each evening to reflect back and think of something positive that happened. When we share these or journal about them, we are physically changing the neural connections in our brains to get better at noticing the good all around us. These can be simple, little things like having time for your favorite cup of coffee or tea in the morning, crossing something off your "to do" list, or being on a project with a colleague you enjoy working with.
2. **Purposely add positive moments to your day** - We don't need to wait for something good to happen; we can make it happen. Again, these can be simple things like smiling at more people (and having them smile back), doing something nice for someone whether it's offering to help them with a project or just asking how they're doing. It could be taking time for a quick walk outside and getting some fresh air. Or maybe it's listening to one of your favorite songs. When we add something positive, we should savor it. By noticing how good we feel and letting the feeling last, we are helping to reinforce those new connections in our brains and making them stronger.
3. **Use challenges at work as opportunities to learn and grow** – It's natural to get upset and frustrated, maybe even mad, when things happen that we don't like. In the moment, it's hard not to feel these negative emotions, but in the NEXT moment we can ask ourselves different questions. Instead of "Why me?" or "What did I do to deserve this?" consider these questions instead:

- a. How can I learn from this?
- b. How does this make me stronger, better, smarter?
- c. How does this help me relate to others better?

When we look back at our lives, we realize that it was those rough situations that helped to build our resilience and our belief in ourselves.

4. **Make social connections** –Did you know that there is a direct correlation between our ability to be positive and the strength of our social connections?^a Having people that care about us and caring about others does great things for our overall wellbeing and health. We need to take time to spend with friends and family that we enjoy. It can be simply stopping in the hall to ask someone about their weekend, inviting a friend out for lunch, or making plans for the weekend. As our lives get busier and busier, it's easy to feel like we don't have the extra time, but investing in quality relationships is actually important for our mental and physical health.

[a\)](#) The How of Happiness by Sonja Lyubormirsky and Positivity by Barbara Fredrickson

5. **Focus on gratitude** –Gratitude is a strong antidote for negative emotions and can break the downward spiral of rumination. We can use reminders to be grateful throughout our day, or we can take time to reflect on them while writing in a gratitude journal. We can be grateful for a variety of things including abilities, opportunities, things, events, situations, people, and even things we're glad we don't have. Gratitude expert, Prof. Robert Emmons has found that regular grateful thinking can increase happiness by as much as 25 percent, while keeping a gratitude journal for as little as three weeks results in better sleep and more energy.
6. **Categorize your stresses** – Would you be shocked to learn that some forms of stress are helpful and good for us? Recent research has shown that although chronic stress is generally hard on our health, certain forms of acute stress can be beneficial, especially when we THINK it's helpful.^a If you believe you have too much stress in your life AND you believe it's hard on your health, data indicates it CAN increase your health risks. Instead, scientists recommend making a conscious choice to view stress as helpful, and the experience as an opportunity to learn and grow.

What can you do? Change the way you think by realizing you can use your stress. Make a list of the things in your work and in your life that are causing you stress and worry. Mark the ones you have no control over with an "X". Label the items that you can do something about with an "A." Now write how you can channel the energy from the stress for the "A" items to help you take action. What do you need to do? Maybe you need to talk to someone, change something, start or stop doing something, or just shift the way you think about it.

As far as the “X” items, ask yourself how you can learn or grow from them. Then remind yourself that dwelling on these things is a waste of energy since they are out of your control. Remember this saying, “Think of what you could achieve if you took the energy you spend on things you cannot change and invested it in things you can.”

a. <http://ideas.ted.com/how-to-be-good-at-stress/>.

7. **Change your story** – Have you ever found yourself jumping to the worst conclusion? Interestingly, this is normal and it’s been an important part of our evolution to help us survive but it can cause us a lot of unnecessary stress in today’s world. An example is the story we tell ourselves when someone doesn’t return our phone call or email. It could be your boss or even a friend. We are wired to assume that the person is blowing us off and doesn’t care about us. A great way to change our story is to use the **ABCD** approach.

A = Action (Your boss doesn’t respond to your email asking for time off.)

B = Belief (You believe they must be an uncaring jerk.)

C = Consequences (You get mad at them for being such a jerk and feel unappreciated.)

D = Dispute (You can dispute your belief and remind yourself that you don’t know why they didn’t respond. They could be distracted and stressed by some crisis happening in their work or life or just forgetful).

Disputing your belief creates different consequences or emotions because you can make up a different story that let’s you feel compassion and hope that they are OK or patience for their faults. Instead of getting defensive, you can ask them if there is a problem.

Interesting statistics:

Research by Jessica Pryce-Jones, author of Happiness at Work and CEO of [iOpener](http://iOpener.com), has shown that “Happiness at work is closely correlated with greater performance and productivity as well as greater energy, better reviews, faster promotion, higher income, better health and increased happiness with life.”

Her studies showed that the happiest employees are 180% more energized than their less content colleagues, 155% happier with their jobs, 150% happier with life, 108% more engaged and 50% more motivated. Most staggeringly, they are 50% more productive too.”

Tina Hallis, Ph.D. is a professional speaker and consultant who uses science to help people shift the way they think so they can achieve more success in their work and in their lives.