



December 2015

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE

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. The health benefits of positive thinking can include:

LONGER LIFE

A University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine study looked at 100,000 women and found that the optimists were 30 percent less likely to die from heart disease when compared to the pessimists.

FEWER COLDS

Positive thinking is believed to help boost the immune system. This helps people fight off common colds.

BETTER DISEASE COPING SKILLS

People with positive attitudes tend to recover more quickly from surgery. They also tend to cope better with heart disease.

BETTER CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

A 2013 study from the Harvard School of Public Health found that middle-age people who scored as "optimistic" on a test had higher levels of good cholesterol.

IMPROVE STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Having a positive outlook helps you cope better with stressful situations. This, in turn, helps reduce the harmful effects of stress on your body.

DEFEAT NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

One of the secrets to improving health is to try to align your thinking with the way you want to behave.

- Try to be aware of when negative thoughts are getting in the way. Don't judge yourself for having the thought; just notice how it makes you feel.
- Next, try replacing the negative thought with a helpful, positive one. For example, if you think, "I just feel too tired to go walking" try replacing it with "I know that tired feeling will go away as soon as I start walking."

QUICKTAKES



BETTER LIVING: You Can Do It!

If you want to make a healthy lifestyle change that sticks, two things will help a lot. First you'll need to set a realistic, achievable goal. Next you have to believe in yourself to reach it.

Start by creating a goal that is SMART. What makes a goal SMART? Your goal should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timed

You'll also need to believe in yourself to reach your goal. Confidence is key when you're working toward a healthy living goal. This month's newsletter looks at the power behind positive thought. We'll help you develop habits to maintain a positive outlook for better health.

PROMOTE POSITIVE THINKING

Positive thinking can help make positive changes. Some people are naturally more positive than others. But positivity can be learned and practiced. Here are some ways to think and act in a more optimistic way.

IDENTIFY AN AREA TO CHANGE. Are there areas in your life that you often associate with negative thoughts? Maybe it's work or housework or in-laws or your daily commute that are a big source of negative thoughts in your life. Start by focusing on one area and figure out ways to approach the area in a more positive way.

PAUSE FOR A QUICK CHECK. Throughout the day, stop and think about what you're thinking. If your head is filled with negative thoughts, take note of them. Then try to put a positive spin on things.

RELY ON HUMOR. Don't forget to smile and even laugh from time to time, especially during difficult times. Laughter is a big, effective stress reliever.

MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE. Don't sabotage your work toward a healthier you by eating lots of junk food or staring at your computer screen all day long. Regular physical activity and a healthy diet will go a long way to helping you maintain balance in your life.

IGNORE THE NAYSAYERS. Everybody knows an Eeyore (the gloomy donkey from Winnie the Pooh), someone who always sees the glass as half empty or worse. When you're working to make a lifestyle change, try to surround yourself with positive people, not naysayers. Negative people may make you doubt your ability to make a change.

PRACTICE POSITIVE SELF-TALK. There's no need to criticize yourself. Do not say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else. Be encouraging and affirming with yourself.

Physicians caution against overstating the power of positivity in fighting disease. It takes more than a positive outlook to heal a broken bone or cure an infection. There is no evidence that cancer is caused or affected by negative attitudes. What a positive attitude can do is improve the quality of your life during the treatment of a disease. You may be more likely to stay active, see family and friends, and maintain your social life. In turn, this may enhance your feeling of wellbeing.

HOT CHOCOLATE, MEXICAN STYLE

Takes under 30 minutes, makes 3 servings

After exercising on cold, crisp days, reward yourself with a cup of spiced hot chocolate. Fat-free evaporated milk adds a creamy richness without the saturated fat of whole milk or cream. It boosts the calcium level too.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch of grated nutmeg or ground cloves
- 2 cups nonfat milk
- 1 5-oz (150 ml) can evaporated fat-free milk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

1. In a bowl, whisk together cocoa, sugar and spices. Set the bowl next to the stovetop.
2. In a heavy saucepan, heat fresh milk and evaporated milk over medium heat almost to a boil: small bubbles should appear at the sides of the pan. Quickly pour the hot milk into the bowl with the cocoa mixture. Pour the mixture back into the pan and bring just to a boil, whisking steadily.
3. Add vanilla and whisk until frothy.
4. Pour the hot chocolate into mugs. If you like, garnish each mug with a stick of cinnamon.



NUTRITIONAL INFO

163 Calories
0g Fat
0g Saturated fat
0g Trans fat
9g Protein
30g Carbohydrate
1g Fiber
105mg Sodium
378mg Calcium