

Investing in You:
Using The Power of Positive Thinking

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	5
Positive Thinking is a Bunch of Crap – and Crap Makes Great Fertilizer	5
PLANTING YOUR SEEDS	9
Roots: What’s In Your Garden Now?.....	11
Self-Esteem: Catching the I-Love-Me Disease.....	11
Me-ology: The Self-Esteem Dipstick	13
The Dark Ages: Childhood Programming and Past Letdowns	24
Exercise: Connect-the-influences	26
Getting Back on the Horse	28
Step Away from the Panic Button: Conquering Fear	30
Trauma: Breaking the Chains	36
“‘It Could Be Worse’”: Dramatization and Awareness.....	38
For Your Eyes Only: Journaling to Release	40
Meditation: Connecting Above Pain.....	45
Join the Club: Live and Online Support Groups.....	49
Drop That Horseshoe: There’s No Such Thing as Bad Luck	51
Change Your Mind, Change Your Life	53
Warm-up: Shake Out Negative Kinks	55
Work Those Mouth Muscles.....	56
Do Some Reps.....	58
Cool-Down: Feel the Burn.....	60
Switching Terminals: Hook Up to Positive Energy.....	62
What’s In It for Me?	63
The Buddy System.....	65

Knowledge is Power	65
Sign on the Dotted Line	67
Dangle Your Own Carrot.....	68
Surrender.....	70
SHOOTS AND LEAVES	72
The First Signs of Your Spring of Rebirth.....	73
Conspiracy Theory: The Biggest Threat to the New You	75
There’s Always Tomorrow: Eradicate Procrastination.....	76
Just Say No: How Not to Take On Too Much.....	79
Take Me As I Am: Kicking the Approval Habit.....	85
Know Your Code	86
Graduate from High School	87
Weed Your Friendship Garden	89
Blood is Thicker than Embarrassment.....	90
The Blame Game: Whose Fault Is It, Anyway?	93
Making Your Omelet: How to Learn From Your Mistakes	94
Give Yourself Permission	95
Make Interesting Mistakes	96
‘Fess Up	97
Pinpoint Your Error	98
Talk About It.....	99
Keep Good Records	100
If Your Buds Shrivels, Add More Fertilizer.....	102
When the Door Closes, Go Out the Window.....	103
Buried Alive: What to Do When Your Mountain Crumbles	105
Using Your Lifelines.....	106
OPENING YOUR BLOSSOMS.....	109
Poppy Fields: Visualizing in Technicolor.....	109

Preparation: Boarding the Visualization Train	111
Guided visualization	114
Receptive visualization	116
Altered memory visualization.....	118
Worry-Me-Nots and You-Can-Themums.....	121
Cross-Pollination: How to “Bee”.....	125
FRUITION AND HARVEST.....	140
Natural Attraction: Bringing Love, Money and Success	142
Radiant Relationships	143
Incredible Careers	146
Financial Freedom	150
Dream Delivery.....	152
Awesome Aging.....	153
THE PHYSICAL POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING.....	155
Sit Back and Relax	158
CONCLUSION.....	163
Surviving the Winter: Keep Your Garden Alive	163
CHECKLIST FOR THE POSITIVE THINKING PROCESS	165
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	166

INTRODUCTION

Positive Thinking is a Bunch of Crap – and Crap Makes Great Fertilizer

***“A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.”
Herm Albright***

At some point in your life, you’ve probably heard about the power of positive thinking. Basically, this is a theory that contends if you believe good things will happen to you, there will be some sort of cataclysmic shift in the energies surrounding you which will actually *cause good things to happen to you*. For as many people who believe in the power of positive thinking, there are many more who believe it’s all a bunch of New Age pop psychology drivel or sugar-coated Peter Pan platitudes.

Here’s the kicker: they’re all right.

You see, positive thinking is a system of beliefs. So if you believe it doesn’t work- then, of course, it won’t work. And if you believe it *does* work...well, you get the idea. For non-believers, using positive thinking is like trying to get a job after high school. You need experience to get

a job, but you need a job to get the experience. It can be difficult to know where you're supposed to start. But just like any other process, the key to making positive thinking work for you is to start small. Plant seeds, if you will, and then learn how to tend and cultivate those seeds until you have a mental garden that bears a phenomenal crop, year after year. Anything is possible with positive thinking...even if you do believe it's all a bunch of crap.

Norman Vincent Peale, the father of positive thinking, once said: "If you have zest and enthusiasm you attract zest and enthusiasm. Life does give back in kind." This is the essence of positive thinking. It's not so much a theory as it is a contagious disease. Just as anger and negativity spread quickly from person to person, so do humor and happiness- only good feelings spread far faster. Think about it: have you ever noticed that the quickest way to ease a tense situation is to make a joke? The instant someone laughs or smiles, a sense of relief spreads through everyone in the vicinity. Even if the angered parties don't feel better, they are at least able to discuss the problem in a detached and objective way, and get on with their lives instead of dwelling on negativity. For that same reason, solo drivers who get cut off in traffic tend to remain angry for at least the rest of the drive-

because there is no one else near them to send out good vibrations and break the tension. Makes sense, doesn't it?

If you've picked up this book and read this far, the seeds of belief are already there. Your next step is to clear your mind's garden of doubt and get ready to plant. You'll learn how to take all that negativity and mulch it down into fertilizer that will let your possibilities grow.

Now grab your shovel, and let's head in to the garden.



The biggest tree in the world grows from a seed you can hold between two fingers.

“Whether you think you can or whether you think you can’t...you’re right.”

- Henry Ford

PLANTING YOUR SEEDS

“In every phenomenon the beginning remains always the most notable moment.”

- Thomas Carlyle

To tune in to the power of positive thinking, you should probably start small- particularly if you don't believe it will work. It's one thing to tell yourself, “Tomorrow, when I wake up in the morning I won't hit snooze a dozen times and feel drowsy for the rest of the day,” and quite another to tell yourself, “Tomorrow, when I wake up in the morning I'll be living independently wealthy and living in a mansion.” (Unless, of course, you are in fact independently wealthy and living in a mansion at the moment; in which case you might try to think your way into ownership of a small country.)

The process of making positive thinking work for you begins with destruction, or at least a mild shift in your thought structure. In order to make room for new methods and ideas, you must first tear out all the old negativity patterns you've been building throughout your life. For some, this can be a gradual process: as you witness positive thinking work for you, one small step at a time, you will slowly clear out those

good-things-only-happen-to-other-people thoughts, and be able to cultivate the seeds of change.

Roots: What's In Your Garden Now?

“The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.”

- William James

What's holding you back? Even those who fully embrace the theory of positive thinking may feel some qualms over entrusting their lives to mere thought. There are many possibilities that could be producing weeds in your mental garden, and the best way to get rid of a weed is to yank it out, roots and all. In this section we'll discuss some of the most common stumbling blocks people encounter on the road to positive thinking, as well as how to overcome them and lay the foundation for a healthy life outlook.

Self-Esteem: Catching the I-Love-Me Disease

For most of human existence, self-esteem was an unheard-of notion akin to the theories of those heretics who believed the world was round. The term “self-esteem” - defined by Webster's Dictionary as “pride in oneself; self-respect” - made its way into the common public awareness during the '60s and '70s as a catch-all term to describe the essence of parenting problems. The “old ways” of parenting were

pronounced barbaric and damaging to the budding self-esteem of our youth, and many parents fearful of raising unhappy, ill-adjusted children took advice that led to a generation of children with high self-esteem...so high it eclipsed personal responsibility and created a “me-first” mentality.

On the other hand, most of us are taught that thinking highly of ourselves is a vain, selfish and undesirable trait. Advice telling us to feel better about ourselves and occasionally put us first seems counterintuitive at best. After all, isn't self-love the first step on the road to Ego Central? Many people want to feel good about themselves, but guilt too often rears its ugly head and stops healthy self-esteem from developing.

Because of these conflicting viewpoints, self-esteem is a tricky little emotion to manipulate. It's important to strike a balance between modesty and greed. It takes practice to convince yourself that you are a worthwhile and deserving person, while at the same time keeping in mind that you're not the center of the universe. Though it may sound impossible, it's actually simple to accomplish.

Where do you rate on the self-esteem-o-meter? The following quiz will help you gauge your feelings and identify areas that need improvement.

Me-ology: The Self-Esteem Dipstick

To rate your self-esteem, choose the answer that most closely reflects your likely reaction to the following situations:

1. You know you're good at creating databases. Your boss asks you and several co-workers for a volunteer to organize a new client information database, and another volunteer to write a company newsletter- which you have no idea how to do. You:

A. Volunteer for both, because you're so brilliant you'll be able to figure it out - even at the expense of embarrassing the company the first few times you write a terrible newsletter.

B. Volunteer for the database- and when Fred Jones also volunteers, gently point out that you've had more experience, but would be happy to teach him what you know as you go along.

C. Remain silent. Someone else is surely better at it than you, and the boss would never pick you anyway.

2. You're out with friends and you've just passed gas noisily in the middle of a restaurant, so you:

A. Immediately blame a passing waiter or someone else at your table. You are completely serious in your accusations, and there's no way anyone will be able to pin it on you. If they even think about it, you'll let them have it.

B. Crack a joke about that four-bean salad you had for lunch.

C. Attempt to crawl under the table, then excuse yourself and head to the bathroom. You can't face any of them for the rest of the night, and you consider paying the entire check right now and leaving before they notice you're gone- *if* they notice you're gone.

3. When you watch Jeopardy or play Trivial Pursuit, you:

A. Laugh at the other players when they get the answers wrong. You know them all, and if you ever went on Jeopardy you'd clean them out.

B. Have a blast. You know some of the answers and try to guess at the rest. You love to learn new things.

C. Don't watch Jeopardy or play Trivial Pursuit. You're not smart enough for stuff like that.

4. You've decided to go after that promotion at work. You:

A. Make a bunch of other people look bad so there's no way you'll be passed up.

B. Let your boss know you're interested in the promotion, and then put in some extra effort to prove you're good for the position.

C. Decide on the drive to work that you're not going to go for it after all. You won't get it no matter what you do, so there's no point in trying.

5. When making a tough decision, you:

A. Choose the option that sounds best for you at the moment, and then stick to your decision no matter what, even if it turns out to be the wrong one.

B. Weigh your options and think about the advantages and disadvantages of each one before deciding on your final choice, but remain open to change if it turns out there is a better way.

C. Decisions? You can't make decisions. You always pick the wrong thing and wind up making everyone miserable. You'll get someone else to decide.

6. You're faced with an entire evening alone. You:

A. Gloat, because you don't have to spend time in the company of those miserable cretins who think they're your friends, but can't hold a candle to your brilliant and sparkling personality. You know they're all sitting around wishing they could hang with you, anyway.

B. Take the time to do something you enjoy, like take a long bath, read a good book, or fix yourself your favorite dinner. It's nice to relax once in a while and be alone with your thoughts.

C. Resign yourself to being miserable all night. You might as well go to bed early and hope someone's around tomorrow.

7. When performing a task that requires your full concentration, you:

A. Don't. Whatever it is you're doing, you could do it in your sleep. You don't have to bother concentrating on things.

B. Are able to tune out most distractions and complete the task to the best of your ability. You are determined to put your best foot forward.

C. Can't. You're too nervous about screwing things up to concentrate, so you tend to work on projects in short bursts and often end up finishing things late because you're so distracted.

8. A friend introduces you to someone new. You:

A. Prove that you're a better person by saying something witty or clever that lets them know your friend is paying attention to you right now, not them. If the new person is worth knowing, they'll make the effort to get to know you.

B. Greet him or her warmly, introduce yourself and ask an open-ended question such as "What do you do for a living?" or "Where do you live?" You're prepared to actually listen to the answer and will reserve judgment until you get to know the person better.

C. Mumble "hello," and then slink off in search of a friend who's not talking to someone you don't know. Whoever the new person is, they wouldn't want to get to know you anyway.

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