

10 STEPS TO CREATE A POSITIVE LIFESTYLE

by

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When you think of a positive lifestyle – what do you imagine? Having lots of money, men falling at your feet, having a regular routine at the gym or, feeling contented and confident in yourself?

Life throws all kinds of obstacles in our way – sometimes we have periods of time when all is well and – at other times it can seem as if every bad omen has come our way as we lurch from one emotionally draining crisis to another.

Have you noticed how some people manage to keep going regardless of what happens while others fall at the first hurdle? Surely, if the circumstances for each person are the same the feelings experienced should be too?

Developing a positive lifestyle has more to do with how you choose to perceive situations than about the situations themselves. No one can feel positive all the time and it is debatable whether that would be a good idea

anyway. After all, our appreciation of what we have tends to be greater when we have had to strive to get or keep it.

Current research suggests that a healthy and positive lifestyle has nothing to do with looks, money or status although it can make life easier to have these than not. You can develop a positive lifestyle and it can become a habit.

If you want to be more positive about life the following 10 steps will get you there.

Step One – Learn to let go

How much time and emotional energy do you waste wishing things or people in your life were different? “*If only this*”, “*if only that*” you say.

What has happened cannot be undone but why compound it with throwing more good after bad.

Ok, you would have preferred things to be different but going over the same ground again and again in your head means you are fighting against the reality. This type of circular thinking style depletes you and stops you from benefiting from a positive way of being.

When you want to challenge your thinking then let go by taking a deep breath and saying “*OK, I would have liked things to be different but if I keep on thinking this way I will make things worse and not better*”. This type of thinking style is more likely to help you move on.

Step Two – Put things right

When something goes wrong think about why it went wrong (so you can avoid the same situation in the future) and then do something about it. If you said something better left unsaid or forgot to do something you should have done then acknowledge the situation and act in a positive way. Say sorry – it won't kill you. Explain what happened and put it right if you can. Can you think of one person who never gets things wrong? Actions speak louder than words so think about what you can do and do it. People who develop a positive lifestyle know that it is not making a mistake that is the problem but how to deal with it and move on.

Step Three – Stop Putting yourself down

When you put yourself down you decrease your ability to live in a positive way. It is one thing being modest but another being downright passive. Passive people are not happy or positive people. If you want to be stop putting yourself down then learn to look people in the eye, smile, hold your body upright and say “thank you” when someone tells you that the dress you are wearing suits you. Avoid comments like “*this old thing*” If you catch yourself putting yourself down – stop. Instead of saying, “*I’m useless*”, “*I can’t*” or “*typical of me to get it wrong*” say, “*I found that hard*” or “*I guess it will take a bit more practice*”

Step Four – Just because you think it doesn’t mean it’s true

Thoughts are funny things that can play tricks on our unsuspecting minds making us act in ways that do us no good whatsoever. Imagine you see someone you know across a road – you smile and wave but no response. What’s your immediate thought “*Oh she did not see me*” or “*what have I done wrong?*” You have a choice. You can tell yourself something negative and make yourself feel bad or you can change the way you think into something that will make you feel better about yourself, other people

and the world. After all, why would you choose to always think the worst – where's the sense in that?

Step Five – Look for the Evidence

Sometimes we make mistakes and all that proves is that we are human. However, most of the time can end up feeling ashamed, guilty, depressed and anxious for no reason at all. When you have these feelings instead of just accepting them remember that they are based on what you are thinking about yourself or the situation you find yourself in. Therefore when you find yourself thinking thoughts like “*what will people think?*” ask yourself what evidence you have that people will think anything at all – let alone anything negative. How do you know that people will be thinking a certain way? Once you start to look for evidence it's amazing how hard it can be to find!

Step Six – Take Responsibility

No one is going to make anything happen for you so make it happen for yourself. Even when someone has treated you badly or you have been unlucky you can turn the situation around. Don't personalise bad situations, as the more you believe that you were singled out for bad

treatment the more you are likely to limit your chances of success. It can be a hard lesson to learn but someone has to be a statistic. When organisations downsize, good people can lose their jobs. Sometimes parents are not up to the job of parenting and they make mistakes. You could not help what happened to you as a child but you can learn to take responsibility as an adult. You can shape your future but only if you learn to be brave and take risks. Positive people take risks even if they are scared.

Step Seven - Get out of your tower

You don't want to get hurt so you build a tower around you. You believe that all people are untrustworthy and you are determined to keep people out at all costs. Perhaps you do this in an obvious manner by being hard to talk to and get to know or perhaps you do it more subtly by appearing open but avoiding real meaningful emotional contact. It's true that if you keep people away you do not risk them hurting you. However, you will never be able to live positively if you do not include people in your life. Life is full of people and those who make good relationships are those that are likely to be happy and get more of what they want from life. You do not have to be a pushover but learn to give people a chance.

Step Eight – Be grateful

There is now an increasing body of research that shows that people who are thankful for what they have are more positive than those who constantly think about what they do not have. You can learn to be grateful by stopping during the day and thinking about what you have to be grateful for. For example, you may have lost your job but you still have your health. You may wish you were more attractive but you have friends. Think about everything in your life, whether large or small that you like. After all, you could be standing on a freezing station instead of on a warm, if crowded, tube platform or you could have to walk a mile or so to get to the bus stop.

Step Nine – learn to like yourself

If you do not like yourself then why should anyone else? People who learn to like themselves are more likely to be likeable, are less likely to be put upon and are much more likely to ward off stress and be happy. If there are things about yourself that you would like to change then do so but do not use them as an excuse not to like yourself. Write down a list of 20 things that you like about yourself and that you think you are good at. Think of things that you have done – giving a pound to charity,

helping someone across the street, giving someone a smile – all of these things count.

Step Ten – Never put off to tomorrow what you can do today

How many times have you meant to do something and then never got around to doing it whatever it was? Laziness drains your confidence and your potential for a positive life. Sure, we all need to slob out sometimes but you know that's not what I really mean. *"I'll start my diet tomorrow", "I'll sort that out later" or "one more day won't hurt"* For many people tomorrow never comes and putting things off is really one more excuse to avoid making the most of life and of your chances. If it helps you, organise a reward and get a friend to support you. If you are one of those people who is more motivated to take action to avoid something you don't like then make a pledge that if you do not follow through on an action you will donate some money to one of your *least favourite* cause. Motivation is an individual thing and you need to find the method that works best for you.

Recommended Reading

10 Steps to Positive Living, Windy Dryden, Sheldon Press, £5.99

Get the Happiness Habit, Christine Webber, Help Yourself – Hodder and
Stoughton, £6.99

Dejunk Your Mind: Simple Solutions for Positive Living, Dwana Walter,
Quadrille Publishing, £7.99

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