



Cancer Connections Online Monthly Forum 2008 Archive Presentation

Positive Imagery & The Power of Positive Thinking

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Why Think Positively?

All of our feelings, beliefs and knowledge are based on our internal thoughts, both conscious and subconscious. We are in control, whether we know it or not. We can be positive or negative, enthusiastic or dull, active or passive.

The biggest difference between people is their attitudes. For some, learning is enjoyable, and for others, learning is drudgery. For some, learning is just okay, something required on the road to a job.

"Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Abraham Lincoln

What can we do to be more positive?

One approach is called the three C's: **Commitment, Control and Challenge.**

Commitment

Make a positive commitment to yourself, to learning, work, family, friends, nature, and other worthwhile causes. Praise yourself and others. Dream success. Be enthusiastic.

Control

Keep your mind focused on important things. Set goals and priorities for what you think and do. Visualize, to practice actions. Develop a strategy for dealing with problems. Learn to relax. Enjoy successes. Be honest with yourself.

Challenge

Be courageous. Change and improve every day. Do your best and don't look back. See learning and change as opportunities. Try new things. Consider several options. Meet new people. Ask lots of questions. Keep track of your mental and physical health. Be optimistic.

Studies show that people with these characteristics are winners in good times and survivors in hard times.

Be positive: Live longer, live healthier

Self-talk is the endless stream of thoughts that run through your head every day. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. If the thoughts that run through your head are mostly negative, your outlook on life is likely pessimistic. If your thoughts are mostly positive, you're likely an optimist.

Researchers continue to explore the effects of optimism on health. The health benefits optimism may provide are:

- Decreased stress**
- Greater resistance to catching the common cold**
- A sense of well-being and improved health**
- Reduced risk of heart disease**
- Living longer**
- Better coping skills**

It is unclear why optimists experience these health benefits. One theory is that having a positive outlook enables you to cope better with stressful situations, which reduces the effects of stress on your body. Over time, chronic stress may result in adrenal and immune suppression. Chronic stress may be the form of stress that is most harmful to cellular immune function, impairing the ability to ward off viruses and tumor cells. Although, some evidence indicates that emotional reactivity to stress is regulated, in part, by genetic factors, other evidence indicates that individuals can control their response to stress.

How to put a positive spin on negative thoughts

Self-talk--the inner monologue sometimes referred to as automatic thinking, can be positive or negative. Weed out misconceptions and irrational thinking and challenge them with rational, positive thoughts. Your self-talk will gradually become realistic and self-affirming.

You can learn to turn negative thoughts into positive ones. The process is simple, but it takes time and practice.

Throughout the day, stop and evaluate what you're thinking. If you find that your thoughts are negative, try to find a way to put a positive spin on them.

Start by following one simple rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to someone else.

Rebecca Kane, Nurse Practitioner
Bozeman Deaconess Cancer Center

Cherish Your Day: Some Positive quotes for your life

1. Observe every obstacle as a learning experience.
2. The greater the challenge, the greater the reward.
3. Do the hardest thing first, and the rest will be easy.
4. Few great accomplishments have ever been achieved by anyone alone: seek support from those whose talents exceed your own.
5. Choose your friends wisely.
6. A dream written down with a date becomes a **goal**. A goal broken down into steps becomes a **plan**. A plan backed by **action** makes your **dream come true**.

7. You can learn more about someone's character on one bad day than on all their good days put together.
8. The true measure of all great leaders is how well they weather storms.
9. Live your word; lead by example.
10. What we offer is simple: hope, a chance to achieve, and the opportunity to grow.

A few more simple rules for happiness:

11. Free your mind from worries.
12. Live simply.
13. Give more.
14. Expect less.
15. May you live an interesting life.
16. May you trust your highest power that you are exactly where you are meant to be...
17. May today there be peace within.

Hope you enjoy some of these quotes to help you cherish your day!

Rebecca Kane, Nurse Practitioner
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Imagery--Using your imagination to transform your life

We've talked about the power of positive thinking, and we can learn exercises that promote creativity in our thinking. We can use our imagination, our inner self, to promote a positive outcome. Our imagination is made up of our own ideas, feelings and interpretations of life events. It is a means of transforming our lives in ways that can shape our everyday actions and shape our health.

Visual imagery does not require something to be there before us for our mind's eye to see it. We can use visual activity exercises for short periods in our day to relieve stress. Imagery can be used to problem solve, increase a sense of self-control over a situation, and restructure the meaning of a situation to reduce the stress response to the situation.

Imagery is a relaxation technique similar to meditation that has physical and psychological effects. It can relax the mind and body by decreasing heart rate and lowering blood pressure. It

has also been shown to relieve pain and emotional anxiety, improve the effectiveness of drug therapies and provide emotional insights.

There are many different imagery techniques. One popular method is called palming, which involves placing the palms of your hands over your eyes and imagining a color you associate with anxiety or stress (such as black), and then a color you associate with calmness and relaxation (such as blue). Visualizing a calming color is supposed to make you feel relaxed and improve your health and well-being.

Imagery is the language the mind uses to communicate with the body. It is a biological connection between the mind and body and can be extremely useful in mind body healing.

Unfortunately, many images popping into our heads do more harm than good. In fact, a common type of imagery is worry. It is estimated that an average person has 10,000 thoughts or images flashing through his/her mind in a day. Many are positive, but if a great number are negative, it can alter your physiology.

Step by Step Imagery

Studies indicate that imagery works best when it is used in conjunction with a relaxation technique, such as meditation, progressive relaxation or yoga. When your physical body is relaxed, you don't need to be in conscious control. You can give your mind freedom to daydream, to imagine.

Loosen your shirt collar, take off your shoes, and sit comfortably in a chair. You can also use yoga or meditation posture. Dim the lights, if you prefer. Close your eyes. Take in a few deep breaths. Picture yourself descending an imaginary staircase. With each step, notice you feel more relaxed.

When you feel relaxed, imagine a favorite scene, and gradually direct all your thoughts to this favorite scene. It could be a beach, a mountain slope or an enjoyable moment with family and friends. Try to go into this scene each time you practice your imagery. This is a special place, a safe place where nothing can hurt you and you feel secure.

As you practice, your image will come more into focus. If several images come to mind, choose one and stick with it for that session.

On the other hand, if no images come to mind, try focusing on a different sensation. For instance, imagine fish frying in a skillet or smelling wildflowers in a meadow. If all else fails, how do you feel at this moment? Angry? Frustrated? What color is that anger? Gradually lessen the intensity of that color until it seems to fade away. Each time you do this, imagine your anger or your ailment is completely gone or cured at the end of the session.

At the end of the session, take a few more deep breaths and picture yourself re-climbing the staircase and gradually becoming aware of your surroundings. Open your eyes, stretch, smile and get on with your day.

Another common technique is known as ***guided imagery***, which involves visualizing a specific image or goal to be achieved and then imagining achieving that goal. Athletes use this technique to improve their game. Cancer patients can imagine powerful immune cells attacking their cancer cells and destroying them.

There are scripts for guided imagery that consist of directions that allow the listener to

activate his or her own imagination in a way that appeals to the senses, distracts the listener from stressful stimuli, and connects the listener with concepts that may be helpful.

I have a list of audiotapes and other products relating to guided imagery if you are interested. Enjoy the experience!

Rebecca Kane, Nurse Practitioner
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Non-Contact Healing Touch May Have the Right Touch

Therapeutic Touch is hard to describe, even for practitioners of the practice. No one knows exactly how it works.

Practitioners may sense heat, cold, sickness, or heaviness throughout the energy field. Enter the power of healing touch. "We try to balance the energy field and help patients to heal themselves."

- The nurses who developed Therapeutic Touch were guided by four scientific assumptions:
- 1) All the life sciences agree that, physically, a human being is an open energy field.
 - 2) A human being is bilaterally symmetrical.
 - 3) Illness is an imbalance in an individual's energy field.
 - 4) Human beings have natural abilities to transform and transcend their conditions of living.

The practice of Therapeutic Touch is based on these assumptions. The healer acts as a human support system, their own healthy energy field providing the guide to repatterning the healee's weakened and disrupted energy flow. This support works to stimulate the healee's own immune system so the healee can heal her or himself.

Like other complimentary medicines, healing touch starts with the idea that people are naturally healthy. The way people live and think may disturb their natural energy, and they may become ill. The aim of healing touch is to restore natural health.

Central to healing touch is the belief that a vital energy or life force flows freely through space and sustains all living organisms. In a healthy person, this energy is thought to flow in and out of the body in a balanced way. It is believed that illness results when the energy flow is out of balance.

Practitioners of healing touch use their hands in an attempt to change a person's energy flow and restore health. Healing touch does not require contact between the practitioner and the person during treatment. The practitioner moves his or her hands several inches above the person's body.

There are several consistent and highly reliable results of the Therapeutic Touch interaction:

Relaxation in as little as 2-4 minutes

Pain reduction

Accelerated healing process: From positive effects on the immune system because of

relaxation and relief from pain.

Alleviation of psychosomatic illness: Many of these are stress related illnesses.

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Fun Ways to Prevent Cancer Through Exercise

This was taken from ideas in About.com:Cancer

The American Cancer Society recommends exercising 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week for cancer prevention. If you cringe at the word "exercise," check out these fun ways for fitness. You will have so much fun, you won't even consider it to be working out!

1. Walking

Walking has many health benefits, such as cancer and other disease prevention. Instead of using the treadmill, walk outdoors. If you can find a safe sidewalk, or park, you can walk! How about walking in the mall early in the day. Bring headphones and listen to music, or even an audiobook.

2. Yoga

If you have never done Yoga before, why not start a beginners' class? Yoga is a great physical activity and is a great stress reliever. Don't worry if you are not flexible; you will work your way up each class. Bringing a friend to class with you makes it easier and less intimidating. Once you learn the basics, you can do the exercises at home in your free time.

3. Dancing

Dancing can be the most fun way to meet fitness goals. You can dance in the privacy of your living room, or go to a club. If you have two left feet, try a dance class! Learn Salsa, ballroom dancing or even the meringue! There are so many types of dance to learn, you can't go wrong.

4. Tai Chi

Tai Chi is a Chinese martial art that promotes health through slow moving exercises and breathing techniques. It is also meditative. Classes can be taught in a group setting or in private classes. Many seniors practice tai chi for it's health benefits.

5. Swimming

Swimming is an excellent form of exercise! You work out all muscles of the body, and it can be very cardiovascular. Many gyms offer open swim sessions. If you don't know how to swim, lessons are available for adults. You can also try water aerobics.

6. Hiking

If you love the outdoors, hiking is for you! The scenery alone makes hiking worthwhile. Set a goal for yourself like distance or the amount of time you hike during each session. Not only are you challenging yourself, you are getting one of the best ways to get in shape!

7. Cycling

You can cycle at home on a stationary bike while watching TV, or hit the outdoors with a traditional bicycle. Stationary bikes are preferred by most adults because it is convenient. You can also control the resistance and simulate biking uphill or downhill. Whether you bike in the home or outdoors, you are easily meeting the 30 minutes/5 days a week goal.



Have some fun and remember to drink plenty of fluids!

It's been my pleasure to share a few ideas with you and look forward to your comments and/or questions. Have a nice weekend and take some time for a little exercise.

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