

Timeless Optimism

Five of The Positivity Blog's favorite timeless tips on optimism.

1. It is not too late to change your life.

"Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending." Maria Robinson

It may feel like you have been on the same path and stuck in the same habits for so long that you are stuck permanently on your current route.

It doesn't have to be that way though. I didn't make many positive changes to my own life before I was 25 (I'm 33 now). And over the past 6+ years I have received thousands of emails from readers of all ages - between 14 and 72 - that have told me about how they have recently changed their life in a positive way.

You may not be able to change your life in any way you want right now. But work with what you have where you are right now.

Make a small change if that is what is possible. That small change and success will give you confidence and you can build upon that to make more and perhaps even bigger changes over the year.

2. Don't make mountains out of molehills.

"If you break your neck, if you have nothing to eat, if your house is on fire, then you've got a problem. Everything else is inconvenience." Robert Fulghum

It is easy to let thoughts spin away. To let them grow from a thought or a situation into a big and very scary monster in your mind.

What can you do about this thought habit?

One thought combination that has helped me with this habit is to:

Say stop right away. If you have read anything I have written about self-esteem then you may have seen that I often mention using a stop-word or stop-phrase.

This works well to build self-esteem. It also works well for optimism. In this case it simply means that as soon as you become aware of that you are starting to make a mountain out of a molehill you say or shout STOP! or something similar in your mind.

I tend to use the phrase: No, no, we are not going there!

Broaden the perspective. After I have used my stop-phrase I ask myself this about the perceived problem: Will this matter in 5 years? Or even 5 months?

The answer is almost always no. And my mind is once again calmer and I feel level-headed.

3. Find a more helpful way to view your troubles.

"What seems to us as bitter trials are often blessings in disguise." Oscar Wilde

"If you will call your troubles experiences, and remember that every experience develops some latent force within you, you will grow vigorous and happy, however adverse your circumstances may seem to be." John Heywood

It is easy to get dragged down by the troubles that turn out to not just be molehills (or air).

But if you view them in a helpful and optimistic way then, yes, they may still hurt. But they tend to often hurt a lot less and can even be a source of optimistic excitement.

I didn't use to like making mistakes or failing at all. I often chose to stand still and to not do anything to not risk anything. Nowadays I have learned that these things tend to truly be a blessing in disguise.

What has changed?

I view them differently and act upon them differently than I used to.

I ask myself: what is the opportunity in this situation?

I ask: how will this experience help me in the long run?

These questions help me to make good use of a situation that may seem negative at first. And by doing this process over and over I am a lot less afraid of making mistakes or failing because I know from my experience that by handling this in a smart way I have gained many benefits and grown as a person over the past years.

4. Focus on the small steps you can take.

"Having a positive mental attitude is asking how something can be done rather than saying it can't be done."
Bo Bennett

When you have found an opportunity in what seemed like a totally negative situation then focus on what you can do and take action on.

Ask yourself: what is one small step I can take today to get the ball rolling and move forward with this situation?

Just take that one small step today. Then another tomorrow. The small steps tend to add up quickly and, as I mentioned above, will breed confidence that allow you to take more and bigger steps.

5. Learn to reduce and handle worries.

“When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened.” Winston Churchill

Worries can be very destructive.

But most of the things you fear will happen never happen. They are just nightmares or monsters in your own mind. And if they happen then they will most often not be as painful or bad as you expected. Worrying is most often just a waste of the time you have here.

I know, this is easy to say. But what can you do about it?

What has worked for me is a similar combination that I mentioned above.

I first use my stop phrase: No, no, we are not going there!

Then I ask myself a question based on Churchill’s quote: how many of my worries and things I feared came into my reality in the past?

The answer is: very few.

By repeating this over and over this quick process becomes a habit and starts to pop up often quite automatically when my mind starts to worry about something.