

Give your attitude a positive charge

— by Andrea Nies

While being optimistic isn't always easy, adopting a positive attitude can unleash a 'spiral of success.'

It may seem like being happy is always just around the corner. It's easy to think about things you'd like to change or have more of.

Focusing instead on the positive aspects of life and celebrating your successes is a healthier alternative. Recognizing that life naturally has ups and downs and being willing to push through hard times will make all the difference.

Here's the good news: Simply having a positive attitude can help you feel good and achieve more.

You've heard the popular saying: Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you deal with it. This has proven true for many very successful people. Here's a lesson from people who have faced roadblocks and have not given up.

They tried, and tried, and tried again

J. K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter books, was one step from being homeless and was jobless before she followed her dream of becoming a writer. The manuscript of the first Harry Potter novel was rejected by 12 publishers. Persistence paid off, though, and her books are now popular around the world.

Basketball great Michael Jordan didn't make his school's varsity team as a sophomore in North Carolina. He practiced morning and night year-round to develop his skills, and is now generally considered the most successful basketball player of all time.

It is easy to wish we could have done or do more, but it's important to realize that perception is personal. You get to choose what is good enough.

"When we also choose to see things that are positive and not just negative we get a much more comprehensive picture of what is actually realistic," states Shona Vas, director of the Cognitive-



Behavior Therapy Program at the University of Chicago.

A shot of positivity

If you are having a down day and need to inject some positivity, take Vas' advice and choose one of these activities:

1. Write down the things that are going well in your life. In a recent study, a group of adults wrote down three things that had gone well each day and why, for a week. Participants reported happier feelings for six months afterwards!

2. Determine five of your top strengths. Challenge yourself to use one of these each day for a week. A similar study by Marting Seligma, Ph.D., tracked people who did this, and volunteers also reported increased happiness for six months' time.


It is possible to be more optimistic. Research suggests that even pretending you are happier can make you feel better.

Start the spiral of success

If you do not feel very optimistic, think about how things could gain momentum and positively affect your next move. For example: You adopt a positive attitude toward studying rather than feeling like it's torture; over time, hard work pays

off and leads to success on a test; you receive positive feedback from a teacher or parent, which inspires a desire to work hard again in the future, and so on. Adopting a certain attitude can foster a spiral of success.

Not convinced? Being happy with what you have does not mean ignoring your goals or desires to achieve great things. It simply means focusing on what is good about today. Studies show that optimists (not perfectionists) do better in school, sports and relationships than pessimists do. They also make more money.

Give yourself a break and recognize your achievements. Use your talents and feel good about them. Don't worry too much about small setbacks, and realize that even the most successful people have dealt with hardships in life. 



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