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MENTAL HEALTH

Beyond Positive Thinking: How to Manage Your Mindset

Positive thinking has been endorsed by personal growth gurus for decades, but how exactly does your mindset play a role in your physical wellbeing?

According to Martin Seligman, the director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the father of the positive psychology movement, positive psychology is “the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive.” In other words, positive thinking involves a focus on what is good, or what is going well.

From a wellbeing standpoint, there are many benefits that come with positivity. Researchers¹ have found that positive thinking is protective against cardiovascular disease. For example, the more optimistic you are, the less likely you are to have a heart attack. It has also been linked² to reduced rates of depression and improved immune function.

To manage your mindset, remember these two simple tips: Observe and choose again.

Observe

Pay attention to how you respond to the things that happen around you. In his book *A Complaint Free World: How to Stop Complaining and Start Enjoying the Life You Always Wanted*, author Will Bowen suggests using visual cues to acknowledge your thoughts. For example, move a bracelet from one wrist to the other whenever you notice yourself complaining. You can also create a journaling practice or use a habit tracker to identify patterns in your thinking.

Choose again

Whenever you do happen to catch yourself in a negative thinking pattern, think of it as an opportunity to choose differently. Thoughts and words are powerful. In the moment, reframe your thoughts, or rephrase your words, to make the correction.

Managing a healthy mindset³ is not only about positive thinking. It goes much deeper than that. Since your thoughts ultimately drive your actions, do your best to focus on the positive results you want. That is where your energy will go.



1. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/can-positive-thinking-be-negative/>

2. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22506752/>

3. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950>

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Mental Health Preparedness

Mental health has received a lot of attention in recent years, but most of the focus has been on addressing complex issues that result from poorly managed stress. Learning how to manage stress properly can help strengthen your mental wellbeing and better prepare you for life's challenging moments.

A more proactive approach to managing mental health is to have a plan in place before you need it. This can dramatically reduce the physical and emotional strain you experience, making it more likely that you can access help earlier and manage tough times more easily.

Here are some ways to better prepare yourself for life's heavy moments:

Create an emergency self-care plan

Create a plan that includes practical self-care strategies to help you cope with stress. Meditation, journaling, and physical activity can be especially useful at managing intense energy. When challenging situations arise, it is helpful to have a go-to list of strategies you can turn to.

Find a therapist

Establish a relationship with a therapist now, so you can connect more easily with them when you need help unraveling a problem. Contact your Employee Assistance Program or your insurance plan for a list of providers in your area.

Build a strong support network

Nurture your friendships by reaching out regularly and staying connected. Having a strong support network to lean on in times of need will make you more resilient.



Much like preparing for a natural disaster, mental health preparedness is a proactive approach that can safeguard your wellbeing. Create a plan that you can easily execute when you face challenging or life-changing circumstances.



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6 Reasons to Connect with a Therapist

Therapists are mental health specialists who are trained to guide people through mental and emotional challenges. Here are a few reasons⁴ you might consider connecting with a therapist:

Intense emotions

Do you struggle with managing intense emotions? Unmanaged stress can take a toll on your wellbeing. Finding healthy outlets for intense emotions is key, and a therapist can guide you through some practical options.

Sleeplessness

Are you struggling to get a good night's sleep? If you are getting less than seven hours of sleep each night, it could be damaging your health. Sleep deprivation leaves you less equipped to solve problems and make good decisions.

Grief: Have you experienced a recent loss?

If you have suffered the loss of a loved one, a pet, or a job, it can trigger some intense emotions. A therapist can help you process, express, and manage the intense emotions that surface throughout the grieving process.

Appetite changes

Have you noticed a change in your appetite? Stress can often lead to an increase or decrease in appetite. Without proper nutrition, your body will be less capable of managing stress.

Strained relationships

Are you having difficulty with a friendship or partnership? Relationships are tricky, and therapists are trained to help you find ways to manage challenges in your personal and professional relationships.

Burn-out

Are you feeling overwhelmed by stress in the workplace? According to the World Health Organization, burn-out is defined as "a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." If you are struggling with work-related stress or anxiety, a therapist may be able to help you sort it out.



If you think you may be depressed or are struggling to navigate a difficult situation, it may be helpful to sort through it with a mental health expert. For a referral to a therapist within your network, contact your Employee Assistance Program or insurance plan.

4. <https://psychcentral.com/blog/5-reasons-to-see-a-therapist/>



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RECIPE

Baked Tuna Mac and Cheese Muffins

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups uncooked whole wheat macaroni noodles
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 2 (5 ounce) cans light tuna, drained
- 1 (8 ounce) package shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon dijon mustard
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons white whole wheat flour
- 2 cups skim milk
- salt and black pepper
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- ½ cup whole wheat Panko crumbs

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a muffin tin with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Cook noodles according to directions in a 4 quart pot.
3. Place frozen peas in colander. Drain cooked noodles in colander over top of frozen peas.
4. Pour noodles and peas back into pot.
5. Stir in cheese and tuna.
6. In a bowl, combine egg, flour and milk. Whisk together.
7. Add spices to milk mixture. Pour milk mixture into noodles in pot.
8. In a small bowl combine melted butter and Panko crumbs.
9. Fill each muffin cup to the top with noodle mixture.
10. Sprinkle top with about 1 tablespoon each of Panko crumbs.
11. Bake for 20-25 minutes.

Total Time:

35 minutes

Servings: 4



NUTRITION INFO

(per serving 2 muffins)

Calories <i>kcal</i>	369
Carbs <i>g</i>	27
Fat <i>g</i>	19
Protein <i>g</i>	27
Sodium <i>mg</i>	1045
Sugar <i>g</i>	7

Source:

<https://www.chocolateslopes.com/baked-tuna-mac-cheese-muffins/>



Wellbeing Activity

Self-Care

Create an emergency self-care plan by making a list of easy and practical self-care strategies you can enlist when facing a stressful situation. Some examples might include meditation, journaling, and forms of physical activity.

6 REASONS TO CONNECT WITH A THERAPIST

YOUR WELLBEING ACTIVITY

SELF-CARE

Create an emergency self-care plan by making a list of easy and practical self-care strategies you can enlist when facing a stressful situation.

REASONS TO CONSIDER CONNECTING WITH A THERAPIST:

INTENSE EMOTIONS

Do you struggle with managing intense emotions?

SLEEPLESSNESS

Are you struggling to get a good night's sleep?

GRIEF

Have you experienced a recent loss?

APPETITE CHANGES

Have you noticed a change in your appetite?

STRAINED RELATIONSHIPS

Are you having difficulty with a friendship or partnership?

BURN-OUT

Are you feeling overwhelmed by stress in the workplace?

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Employer Completion Form

I, _____ successfully completed the **Self-Care** Wellbeing Activity by:

Signed,

Date
