



# Employee Enhancement Newsletter

*Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program*

November 2015

Page 1

## Positive Thinking: Stop Negative Self-Talk to Reduce Stress

Is your glass half-empty or half-full? How you answer this age-old question about positive thinking may reflect your outlook on life, your attitude toward yourself, and whether you're optimistic or pessimistic — and it may even affect your health.

Indeed, some studies show that personality traits like optimism and pessimism can affect many areas of your health and well-being. The positive thinking that typically comes with optimism is a key part of effective stress management. And effective stress management is associated with many health benefits. If you tend to be pessimistic, don't despair — you can learn positive thinking skills.

### Understanding positive thinking and self-talk

Positive thinking doesn't mean that you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations. Positive thinking just means that you approach unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way. You think the best is going to happen, not the worst.

Positive thinking often starts with self-talk. Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information.

If the thoughts that run through your head are mostly negative, your outlook on life is more likely pessimistic. If your thoughts are mostly positive, you're likely an optimist — someone who practices positive thinking.

### The health benefits of positive thinking

Researchers continue to explore the effects of positive thinking and optimism on health.

Health benefits that positive thinking may provide include:

- Increased life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Lower levels of distress
- Greater resistance to the common cold
- Better psychological and physical well-being
- Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
- Better coping skills during hardships and times of stress

### Identifying negative thinking

Not sure if your self-talk is positive or negative? Here are some common forms of negative self-talk:

*Online Seminar  
Reminder*

*Stick with It*

**When:**

November 17, 2015

**Where:**

[www.deeroakseap.com](http://www.deeroakseap.com)

**Webinar Times (CST):**

11:00 AM- 12:00 PM

AND

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM



DEER OAKS EAP SERVICES



## Positive Thinking: Stop Negative Self-Talk to Reduce Stress continued...

- *Filtering.* You magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all of the positive ones. For example, you had a great day at work. You completed your tasks ahead of time and were complimented for doing a speedy and thorough job. That evening, you focus only on your plan to do even more tasks and forget about the compliments you received.
- *Personalizing.* When something bad occurs, you automatically blame yourself. For example, you hear that an evening out with friends is canceled, and you assume that the change in plans is because no one wanted to be around you.
- *Catastrophizing.* You automatically anticipate the worst. The drive-through coffee shop gets your order wrong and you automatically think that the rest of your day will be a disaster.
- *Polarizing.* You see things only as either good or bad. There is no middle ground. You feel that you have to be perfect or you're a total failure.

### Focusing on positive thinking

You can learn to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. The process is simple, but it does take time and practice — you're creating a new habit, after all. Here are some ways to think and behave in a more positive and optimistic way:

- *Identify areas to change.* If you want to become more optimistic and engage in more positive thinking, first identify areas of your life that you typically think negatively about, whether it's work, your daily commute or a relationship. You can start small by focusing on one area to approach in a more positive way.
- *Check yourself.* Periodically during the day, stop and evaluate what you're thinking. If you find that your thoughts are mainly negative, try to find a way to put a positive spin on them.
- *Be open to humor.* Give yourself permission to smile or laugh, especially during difficult times. Seek humor in everyday happenings. When you can laugh at life, you feel less stressed.
- *Follow a healthy lifestyle.* Exercise at least three times a week to positively affect mood and reduce stress. Follow a healthy diet to fuel your mind and body. And learn techniques to manage stress.
- *Surround yourself with positive people.* Make sure those in your life are positive, supportive people you can depend on to give helpful advice and feedback. Negative people may increase your stress level and make you doubt your ability to manage stress in healthy ways.
- *Practice positive self-talk.* Start by following one simple rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else. Be gentle and encouraging with yourself. If a negative thought enters your mind, evaluate it rationally and respond with affirmations of what is good about you.

### Practicing positive thinking every day

If you tend to have a negative outlook, don't expect to become an optimist overnight. But with practice, eventually your self-talk will contain less self-criticism and more self-acceptance. You may also become less critical of the world around you. When your state of mind is generally optimistic, you're better able to handle everyday stress in a more constructive way. That ability may contribute to the widely observed health benefits of positive thinking.

Source: [https://www.advantageengagement.com/p\\_content\\_detail.php?id\\_element=001&search\\_term=positive%20changes&id\\_cr=58388](https://www.advantageengagement.com/p_content_detail.php?id_element=001&search_term=positive%20changes&id_cr=58388)

## Sleep-wake cycle needs to be consistent



Sleeping late now and then may feel like a luxury. But an inconsistent sleep schedule can throw off your body's sleep and waking pattern, or circadian rhythm, according to sleep specialists writing in the Harvard Health Letter. Inconsistent cycles can lead to sleepless nights.

To get sleep and waking patterns back on track, talk to a sleep expert. The first step is a physical exam to rule out underlying health conditions that may cause insomnia. If no underlying cause is found, try a sleep journal. Each morning, write down the wake time, the bedtime from the night before, how long it took to fall asleep, and whether there was any waking in the night—and if so, how many times. After two weeks, a pattern will emerge. It can help pinpoint any changes that need to be made.

The wake time is most important to getting on a schedule again because it anchors the circadian sleep rhythm. Use an alarm clock to stick to the schedule. Make bedtime about seven or eight hours before the alarm will sound.

It also helps to make a wind-down period part of the bedtime routine. That means stopping the use of all electronics an hour and a half before bed, keeping the lights low, and doing relaxing yet nonstimulating activities such as reading.

Filling the day with more structure will also reinforce the circadian rhythm. Keep a regular schedule for work, meals, exercise, and activities such as grocery shopping, socializing, or housework.

**Health-e headlines™**

## *Don't Turn that Ignition*

If you are feeling stressed and anxious before you even start your trip, then take time to calm down now, not after you are on the highway. Take that deep breath you always heard would work. You might even try counting from 1 to 10, inhaling on 1, exhaling on 2, up to 10 and back to 1 again.

**Health-e headlines™**

## *Avoid...*

Controversial or argumentative emailing. When you engage in an emotional discussion via email, the emails will fly. Emotional issues should never be handled by email; a phone call or person-to-person handling of the situation is best, both for the sake of your inbox and the health of the office dynamic, according to The Egan Group.

**Health-e headlines™**

## *An EAP Reminder*

*Life Can Be Hectic. The EAP Can Help You Find Your Balance.*

Deer Oaks, your EAP, is always available to you and your household members.

If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.

Counselors are available 24/7 to provide you with immediate care.





## Clinician's Corner..

*Monthly Advice from the Deer Oaks Clinical Team*

### Unhealthy Habits



Quitting is hard. You probably know this already, but it bears repeating, especially because the vast majority of us has probably attempted to quit a bad habit (or start a new healthy habit), been unsuccessful, and have given up immediately and/or blamed ourselves for failing. If quitting was easy, there would not be millions of Americans who struggle with smoking, unhealthy eating, or poor exercise habits. So that in itself is the first key: be kind to yourself. Even considering breaking a habit is a step in the right direction, and you should be proud simply for that. Then it's all about setting small reasonable goals.

The first goal in your path to decreasing unhealthy behaviors is to find and define your motivation. Having vague reasons for quitting, or doing it because someone else is encouraging you will not be enough. Without motivation, it can be easy to allow yourself to slip back into less healthy ways, especially when the going gets tough. So, before you even consider changing your behaviors decide why you will be making this change – for your health, for your family, or to be able to achieve another goal (for example, by hitting a target weight, you will treat yourself to a vacation backpacking through Europe). You may even go as far as creating a motivation board, or posting pictures or key motivating words around your home and workspace to keep your motivation high.

Another key element of breaking an unhealthy habit is to break your journey down into small, manageable and realistic steps. All-or-nothing goal-setting can lead to failures, disappointment, self-blame, and then decreased motivation to start again. Break a big goal up into smaller goals, reward yourself when you achieve even the smallest of goals, and use any missed goals as an opportunity to learn, not berate.

Finally, try to enlist support to meet your goals. Tell family and friends what you are intending to do and see if there are any ways in which others are willing to help. Or, find professional or community resources to help develop a personalized plan and ensure coaching along the way. Visit Deer Oaks online to discover more ways we can help you achieve any goal or call us toll free, 24/7, or check out our online resources to learn more.

By:

Kira Rogers, Psy.D, HSP-P  
Regional Clinical Manager  
Deer Oaks EAP Services, LLC



# How to: Avoid Credit Card Dependence



As the cost of living rises and the economy continues to weaken, many find themselves hard-pressed to make ends meet each month.

In some dire cases, financially burdened consumers are relying on credit cards to purchase necessities such as food and gas, driving up card balances and compounding the issue of higher food and energy prices – with interest.

Whether you're using credit for splurges, or for necessities, it can be an expensive habit. Consider the following tips to help wean you from dependence on credit cards:

- 1) *Shelve your credit cards.* Consider carrying cash or your debit card for daily use. Leave credit cards at home and only carry one when you plan to use it for a larger purchase or something that you have already reserved for your credit card.
- 2) *Tighten up your budget.* Create a real budget and include even the smallest expenses. Maybe filling up at the station or picking up a few things at the grocery store were once expenses that would previously go unnoticed in your checkbook. However, with much higher prices in gas and food today, even smaller ticket items add up.
- 3) *Cut back on non-essentials.* The easiest way to free up extra cash is to know the difference between needs and wants, and make a conscious effort to do without those things that you don't need such as eating out, vacationing, and shopping for discretionary items such as furniture and electronics.
- 4) *Create a plan to pay down debt.* Sometimes it's easier to break a habit when you have a goal you are trying to accomplish. Make a commitment to pay down a portion of your debt within a certain timeframe, and get your family involved in working towards a shared goal.

Finally, if your financial obligations become overwhelming and you find yourself losing control, seek help. Your human resource or employee services department may have options available. Community service and counseling agencies are also available and can offer a number of services to assist you with gaining control over your finances.

## About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit [www.MoneyManagement.org](http://www.MoneyManagement.org).