

How Does an Optimistic Mindset Change My Tomorrow?

Word count: 798

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My first thought when I started playing volleyball was, “You’ll be the worst one on the team!” And my first thought when I tried to get into advanced language arts was, “You might not be good enough.” And, yes, my first thought when I heard about this competition was, “You’ll never actually win, so why even try?”

In my thirteen years, I’ve come very close to talking myself out of trying new things and exploring new opportunities. If I had listened to those negative thoughts, I would’ve missed out on so many things that I love and pride myself in today. Not only do my own personal experiences back this up, but there have also been many scientific studies that support this.

Research says that having an optimistic mindset has numerous health benefits. A study by Johns Hopkins expert Lisa R. Yanek, M.P.H. found that “people with a family history of heart disease who also had a positive outlook were one-third less likely to have a heart attack or other cardiovascular event within five to 25 years than those with a more negative outlook.” This means optimism can sometimes help override genetics! I’ve always felt a change in how good I feel when I try to have a positive mindset. Not only does my mental health improve, but my healthy habits do, too. I find when I have a more positive outlook on life, I want to work out more and eat healthier.

Finding ways to improve your mindset also can improve your success rate and help at work. An article in the *Harvard Business Review* cites a study that found that those “in the top quartile for optimism as compared to their peers are 40% more likely to get a promotion over the next year, six times more likely to be highly engaged at work, and five times less likely to burn out than pessimists.” I’ve also found that when I think

on the bright side, I'm more motivated. When I'm more motivated, I'm able to produce better quality work and spend more time on things, which helps a lot.

People with a more optimistic mindset can also more quickly move past the effects of traumatic or stressful events. According to an article in *The Atlantic*, "having a positive outlook in difficult circumstances not only is an important predictor of resilience, but is the most important predictor of it. People who are resilient tend to be more positive and optimistic compared with less resilient folks; they are better able to regulate their emotions, and they are able to maintain their optimism through the most trying circumstances." This article cites a study by Denis Charney where he spoke with 750 war veterans that were held hostage in solitary confinement and tortured for years. He examined and interviewed all of them once they were rescued and found that these people seemed far more resilient and had a much lower rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression than many other war veterans that had also returned. He came to the conclusion that the reason behind this was because of ten characteristics, with the top two being optimism and humor. While the veterans were there, they kept an optimistic mindset and cracked jokes, and are now in a much better position than their more pessimistic peers.

When my grandpa died, it was tough to move past how upset I was. Positive thoughts alone weren't going to help me totally move past the situation. The difference is, if I had just thought negative thoughts, I wouldn't have moved past it any more than if I had just thought positive. Instead of letting a negative and sad situation consume me, I instead felt sad and upset, but also tried to remember all the good memories of him and let myself be happy. It is important to allow yourself to recognize that it's okay to be sad and to have negative thoughts, but that there is also a lot to be happy about and there's

plenty of good to focus on. Balancing negative and positive thoughts makes it easier to move past difficult situations and bring more positive memories to the forefront.

So, what if next time I face a tough decision or a difficult situation, I think, "It'll be fun and you are still learning, maybe you'll be really good at it!"? A simple thing like this helped me find my favorite ever sport to play, I ended up being in advanced classes, and I ended up taking a step outside my comfort zone with this contest. So next time a challenge stares you in the face or when stressful events pop up, try changing your perspective and having an optimistic mindset. You'll continue to reap the rewards for years to come.

Sources

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