



Envision

Opt for optimism: Your positive attitude can reduce stress | Aetna Resources For LivingSM

Stress can be hard on your mind and body. When we go through a change — positive or negative — our bodies need time to heal.

Having an optimistic attitude can help you recover from stress and may keep you healthier than someone who thinks negatively. By learning to “look on the bright side,” you can help counter the harmful effects of stress and improve your overall wellbeing.

Look on the bright side

You’ve likely heard that an optimist sees a glass as half full, while a pessimist sees it as half empty. Optimists choose to feel hopeful about how they see a situation. They’re positive thinkers who practice positive self-talk. They tell themselves, “I can.” This positive thinking can help them meet their goals and get through tough times.

No one is optimistic all the time. But anyone can learn how to adopt a more positive attitude. When you practice being an optimist, you’ll be on your way to a happier, healthier body and mind.

Become an optimist

Positive thinking doesn’t always come naturally. But with some work, you can become a more optimistic person. Consider these tips:

- 1. Find a role model.** Look for someone who seems to make the best of any given situation. Learn how that person maintains his or her attitude and copy that behavior.
- 2. Spend time with people who are upbeat.** Energy travels. So being around positive people can help you feel more optimistic.
- 3. Practice positive self-talk.** Tell yourself encouraging things every day for a month. It might feel silly at first. But positive self-talk can make a big difference in how you feel.
- 4. Practice affirmations.** These are positive statements that motivate you. Use short “I am” statements such as, “I am happy with my job.” Say it out loud several times, then visualize it.

Develop a positive attitude

How you view a situation can affect how you experience it. It's easy to see a stressful situation as being all bad. But if you notice the good things in a hardship, it can help you not only get through, but grow through the tough times.

Try these skills to help develop a positive attitude:

- **Laugh.** Humor is a great stress-reliever. Take the time to find humor in your situation.
- **Reach out.** When you're feeling low, you may be tempted to keep to yourself. And while it's okay to spend some time alone, be sure that you also maintain your relationships. Spend time with those who support and encourage you. They'll help you return to a place of wellbeing.
- **Change your scenery.** It can be easy to focus on problems and forget the bigger picture. Try to gain perspective by taking a short break. Change your routine, go for a walk or try something new.
- **Live well.** Taking good care of your health will help you handle stressors more successfully. Move your body, get plenty of rest and eat a balanced, healthy diet.
- **Love a pet.** Companionship can restore your calm. Just taking a moment to sit with your pet can remind you how good life is.

- **Have a good talk with yourself.** We talk to ourselves all the time. How positive or negative are those voices in your head? Negative self-talk can leave you feeling worse. Instead of saying, "You sure blew that one," try talking to yourself positively: "You learned that new skill very well." Notice all the little things you do right. Make lists of your positive actions and post them in visible places.
- **Relax and let it go.** Successful coping depends on being able to relax and let everything go from time to time. The body needs to renew itself and recharge. You might try meditation, visualization, yoga, hot baths or listening to calming music.
- **Avoid additional stressors.** There are some things that don't reduce stress in the long run. In fact, they can add to your problems. So be sure to avoid drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and fatty foods — they can drain your energy. Don't buy things you can't afford — that will drain your finances. And try to avoid negative people and gossip — they'll drain your positive thinking.

With a little hard work, you can develop a positive, optimistic outlook.



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