

10 Tips for a Happier, Longer Life



A recent study by the Mayo Clinic reported that optimistic people

live longer lives, by almost 20%!!! Most of us enjoy being in the company of positive, optimistic people. Their sunny outlook on life is both refreshing and encouraging. It is easy to see the benefits that we gain from associating with those who are filled with optimism, but what about them?

Have you ever wondered whether or not there are any tangible, long term benefits associated with having a positive outlook? Does our attitude really affect our health as some have claimed, or is this just one of those scenarios that sound reasonable but can't be proven.

Science meets the challenge

The BBC recently reported on a long term study conducted by the prestigious Mayo Clinic aimed at finding the answers to those very questions.

Between 1962 and 1965 they interviewed more than 1,100 patients and gave each of them an optimism ranking based on their perception of life. Then they tracked those people for the next 30 years to see if they could identify any noticeable differences.



What did they find?

The Mayo Clinic researchers discovered that those with the highest optimism ranking had a 19% better chance of still being alive. Think of the implications here, 19% is huge. Other than restricted calorie intake, no other single protocol has been able to produce such significant results.

In response to these findings, one of the staff psychiatrists said: "It confirmed our commonsense belief. It tells us mind and body are linked and that attitude has an impact on the final outcome, death." This statement is further supported by a Yale University researchers statement that: "Positive self-perceptions can prolong life expectancy"

The benefits are twofold

What do these findings mean for us and do they have any practical application? First of all, there's the immediate positive effect of adopting a more optimistic attitude, namely, increased happiness. Yes, optimistic people tend to experience greater joy on a day-to-day basis than their pessimistic counterparts. Everyone wants to be happy and this is a huge step in the right direction.

Secondly, the prospect of a longer healthier life is a scientifically proven benefit of an attitude based on positivity. In contrast, a negative, pessimistic mindset has

been shown to contribute to scores of health challenges including immune disorders, cancer, and heart problems. All other factors being equal, a happier life means a healthier life.

10 Practical steps to a more optimistic attitude

Learning to maintain a positive attitude during stressful times can be challenging. It may take some time before your natural response to almost any situation is optimistic. However, when you consider both the short term and long range benefits, your efforts are bound to pay big dividends. Let's consider 10 simple steps you can start using immediately to move you in a positive direction.

- 1) **Practice Gratitude.** A grateful mindset exerts a powerful influence on your outlook. Not only does it make you feel good in the moment, it also shifts your focus in a positive direction. Turn your attention toward your blessings and keep it there. As you focus more on what you are grateful for in your life (even the really small blessings), you will worry less about anything that may be lacking. As a result, you will experience a more pervasive sense of happiness.
- 2) **Embrace Happiness.** Being happy is not about circumstances or any other outside force. Happiness is a decision we make. Why not make up your mind to embrace happiness, starting now? Go ahead and make a decision. Let your personal identity get all wrapped up in the concept of happiness. Fold it around yourself like a big comfortable blanket.

- 3) **Replace Problems with Challenges.** Subconsciously, the word problem says, "Life is not as it should be." This causes our energy to be funnelled toward repairing something that's gone wrong. On the other hand, the word challenge sends no such message. Instead of trying to repair a malfunction, our resources are recruited to search for a new opportunity. Seeing an experience as a challenge will focus our attention on a positive outcome.
- 4) **Enjoy the Journey.** A journey is an adventure of discovery. When we are on a journey we don't fear change, we welcome it. We look forward to new and unfamiliar experiences. On a journey we are full of optimism because we are filled with the expectation of a wonderful adventure. This is the perfect attitude to carry with you every day.
- 5) **Take Time to Smell the Roses.** When you constantly feel rushed and scattered, it can be difficult to maintain an optimistic outlook. Buying out regular opportunities to focus on simple pleasures can help restore a sense of balance to your life. By pausing briefly to really taste your food or enjoy a beautiful piece of music, you remind yourself of the joy of simplicity.
- 6) **Start the Day On a Positive Note.** Find a few minutes each morning to clear your mind and then think positive thoughts about the upcoming day. Focus on the people and events that bring you joy or a sense of satisfaction. What's your favorite part of the day going to be? Take some time to look forward to everything that you will enjoy. Now carry that feeling with you all day long, even during the less enjoyable activities. Let your optimism flow into your entire day.

- 7) **Treasure Hunt.** Make it a habit to actively search for the positive side of everything. Turn it into a private game. With practice, you will be surprised how easy it becomes to see the not so obvious benefits and pleasures all around you. Being alert to the reasons for optimism also helps move our attention away from the negative side of life.
- 8) **Act Happy.** You can use words and body language to program your nervous system. When you make a conscious effort to walk the walk and talk the talk, your feelings will soon follow. Our personal perspective takes a lot of clues from how we act. If you act like an optimistic person, your mind accepts that as your reality. Try it and see for yourself.
- 9) **Keep Company With Positive People.** Use the power of peer influence to feed your sense of optimism. The attitude of the people around us can be a powerful force for good or bad. Seek out the company of those with a sunny disposition and let yourself be influenced by their optimism. Use the group dynamic to your benefit.
- 10) **Do A Nightly Gratitude Review.** This is a great way to end your day. Before you go to bed think of at least ten things that you are truly grateful for. Let yourself feel the joy that those things bring to your life. Fall asleep reflecting on your blessings.

Bonus - Here's one more powerful tip for a happier, healthier life. If you can, free yourself from negative influences - it will change your life. Without that



pervasive daily dose of despair, you will find it so much easier to focus on positive things in life.

Practice These Things Daily for 30 Days

Print out this list and read it daily, it will help you stay on track. If you catch yourself sliding into a pessimistic head space, stop and review your list. All you need to do is stay the course for 30 days and these things will become part of your nature. You will become one of those positive, optimistic people that share their sunny disposition with everyone around them.