

Grade 7 Literacy

Week of November 23 – November 27

Lesson 4: Positive Thought Strategies

There are many ways a person can change negative thoughts and self-criticism to more realistic and positive thoughts. Focusing on all of them at once may be overwhelming, but focusing on a few at a time and reminding yourself of these positive approaches regularly can change your self-esteem.

Read the positive thought strategies below and choose several that would help you most.



- **Avoid exaggerations.**
Correct your internal voice when it exaggerates, especially when it exaggerates the negative. Try to avoid thinking in extreme terms ("I always make that mistake" or "I'll never get that promotion.")
- **Nip negative thoughts in the bud.**
Sometimes putting a stop on negative thinking is as easy as that. The next time you start giving yourself an internal browbeating, tell yourself to "stop it!" If you saw a person yelling insults at another person, you would probably tell them to stop. Why do you accept that behavior from yourself?
- **Accentuate the positive.**
Instead of focusing on what you think are your negative qualities, accentuate your strengths and assets. Maybe you didn't ace the test you were studying for, but maybe your hard work and perseverance led to a better grade than you would have had. Maybe you felt nervous and self-conscious when giving a presentation at work, but maybe your boss and coworkers respected you for getting up and trying.
- **Accept flaws and being human.**
Maybe you did get nervous and blow that presentation at work - so what? Talk to your boss about what went wrong, try to address the error in the future, and move on. All people have flaws and make mistakes. Your boss, coworkers, friends, family, postman, congressman, and favorite movie star have all made mistakes. They've forgiven themselves; so can you.
- **Accept imperfections.**
Perfection is a high goal to aim for -- you don't need to start there or even end there. Make doing your best your ideal -- what more can you realistically do? Focus on what you've gained from the process and how you can use it in the future. Avoid focusing on what wasn't done or 'should have' been done differently. Allow yourself to make mistakes and then forgive yourself. Try laughing instead of criticizing.

- **Don't bully yourself!**

"Should have, could have, would have ..." Try not to constantly second guess yourself, criticize yourself for what you "should" have done better, or expect too much from yourself. Don't put standards on yourself that you wouldn't expect from others. It's great to want to do well, but expecting yourself to be perfect (which is impossible) and then punishing yourself when you fail is a vicious cycle. Using expressions like "I should have" is just a way of punishing yourself after the fact.
- **Replace criticism with encouragement.**

Instead of nagging or focusing on the negative (in yourself and others), replace your criticism with encouragement. Give constructive criticism instead of being critical ("maybe if I tried to do ____ next time, it would be even better" instead of "I didn't do that right.") Compliment yourself and those around you on what you have achieved ("well, we may not have done it all, but we did a pretty great job with what we did".)
- **Don't feel guilty about things beyond your control.**

You are not to blame every time something goes wrong or someone has a problem. Apologizing for things and accepting blame can be a positive quality, if you are in the wrong and if you learn and move on. But you shouldn't feel responsible for all problems or assume you are to blame whenever someone is upset.
- **Don't feel responsible for everything.**

Just as everything is not your fault, not everything is your responsibility. It's okay to be helpful, but don't feel the need to be all things (and do all things) for all people. This is taking too much of a burden on yourself AND limiting those around you. Let others be responsible for themselves and their actions -- you shouldn't feel responsible for their happiness.
- **Do feel responsible for your feelings.**

Just as you can't "make" other people happy, don't expect others to "make" you feel happy or good about yourself. In the same way, they shouldn't make you feel guilty or bad about yourself. You create your own feelings and make your own decisions. People and events may have an affect on your emotions, but they can't dictate them.
- **Treat yourself kindly.**

People often feel more comfortable treating themselves in ways they wouldn't consider treating others. Do you criticize yourself with terms like "stupid" "ugly" or "loser"? Would you use those terms to describe a friend? Remind yourself that you deserve to be treated as well as you treat others. Do something nice for yourself sometimes -- either in thought (give yourself a compliment) or action (treat yourself to a nice dinner or new book.)
- **Give yourself a break.**

You don't need to be all things to all people or please everyone. Give yourself permission to decide you're doing the best you can. Remind yourself when you're doing things well -- don't wait to hear it from someone else.
- **Choose the brighter side of things.**

You can choose how to interpret comments and events, so try for the more positive

interpretations. If someone says, "You look good today," don't ask yourself "What was wrong with the way I looked yesterday?" Accept compliments graciously (don't ask yourself why you haven't been complemented on something else or why you haven't complemented you before.) Look at temporary setbacks as opportunities for growth.

- **Forgive and forget.**

Try not to hang on to painful memories and bad feelings - this is a surefire way to encourage negative thoughts and bad moods. Your past can control you if you don't control it. If you can, forgive past wrongs and move on. (Don't forget that forgiving yourself is an important part of this process, too!) If you have a hard time forgiving or forgetting, consider talking through your emotions with a good friend or counselor, but try not to dwell. It's important to work through things, but you can't let the past determine your future.

- **Focus on what you CAN do, not what you can't.**

Avoid "can't" thinking or other negative language. If you say something often enough, you may start to believe it, so keep your statements positive, not negative. Don't be afraid to seek help in accomplishing things, but remind yourself that you don't need approval from others to recognize your accomplishments. Focus on what you're able to do. Remind yourself of all your capabilities and positive qualities.

Create your positive thought strategies list. Choose 3-6 strategies that will work best for you:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____
