Benefits of Positive Thinking

It's time to think positive. Picture a rose bush in full bloom. What did you notice first: the roses or the thorns? A rose bush has plenty of both. But if you focused on the roses and overlooked the thorns, you were thinking positive. There is a lesson here.

Thinking positive is a choice. It's a decision to appreciate the roses in your life (loved ones, favorite activities, and relaxing moments) while letting go of the thorns (stresses, disappointments, and losses). This doesn't mean pretending to be happy when you're not. If you're upset, it's important to deal with it and talk about your feelings. Thinking positive means choosing to fill your mind with positive thoughts.

The Benefits of Staying Positive

• "A positive outlook is necessary to prevent depression, to get along with others, and to feel better about yourself and your life," says psychologist Norman Abeles, Ph.D., past president of the American Psychological Association and an expert on mental health in seniors.

• If you have health problems, it's important not to get stuck down in the dumps. "A negative attitude makes you feel worse physically. It increases your stress, which worsens your pain and drains your energy," says Dr. Abeles. On the other hand, "a positive attitude helps you relax and feel more competent" when dealing with everyday challenges.

• Dolores Gallagher Thompson, Ph.D., director of the Older Adults and Family Center at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Palo Alto, Calif., says older adults dealing with health problems become sad that they can't do everything they used to. At that point, some decide they can't ever be happy again. "I call thinking that starts spiraling downward 'predepression,'" she says. "When you start to feel this way, it's time to change your thinking. If you don't, eventually you will become depressed."

Challenge Your Fear About Getting Older

• "From the time we are young, many of us dread growing older. This is partly because negative images of seniors—as grumpy, disabled, and forgetful—are everywhere, from greeting cards to TV commercials," says Becca Levy, Ph.D., a Yale University psychologist and researcher of stereotypes related to aging. If you accept these negative images as true—and apply them to yourself—you may start believing you're less capable than you really are.

• The bottom line: Question your deeply held beliefs about aging and screen out the negative. You are what you believe you are. Give yourself credit for the wisdom and maturity you've gained through the years.

How to Change Your Mind

If you tend to count your worries instead of your blessings, it's time for a fresh approach. Here's how to start thinking more positively.

- **Reason with facts, not feelings.** Changes in your life can make you feel uncertain and anxious. You may then fear the worst. "Step back and get the facts," says Dr. Gallagher Thompson. "Talk to an expert, such as your doctor, and find out what you can expect. Then ask yourself, if this was happening to somebody else, what advice would I give them?"

- **Stay connected.** Keep in touch with friends and loved ones and be open to developing new friendships. Volunteering your time and keeping active in clubs or faith-based groups will help you focus on others more than yourself. "Spend time with positive people who are living active, fulfilled lives," says Dr. Abeles.

- **Plan for your happiness.** Schedule time for pleasant activities as often as possible. Having something to look forward to will keep your spirits up.

- **Become a problem-solver.** Don't just wish problems would go away. Take steps to solve them as quickly as possible, asking for support and help from others.

- **Find the silver lining.** Give yourself time to adjust to change or loss. Change can bring new opportunities: Be open to them. "Your life won't be the same, but it likely can be better than what you imagine," says Dr. Gallagher Thompson.

Build a More Positive Mindset with Uprise Health Skill Building Modules

Learn, develop, and practice new skills to improve your mental fitness. The following is a list of the Advanced Mindset on-demand courses to help you radically improve your life and work:

- **Stress:** Retrain thoughts about stress

- **Guilt:** How to stop feeling guilty and over-responsible

- **Metacognition:** Learn about the 'rules for thinking' that drive unhelpful patterns

- **Beliefs:** Find and examine your core beliefs