

Positive Effect Leadership Structured Coaching Program Lesson 2, Assignment 2: The Power of Positivity and Caring

Positivity is useful at work, but also can improve your personal life. An increase in the experience of positive emotions results in an increase in creativity, resilience, and broad-mindedness. At work, positivity increases productivity, efficiency, and morale. Cultivating a positive outlook is worth the work. Below are some ideas to help you cultivate positivity. Resources are listed if applicable.

Your Happy Place

Clearly visualize what or who can summon feelings of warmth and love for you. It can be a child, a pet, a beach, or an image of God. Your happy place is completely personal and you don't have to share it with anyone. First and most important – find your happy place. As leaders, we want to be able to call up that feeling of love, warmth, and expansiveness on demand. A very clear mental image of what creates those feelings for you is the first step.

The Five Steps of Freeze-Frame

1. *Recognize* that you are feeling stress and take a timeout so that you can put your thoughts and feelings on hold.
2. *Shift* your focus to the area of your heart. Breathe as if your breath is flowing in through the center of your chest and out through your stomach area.
3. *Activate* a positive feeling. Find your happy place!
4. *Ask* yourself what would be a better way to handle this situation or what action would reduce your stress.
5. *Notice* any change in the way you think and feel about the situation.

Resources: www.heartmath.com

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Moments of Renewal

We tend to think of work as stressful and find our peaceful moments after work. However, in order to avoid burnout, we need to create a moment of rejuvenation in one of the following categories each day:

- **Mindfulness**—being fully present in a moment. We can practice mindfulness for a few minutes just by sitting quietly and focusing on our breath.
- **Compassion**—gratifying feeling of helping others. One way to create compassion is to mentor others.
- **Hope**—positive feelings about the future. We can create hope by talking about our vision of the future or with some strategic planning.
- **Fun**—finding a way to add a bit of levity to the day. Fun can come in many forms. One word of warning: fun should never be at anyone else's expense.

Resources: *Resonant Leadership: Renewing Yourself and Connecting with Others Through Mindfulness, Hope, and Compassion* by Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee

Positivity Portfolio

A Positivity Portfolio is a physical representation of your happy place. Collect pictures of family, pets, or nature that evoke a feeling of love and expansiveness. Write down motivational quotes or verses that have meaning for you. When you are stressed or having a hard time summoning feelings of peace and love for others, pull out your Positivity Portfolio. (You could also create a Positivity Portfolio board on Pinterest!)

Resources: *Love 2.0: Finding Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection* and *Positivity: Top-Notch Research Reveals the Upward Spiral That Will Change Your Life* by Barbara Fredrickson

Gratitude Journal

A good way to end the day is to reflect on things that you are grateful for. It helps to remind us of the positive events of the day. You can increase your positive outlook by also writing down three positive interactions that you had during the day.

Resources: Search “gratitude journal” online and you will get tips and physical journals.

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Affirmations

Affirmations are positive statements that have meaning for you. You can put them up on the bathroom mirror or at your desk. You can memorize ones that you want to be able to recall on command.

Resources: If you are looking for some ideas, check out: <http://www.louisehay.com/affirmations/>

#100HappyDays

Post one picture on social media a day of something that makes you happy. It's a great way to get in the habit of looking for the positive in your day.

Resources: <https://100happydays.com/>

Exercise

Studies show a link between positivity and regular exercise. Exercise can even help with depression. It doesn't have to be strenuous. A walk will do!

Resources: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/27/mental-health-benefits-exercise_n_2956099.html

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC474733/>

<http://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/exercise-and-depression-report-excerpt>

Meditation

Once again, lots of studies out there show the benefits of meditation. Search online if you need some convincing. Meditation is a small investment of time with big payoffs.

Resources: Headspace (app), Take a Break (app), <http://positivityresonance.com/meditations.html>, search "lovingkindness meditation" online or in an App Store.

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Cognitive Restructuring

All of the things that we've talked about in this assignment are ways to change your thinking which is called Cognitive Restructuring. We can have habits in our thinking that don't serve us or help us to stay positive. Like all habits, it takes about a month of concerted effort to change the way we think. It's easier to replace a thought than to not think it. If you have a tendency to feel like a victim, stop as soon as you notice the thought appearing. Intentionally change to something like, "I am powerful and can make choices to change any situation." That's just an example. Create one that resonates with you. It isn't easy to change any habit, but the key is to keep at it for at least a month. After a month, you will have replaced the automatic negative thought with a positive thought of your own intentional choosing. Way to wave around the Magic Wand of Destiny!