

Maintaining a Positive, Optimistic Attitude

What do we mean by positivity in a person?

You can spot a positive, optimistic person by their responses to everyday situations. They typically show up like this:

- Habitually look at the bright side
- Regularly experience emotions such as joy, hope, gratitude, serenity, exploration, and discovery
- Gratefully accept the world as it is

Essentially, positivity is a matter of choosing, even in the most challenging situations, to create light instead of darkness.

Optimism, a product of positivity, is a mental attitude that reflects a belief or hope that the outcome of some specific endeavor, or outcomes in general, will be positive, favorable, and desirable.

Positivity and optimism are powerful attitudes. While they originate in the individual, they can lift everyone that person touches. And they are human entitlements. Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist, Auschwitz survivor, explains why:

Between a stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. The last of human freedoms is to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances.¹

Why is positivity important in the workplace?

Thousands of moments every day

According to Nobel Prize-winning scientist Daniel Kahneman, we experience approximately 20,000 individual moments in a waking day. Each "moment" lasts a few seconds. If you consider any strong memory -- positive or negative -- you'll notice that the imagery in your mind is actually defined by your recollection of a precise point in time. And rarely does a neutral encounter stay in your mind -- the memorable moments are almost always positive or negative. In some cases, a single encounter can change your life forever.²

Ultimately, you decide whether a moment is positive or negative. Here are just some of the reasons to choose light over darkness:

Benefits of Positivity

¹ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 1992 Edition

² The Big Impact of Small Interactions, by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton, Excerpted from [How Full Is Your Bucket?](https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/12916/big-impact-small-interactions.aspx) Gallup Business Journal, October 14, 2004
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From “The Benefits of Positivity and Cost of Negativity” by Jon Gordon:³

- Positive people live longer.
- Positive work environments outperform negative work environments (Goleman, 2011).
- Positive leaders are able to make better decisions under pressure (Institute of HeartMath, 2012).
- Marriages are much more likely to succeed when the couple experiences a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative interactions, whereas when the ratio approaches 1-to-1, marriages are more likely to end in divorce (Gottman, 1999).
- Positive people who regularly express positive emotions are more resilient when facing stress, challenges, and adversity.
- Positive people are able to maintain a broader perspective and see the big picture, which helps them identify solutions, whereas negative people maintain a narrower perspective and tend to focus on problems (Fredrickson, 2009).
- Positive people have more friends, which is a key factor of happiness and longevity (Putnam, 2000).

The Cost of Negativity

- Ninety percent of doctor visits are stress related, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- A study found that negative employees can scare off every customer they speak with - for good (Rath, 2004).
- At work, too many negative interactions compared to positive interactions can decrease the productivity of a team, according to Barbara Fredrickson’s research at the University of Michigan.
- One negative person can create a miserable office environment for everyone else.
- Negative emotions increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.
- Negativity is associated with greater stress, less energy, and more pain.
- Negative people have fewer friends.

³ The Benefits of Positivity and Cost of Negativity, Jon Gordon, Jon Gordon’s Weekly Newsletter, (June 2017) <http://www.jongordon.com/positivetip/benefits-of-positivity.html>