

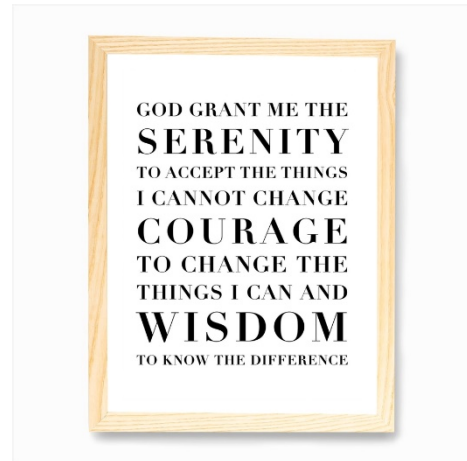
7 WAYS TO STAY POSITIVE DURING THE TOUGHEST TIMES

1. Learn not to hold onto negative thoughts for too long.

Don't feel like you must always be happy and cheerful. It's OK to feel negative or down if you feel hurt, upset or worried about what has happened or is happening to you, your family and/or your friends.

What's important is that you don't stay stuck in the negative. Practice recognising the negative feeling and giving it a name (e.g. 'Anger' – as in "*I am feeling angry!*" – or 'worried' or 'let down').

Ask yourself, "*Can I do anything to change this situation?*" If you can, write down what's possible and plan your next steps. If you can't change what is going on or what has occurred, try to accept what's happening in your life right now. See if you can put it behind you, let it all go and have faith that good things will come your way some time soon.



If it's not possible to put it behind you right now, find someone to talk to and share what's happening. You might also be able to play a little mind trick and shrink the problem down to something smaller. Pretend to put the problem into a box and put it outside for a while until you feel more able to deal with it. When you take it out of the box next time, you will be surprised at how much it has shrunk.

2. Ask yourself if this will matter in the next few weeks or months



Putting things into perspective is helpful to stay positive. While missing out on getting on the team, not doing well in an exam or losing your part time job seems like a 10 out of 10 disaster at the time, it's likely not to feel this bad in a few weeks. Time heals and life goes on. Also, often when one door closes another will open. You become aware of opportunities or people you hadn't noticed before and soon you are on a new pathway.

3. Doing good does you good

Research shows that giving to others is one of the quickest routes toward happiness. Happiness and being positive are different but very close cousins. Helping others also reduces your stress and improves your physical health and you will even live longer. Do something for a good cause, volunteer or have a go at random acts of kindness like offering an older person a seat on the bus. Taking time to be kind to others can make you feel good. Have a go at this.



4. Be a best friend to yourself



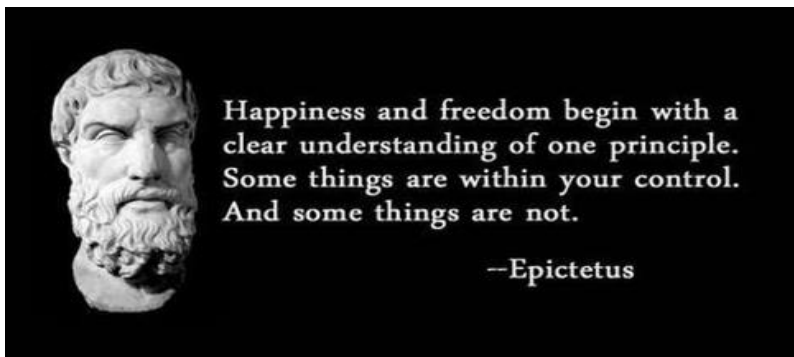
Imagine it is your friend who is having the problem. Think about what advice you would give to him or her to sort the problem. Would you blame them for creating the problem or would you be kinder and look at how to problem solve them out of it?

If they were beating themselves up for being careless or stupid or something else, you would be kind and supportive. Try this trick for yourself and see if it helps you stay positive.

5. Make changes to things that are within your control

Spending time stressing about things that you can't change is a bit of a waste of time. There is a brutal truth that we all need to accept; namely, that we have no control over many things in our lives. Accepting this really helps us to stress less. Here are some ideas to help us stop worrying:

- a) **Work out what you can control:** For example, we can't stop a virus from spreading around the world. What we can control is reducing our chances of getting sick by staying home and washing our hands regularly. What we can control is our own attitude and effort in life.
- b) **Role modelling or encouraging others.** You can have some influence over people, but you can't control them. You can organise an online chat with all your friends, but you can't make them join in if they don't want to. You can organise a party, but you can't make people have fun.
- c) **Get clear as to whether you are problem solving or brooding or moping.** The longer you brood the bigger the problem will become. Every time you stress about the problem, it eats up more of your time, energy and positivity. Getting out of your head is important. Put on some music, ring a friend, go for a run, play some basketball and clear your head. When you come back to it later, it will be easier to solve.
- d) **Develop some healthy messaging** to yourself; for example, *"I can sort this"* or *"I keep it positive"*.



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6. Practice Gratitude

Every morning, for the next thirty days, write down three things that you are grateful for. Try and be as specific as you can be. For example, instead of just putting 'my friend' or 'my cousin', write what it is about them that makes you feel so grateful. An example could be that they are always supportive and, on down days, they cheer you up.

We hope these ideas have been helpful for you.

References

- 7 ways to stay positive even during the toughest times: Julia Malacoff, Healthy Living, Feb 2018
- How to stop worrying about things you can't change, Amy Morin, Psychology today May 2017