

Does Positive Behaviour Contribute to Individual Success?

Dr. Richard Wiseman conducted a large number of studies comparing the success rates of people who tend to think more positively with those who think more negatively. Over the course of a number of years, Wiseman identified four principles that distinguish the behaviour of more positive people from people who are less positive. The following pages describe his four principles.

Principle One: Positive People Tend to Maximize Chance Opportunities

- *Positive People Develop More Relationships*

Positive people tend to spend a greater amount of time around others both at work and in the community. As a result, they have a greater chance of meeting individuals they can form lasting personal and professional relationships with. The more outgoing and extroverted an individual becomes, the greater likelihood they will have chance encounters with individuals. These sometimes-casual encounters result in a greater number of opportunities to develop a larger number of personal relationships.

Positive individuals tend to make eye contact and smile more around others than negative people. They also tend to initiate conversation with strangers more often. They then attempt to stay in contact with others they have met. This helps them to solidify relationships.

- *Positive People Tend to be More Relaxed and Inquisitive*

Positive people are less anxious, relax more, and have a greater amount of fun than negative people. They tend to enjoy their life a greater amount with people they meet and work with. Their relaxed attitude enables them to take time to listen, read, and observe the world around them. They tend to read a larger number of reports, articles, books, blogs, and websites with the intent to not only see what is being communicated but to look for other messages, meanings, relationships, insights, and opportunities within what they read. They learn about new solutions in one area and ask how they may be applied to solve challenges in another. They question what is being presented by asking why and how it could be changed or altered and what that would mean if applied in a different manner.

- *Positive People are More Open to New Experiences*

Wiseman found that positive people are actually more open to new experiences. While they may have favourite routes home, favourite foods, music, clubs, sports, friends, games, and social activities, they also tend to be more open to trying new foods, music, sports, etc. This willingness to try something different exposes them to new experiences, new approaches, and from this, they develop different views of life and work. These experiences expand their mind by introducing them to new ways of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling that they may never have experienced. Their expanded senses provide new insights, expanded awareness, and greater opportunities to develop new solutions to existing challenges.

Principle Two: Positive People Tend to Listen to Their Hunches, Gut Feelings, and Intuitions

Wiseman's research reveals that positive people are more optimistic and tend to be more successful than negative people, who tend to be more pessimistic. Positive people tend to trust their inner self, gut feelings, hunches, and intuition. This applies to decisions around their career, work, finances, and relationships. Positive people try to listen to their inner voice and carefully assess what it is trying to say. To do this, they may stop, find a quiet place, sit down, and reflect on what is going through their mind. This may also include writing up lists of pros and cons, threats and opportunities, advantages and disadvantages, best case and worst case scenarios, and cost/benefit analyses. They may take the time to get a night's sleep before actually making a final decision. Too often a negative or more pessimistic person will react too quickly to a situation, or simply freeze up and make no decision at all, fearing that any decision will be the wrong decision. Doing nothing may be the worst decision of all.

Principle Three: Positive People Tend to Expect Good Fortune

- *Positive People Expect Good Things to Happen in the Future*
More positive and optimistic people view their future as one in which they will experience a lot of success in all areas of their life. They expect this in both situations that are within and outside their control. The stronger their feeling, the more this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. While positive people do not take dangerous risks, they do challenge themselves to set higher goals and then work harder to achieve them. Positive people feel they are very lucky to have the life they live and remind themselves how lucky they are on a constant basis. Negative people tend to do just the opposite.
- *Positive People Work Hard to Achieve Goals*
While negative people tend to give up on something when the going gets tough, positive people buckle down and become more determined to achieve their goals. Positive people are more determined to succeed even when their chance of success becomes very slim. Positive people apply themselves and work harder to achieve their goals. Some negative people actually give up before they start. This, unfortunately, means they will never succeed. Many successful people do a cost/benefit analysis either mentally or on a sheet of paper. They list what it will cost them to achieve their desired outcome and what benefit(s) they will derive. This enables them to clearly see what actions they need to take (costs) in order to achieve their outcome (benefits).
- *Positive People Expect Others to Behave in a Positive Way*
Positive people not only see their behaviour as positive but also expect the people they interact with to be interesting, happy, fun, pleasant, friendly, helpful, positive, and productive.

It is not unusual for positive people to mentally rehearse future interaction with others. They consider what they can do to help create a positive atmosphere at the beginning of an interaction. They then consider the points to be discussed and how they will try to contribute to each in a positive and productive manner. While they expect others to behave in the same manner, they take the time to consider how some individuals may behave in a negative manner and what they can do to minimize negative behaviour and, ideally, move it from negative to positive.

Principle Four: Positive People Tend to Overcome Misfortune

Positive and optimistic people employ a number of techniques to overcome the misfortune in their life. They do this by:

- Realizing that the misfortune they just experienced could actually have been worse.
- Comparing their misfortune with other people who have experienced even greater misfortune.
- Reminding themselves that while they may be experiencing an unfortunate situation, things will get better in the long run.
- Believing that the misfortune they are experiencing may actually turn into something better in the long run.
- Not dwelling on their misfortune.
- Reminding themselves of all the other things they should feel thankful about.
- Concentrating their thoughts on the good things they are going to experience in the future.
- Taking control of a bad situation and resolving it in a calm and constructive manner.
- Seeking to determine what caused their ill fortune, learning from their negative experience, and determining what corrective actions they need to take so it does not happen again.
- Clearly and objectively identifying those factors that contributed to a bad experience.
- Avoiding a knee jerk reaction to a situation, which could possibly make it worse.
- Trying to calm themselves down, relax, and take the time to think about the situation.
- Gathering information and seeking input from others they respect.
- Sleeping on a decision before taking action.
- Recognizing how they react to the situation through the words they choose, their tone of voice, their facial expression, and the way they present their body, all impact how effectively the problem can be solved.
- Understanding the importance of choosing the right time, location, and appropriate stakeholders – these can all have an impact on resolving a situation.

Note

Adapted from *The Luck Factor*. Richard Wiseman (Arrow Books, 2004).