

Excerpt from *The New York Times* – “Turning Negative Thinkers into Positive Ones”

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well-being is a skill that can be learned

We can promote more positive responses by learning and practicing skills that develop and foster positivity.

The Center for Healthy Minds University of Wisconsin-Madison has shown that in as little as two weeks, training in compassion and kindness meditation can result in changes in brain circuitry linked to positive social behaviors such as generosity.

A recent article in *The New York Times* highlighted the Center’s work on the science of developing and sustaining positive feelings. Here are a few tips on fostering positive emotions from the article “Turning Negative Thinkers Into Positive Ones.”

DO GOOD THINGS FOR OTHER PEOPLE. In addition to making other happier, this enhances your own positive feelings. It can be something as simple as helping someone carry heavy packages or providing directions for a stranger.

APPRECIATE THE WORLD AROUND YOU. It could be a bird, a tree, a beautiful sunrise or sunset or even an article of clothing someone is wearing.

DEVELOP AND BOLSTER RELATIONSHIPS. Building strong social connections with friends or family members enhances feelings of self-worth and, long-term studies have shown, is associated with better health and a longer life.

ESTABLISH GOALS THAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED. Perhaps you want to improve your tennis or read more books. But be realistic; a goal that is impractical or too challenging can create unnecessary stress.

LEARN SOMETHING NEW. It can be a sport, a language, an instrument or a game that instills a sense of achievement, self-confidence and resilience. But here, too, be realistic about how long this may take and be sure you have the time needed.

CHOOSE TO ACCEPT YOURSELF, FLAWS AND ALL. Rather than imperfections and failures, focus on your positive attributes and achievements.

PRACTICE RELIANCE. Rather than let loss, stress, failure or trauma overwhelm you, use them as learning experiences and steppingstones to a better future. Remember the expression: When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS. Ruminating on past problems or future difficulties drains mental resources and steals attention from current pleasure. Let go of things you can’t control and focus on the here-and-now. Consider taking a course in meditation.