

News & Announcements

Preparing for Exams

Is it too early to be thinking about exams? We don't think so. Successful planning for exams begins early in the semester. Make a plan to get your best score on every test this year. Here are some quick **tips for exam prep success:**

- ▶ Set goals
- ▶ Attend all classes
- ▶ Take notes; ask questions in class
- ▶ Review your notes
- ▶ Organize & stay organized
- ▶ Do your homework every night
- ▶ Ask for help when you need it
- ▶ Set aside time to review past notes
- ▶ Look ahead to upcoming topics
- ▶ Summarize your notes orally or in writing
- ▶ Memorize & recite facts
- ▶ Make up quizzes for yourself
- ▶ Schedule in extra study time before exams
- ▶ Build confidence in your ability to do well

STR in the Community

In March, STR began working with a group of students at Shoreline Middle School to build a business through Junior Achievement. Students are creating an outlet to sell t-shirts that they have designed. The money they earn from their business will support Polar Bears International. For information on the sale date, contact us.

If you are interested in hosting a talk by Smart Tutor Referrals, please contact us.
30 - 45 minute talks for peer tutors are offered free of charge as a community service.

Secret Study Skills – The Power of Positive Thinking

by Dahlia Miller

“Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! ... With sound self-confidence you can succeed.”

Norman Vincent Peale (1898 – 1993)

Why do students need to understand and use the skill of positive thinking? It's because they set themselves up against challenge everyday. Students are constantly pushing beyond their current capabilities to learn more and take on more skills and knowledge. This requires a lot of courage and determination. Without enthusiasm, faith in abilities and optimism, most people would experience fear, discouragement or a sense of futility in the face of this kind of challenge.

A lack of positive thinking shows itself in students who 'forget' homework consistently, who neglect to hand homework in, who are not comfortable asking for help, or who 'blank out' in exams.

Learning and applying some core positive thinking strategies can have a huge impact on a student's life in the classroom and beyond. In this article we'll discuss two approaches to positive thinking.

Strategy #1: From the Outside In

Psychology people are always coming up with interesting experiments. In one of these experiments, psychologists asked people to read 100 comics. Then they asked people to rate how funny they thought the comics were. The people were split into three groups – one simply read and rated the comics, the second and third did the same but with a slight twist. The second group was asked to read the comics while holding a pen horizontally between their lips (so they couldn't smile). The third group was asked to read the comics while holding a pen horizontally between their teeth (so they were forced to smile).

Here's the interesting part: the people who were forced not to smile rated the comics as 'less funny' than the control group (the group without any pens in their mouths). The people who were forced to smile rated the comics as 'funnier' than the control group did.

What can we extrapolate from this experiment? Well, perhaps the main point related to our topic is that it's possible to influence our emotions from our actions. How we respond to a situation (ex. by smiling or not smiling) changes how we feel about it. And if our feelings are positive, we're more likely to take positive, confident action. If our feelings are negative, we're more likely to feel defeated and to not take action, interpreting the situation as too uncomfortable or, worse, out of our control.

We tend to think that we are experiencing a situation directly, but this experiment shows that we experience situations through a filter of emotion and interpretation. (Otherwise everyone would have thought the comics were equally funny.) Have you ever noticed how two people may respond to the same situation differently? What filters do you use when you meet situations? Are you seeing things in a positive, optimistic light or are you pulling an Eeyore?

Could it be so easy that all we need to do is act in a positive way in order to transform how we see, feel and interpret situations (as in 'fake it 'til you make it')? Apparently so. If you want to be happy – smile; if you want to be unhappy – don't smile. So, if you want to be a competent student, then study, bring your work home and hand it in; if you want to be incompetent, then don't study, don't bring your work home, and don't hand your homework in.

About Us

Our Mission Is:

- ▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents through:

In-home private tutoring matched specifically to each student's needs.

Stimulating workshops building skills in a practical and creative way.

- ▶ To enhance students' skills and increase learning confidence through one-on-one support that is truly individualized, recognizing each student's unique abilities.
- ▶ To improve the quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals. They are carefully screened and chosen specially to match the needs and learning styles of each student.

We support families in education.

For more information and resources, visit us on-line at:

www.SmartTutorReferrals.com

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Strategy #2: From the Inside Out

While it is possible to influence how we feel by our actions, there is a more effective method. Here is an equation I'd like you to consider: Beliefs create thoughts ▶ thoughts create emotions ▶ emotions create actions ▶ actions create consequences

What this equation tells us is that the consequences we experience (like high or low grades) are created mostly by our beliefs. Who is in control of what you believe? of what you think? of how you feel? of your actions? Of course it's you. Your interpretation of a situation is completely within your control. So it follows, then, that if you are in control of your beliefs and thoughts, then you can also control your consequences.

What we believe about ourselves and the world determines our thoughts. For example, if you believe that you are good at math, then you will likely think that math assignments are do-able. If you think math assignments are do-able, you will likely feel confident and capable. Feeling this way, you will likely perform well on any given assignment, get it done and hand it in. If you do all of that, you'll likely get a pretty good score.

If, on the other hand, you believe that you are terrible at math, then you will likely think that all math assignments are hard (even before you look at the one being handed to you). If you think that math assignments are too hard for you then you'll likely feel defeated and distressed. Feeling this way, you will likely be in a state of high adrenaline. In this state of nervousness, it's quite difficult to think clearly (since when our heart is beating too rapidly, our higher thinking is shut off in order to save our bodies from any impending life-threatening danger). If you're not thinking well, you'll likely not get a good score.

Change your thoughts and you change your world. If you think you can overcome an obstacle, chances are that you can.

Here's another example. **Situation:** You receive a low grade on an essay.

Negative thoughts: *"I really stink."* (resulting emotion: sadness) *"I've never been good at writing."* (hopelessness) *"That teacher is such an unfair marker."* (anger) Where can you go with this experience if you are feeling sad, hopeless or angry? These types of thoughts and feelings will likely lead to complaining, avoidance and acting out in anger (against the teacher or some innocent bystander).

Positive thoughts: *"I'm going to practice more to improve my essay writing."* (resulting emotion: determination) *"Now that I see my mistakes, I know what I need to work on."* (hopefulness) *"I'm good at learning new skills. This is a challenge for me to master."* (confidence) These thoughts and feelings are likely to lead to positive actions such as focused study, more proofreading on future essay assignments, or asking for assistance.

Positive thinking is taking control over how you choose to think about a situation. With control, you can influence the outcome. Choosing a more positive perspective, you can gain more power and confidence – and people respond to this. When we expect success, we become hopeful and confident. This comes across in our body language and the way we express ourselves in writing and in our speaking. If you behave confidently and accept challenges with positive determination, not only will teachers and parents begin to see you as capable, but you will see yourself as able to accomplish tasks that previously had felt out of reach. Your marks will improve, almost guaranteed.

You can choose your attitude. If you hear yourself thinking negative thoughts, you can simply choose to 'cancel' those thoughts out and rethink them in a more positive light. Encouraging yourself, you are more likely to enjoy the learning.

Parents and teachers can help by asking students how they are feeling about their schoolwork, listening for positive or negative beliefs. Unless a student is asking for correction or it is a teaching situation, students will gain the most benefit by being recognized for what they are doing well. If you hear a student speaking negatively about his or her efforts, you could ask that student to reframe what they are describing in a positive light, and then discuss actions that can be taken to bring a positive resolution to the situation.

Positive thinking is not just putting a positive spin on things without taking creative action. If there is a situation that needs remedying (like homework not being handed in), believe in your ability to come up with some creative solutions on your own or with someone else.

Positive thinking is you deciding to take control over how situations impact you. There is no set script for how you ought to react to any situation – you can make it up yourself – you can change your script part way through. You are the writer, director and actor of your story.

"We become what we think about."
Earl Nightingale (1921-1989)