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Contact Us

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-779-6125

EMAIL:

info@connectionseap.com

www.connectionseap.com

THE POWER OF
POSITIVE
REFRAMING

PG: 2

WORKPLACE
SUCCESS:
ENTHUSIASM AND
ATTITUDE

PG: 5

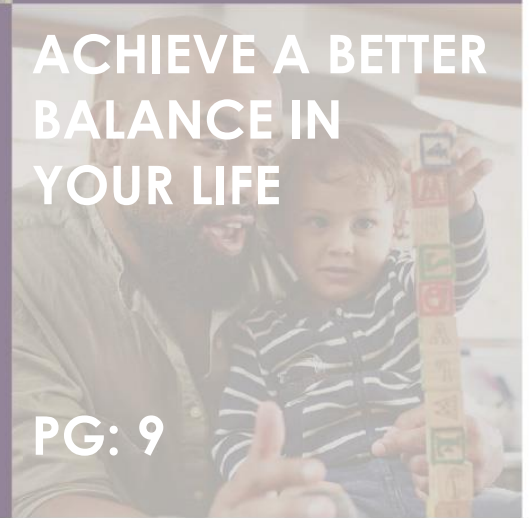
HOW TO DEAL
WITH GRIEF

PG: 8

ACHIEVE A BETTER
BALANCE IN
YOUR LIFE

PG: 9

CONNECTIONS
Employee Assistance Program | Employee & Family Solutions



THE POWER OF POSITIVE REFRAMING



When faced with an unexpected change, many people immediately characterize it as "bad" and have a negative reaction—often driven by fear of what might come next. When another person gets on their nerves, they may leap to a negative opinion, ascribing bad motives to their actions. When something goes wrong, they can be overly critical of themselves. Sound familiar? These are often impulsive responses based on unfounded assumptions. They can drive stress, lower your mood, and get in the way of productive action.

In reality, the change that's happening is neither bad nor good—It's your reaction to it that's negative. The person you are irritated by may simply have a different style of communicating than you, and the best of intentions. And what went wrong may not have been your fault. When you look at an event or a person through a negative frame, you're setting yourself up for stress and unhappiness and placing an obstacle in your forward path.

By shifting the frame through which you view something—what some people call positive reframing—you can often turn that negative reaction around. When you do, you'll find opportunities for personal growth, closer collaboration, and better outcomes.

What is positive reframing?

Positive reframing is the technique of looking at things in new ways to find the positive in them—the opportunities in change, the good in other people, and the strengths in yourself. It's the simple act of changing your point of view.

While the idea of positive reframing is simple, it can take practice to make it work for you. It involves changing habits of thought. When you notice yourself having a negative reaction to an event or another person, or disheartening thoughts about yourself, positive reframing is a tool that can open your mind to more positive thoughts and possibilities.

continued on page 3



THE POWER OF POSITIVE REFRAMING (Contd.,)

How Positive Reframing Can Help You

Positive reframing doesn't change the situation you're facing or the people you're dealing with. It changes your responses to those realities, enabling you to deal with them in productive and positive ways. By taking a more flexible and open-minded approach, positive reframing can help you do the following:

- Reduce stress.
- Be more resilient.
- Improve relationships.
- See and act on new opportunities.
- Be more thoughtful and open-minded.
- Find greater happiness in life.

Examples of Positive Reframing

Reframing Events and Situations

- When a change happens, instead of focusing on what could go wrong for you, think about new opportunities the change might present.
- When you suffer a setback, instead of catastrophizing and seeing a steady downward path ahead, look for ways to turn the situation around.
- Look for the humor in tough situations. Find ways to laugh at what's absurd while working to make the best of a difficult time.
- Instead of feeling defeated and hopeless, think about where you can take action—even a small first step to start making a situation better.
- Avoid words like "can't" and "impossible" when thinking about a challenge. Recognize that it may be difficult, but assume that you "can."
- Think of the stress from a new challenge as a form of energy—invigorating and exciting rather than draining and debilitating.

The goal here is to step back from a narrow and negative view of a situation and look for new perspectives that can lead to opportunities and personal growth.

Reframing Your Perceptions of Other People

- Instead of seeing someone as impulsive, see them as spontaneous.
- Instead of seeing someone as stubborn, see them as committed and persistent.
- Instead of seeing someone as fearful, see them as thoughtful and careful.
- Instead of seeing someone as loud, see them as exuberant and confident.

The idea here is to turn negative assessments of people into more generous and positive views. Positive reframing in your relationships with others involves looking for the good in people rather than assuming and focusing on the bad.

Reframing How You Think About Yourself

- When you make a mistake, instead of coming down hard on yourself, think about what you can learn from the situation so that you can do better in the future.
- Be kind to yourself. If you find yourself being overly self-critical, imagine how you would talk to a friend in your situation.

Positive reframing can help you turn self-talk into a motivating boost rather than a discouraging critique.

Practicing Gratitude

Making time to think about what you are grateful for is another form of positive reframing. It pushes your thinking from the negative to the positive aspects of life to remind you what is going well.

continued on page 4



THE POWER OF POSITIVE REFRAMING (Contd.,)

Try it for yourself.

Positive reframing takes some effort, especially at first. It's like changing any other habit—in this case, the habit of reflexive negative thinking. With practice, though, it gets easier. Here are some ways to build the positive-reframing habit:

- **Pay attention to quick and impulsive negative reactions to events and people.** When you catch yourself in these thought patterns, make a concerted effort to replace those negative reactions with more positive and open-minded views of the situation. What might be another explanation for this? How might that new view open the door to something positive?
- **Look for what you can change, what's within your span of control.** You can't change market forces that are affecting your job or, usually, the behavior of other people. But there's always some aspect of the situation that you can change. Your reaction to it is one aspect. There may be others, too, and those could lead to new opportunities.
- **Examine what's causing you stress.** What are you worried about or fearful of? Are those worries and fears reasonable? How might you look at and react to the things that are causing you stress to defuse tension and turn them into positives?
- **Find the humor.** Even in the worst situations, there's always something absurd that you can laugh at. Laughter will lift your spirits, helping you turn negative thoughts into positive strategies.
- **Focus on positive outcomes.** When you feel overwhelmed by a challenge, look ahead to the end

result and the progress that you're making. Look back, too, at the progress you've made and past accomplishments. Too often, people move quickly from one task or challenge to another without taking time to recognize and celebrate their successes.

- **Break the catastrophizing habit.** It's easy, and not usually helpful, to jump to visions of worst-case scenarios. Turn this tendency on its head by realistically considering the worst thing that could happen. Say it out loud or write it down. Now think about how likely that outcome actually is and how bad it really would be. How might you cope with that situation? What might you do to reduce the risk of it happening? You'll probably find that the worst-case scenario is neither as likely nor as bad as you are imagining.

Bad things do happen in life, and many of them are out of your control. You will encounter difficult or aggravating people. You may be in the habit of over-criticizing yourself. Positive reframing is a valuable tool to help you consider those events, people, and thoughts in a new light—to shift your immediate and negative responses to ones that are more considered and optimistic. It may feel forced at first, but as you practice positive reframing it will come more naturally to you. Once it becomes a habit, you'll probably notice some of the stress in your life melting away and some of your relationships with other people becoming easier and more rewarding. You'll feel better about yourself, and you may find new solutions to what might otherwise have seemed like insurmountable problems.

Morgan, H. (2020, November). *The power of positive reframing* (C. Gregg-Meeker, Ed.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

WORKPLACE SUCCESS: ENTHUSIASM AND ATTITUDE



Having a positive attitude in the workplace can help with potential promotions. What is the difference between "You're hired!" and "Thank you for your interest, but . . ."? In a word: enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can mean the difference in not just getting a job, but succeeding in a job and even advancing in your career. A positive and enthusiastic attitude is a critical component of workplace success.

Employers promote employees who not only produce, but also motivate others in the workplace. When employers look at prospective candidates, beyond skills, experience, and training, they look for those who demonstrate enthusiasm—those they believe will complete assigned tasks in an upbeat and cooperative manner. All other things being equal, a candidate who can demonstrate a positive attitude and eagerness to tackle the job will have an advantage over one who displays an attitude viewed by the employer as negative or disinterested. In fact, many

employers would rather provide job-skills training to an enthusiastic but inexperienced worker than hire someone with perfect qualifications but a less-than-positive attitude. Managers sometimes worry that this type of person will not get along with supervisors and coworkers, treat customers disrespectfully, and not put much effort into his or her work. On the other hand, employees who are viewed as enthusiastic are known to provide good customer service, resolve interpersonal conflict effectively, and work productively with others.

There are many ways in which an individual might demonstrate enthusiasm in the workplace. For example, in a job interview, he or she might smile, sit up straight, make eye contact, and discuss training and work experiences in an upbeat manner. Once hired into a position, an enthusiastic employee will typically show up on time, show interest in his or her job, and

continued on page 6

WORKPLACE SUCCESS: ENTHUSIASM AND ATTITUDE (Contd.,)



demonstrate a willingness to listen, learn, and try new things. In customer service settings, an enthusiastic employee will approach customers proactively and offer assistance or seek out tasks and projects when there is down time. This positive attitude helps employees go above and beyond to get along with coworkers and managers—even difficult ones—and respond to constructive criticism with maturity and willingness to improve. Overall, an employee with enthusiasm comes across as someone who wants to be at work and who is willing to do what it takes to get the job done.

A positive attitude is an "I can" attitude. It's important for you to learn how to develop a positive attitude and, almost as important, how to showcase that to others, including employers. Turn negative thinking into positive thinking, and display enthusiasm during an interview and on the job.

Never underestimate the power of PMA!

PMA, or Positive Mental Attitude, is one's ability to maintain the belief that he or she can transform or change a tough situation into something better. This activity will help participants take difficult situations

and find ways to empower themselves to turn negative thinking into positive thinking.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is a positive attitude? If I have a positive attitude, what actions might I display? What does a positive attitude "look" like to others?
- What is a negative attitude? If I have a negative attitude, what actions might I display? What does a negative attitude "look" like to others?

Then say: "Developing a positive attitude starts from learning to believe in one's self. In order to believe in ourselves, we must first understand our personal strengths." Consider and share your personal strengths.

PMA Activity

Write the below statements on a piece of chart paper, and grab a set of dice. Sit with a friend or a trusted colleague, or a small group, and take turns rolling the dice two or three times. Complete the following statement upon each roll:

- Roll a 1: I am thankful for . . .
- Roll a 2: Other people compliment me on my ability to . . .

continued on page 7

WORKPLACE SUCCESS: ENTHUSIASM AND ATTITUDE (Contd.,)



- Roll a 3: Something I would like other people to know about me is . . .
- Roll a 4: I feel really good about myself when . . .
- Roll a 5: I am proud of my ability to . . .
- Roll a 6: Something nice I recently did for someone else was . . .

Note: *If the people in your group know each other well, feel free to substitute questions that ask about the positive qualities of the participants.*

Conclusion

Why do you think the statement for Roll #6 was included in this activity? It's because helping or "doing" for others often helps people feel good about themselves. When you feel good about yourself, you often demonstrate a positive attitude that can be seen by others.

Discuss with participants how internal feelings have the ability to impact those around you. How might a positive attitude help you on a job?

Journaling Activity

Do you think that attitude (whether positive or negative) is something people are born with or that they have power to control within themselves? Think

about a time when your attitude (either positive or negative) impacted you and those around you. When is it most challenging for you to keep a positive mental attitude? What do you do to help keep yourself positive during difficult times?

Extension Activity

Keep a log for one week. Write down 50 (or 40 or 30) great things that happen each day. Include even the small things like these:

- Someone held the door open for me.
- I found a quarter on the sidewalk.
- When I went shopping, the clerk at the store was really friendly and helpful.

The goal of this activity is to help you focus on the positive. Consider if you felt any different during the week as a result—either in your interactions with others or in your own feelings about yourself.

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). (n.d.). *Mastering soft skills for workplace success: Enthusiasm and attitude* [Excerpt] (B. Schuette, Ed.). Retrieved October 18, 2018, from <https://www.dol.gov/>

HOW TO DEAL WITH GRIEF

Grief is the normal response of sorrow, emotion, and confusion that comes from losing someone or something important to you. It is a natural part of life. Grief is a typical reaction to death, divorce, job loss, a move away from family and friends, or loss of good health due to illness.

How does grief feel?

Just after a death or loss, you may feel empty and numb, as if you are in shock. You may notice physical changes such as trembling, nausea, trouble breathing, muscle weakness, dry mouth, or trouble sleeping and eating.

You may become angry—at a situation, a particular person, or just angry in general. Almost everyone in grief also experiences guilt. Guilt is often expressed as I could have, I should have, and I wish I would have statements.

People in grief may have strange dreams or nightmares, be absent-minded, withdraw socially, or lack the desire to return to work. While these feelings and behaviors are normal during grief, they will pass.

How long does grief last?

Grief lasts as long as it takes you to accept and learn to live with your loss. For some people, grief lasts a few months. For others, grieving may take years.

The length of time spent grieving is different for each person. There are many reasons for the differences, including personality, health, coping style, culture, family background, and life experiences. The time spent grieving also depends on your relationship with the person lost and how prepared you were for the loss.

How will I know when I'm done grieving?

Every person who experiences a death or other loss must complete a four-step grieving process:

1. Accept the loss.
2. Work through and feel the physical and emotional pain of grief.
3. Adjust to living in a world without the person or item lost.
4. Move on with life.



The grieving process is over only when a person completes the four steps.

How does grief differ from depression?

Depression is more than a feeling of grief after losing someone or something you love. Clinical depression is a whole-body disorder. It can take over the way you think and feel. Symptoms of depression include

- A sad, anxious, or "empty" mood that won't go away
- Loss of interest in what you used to enjoy
- Low energy, fatigue, feeling "slowed down"
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Loss of appetite, weight loss, or weight gain
- Trouble concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Feeling hopeless or gloomy
- Feeling guilty, worthless, or helpless
- Thoughts of death or suicide or a suicide attempt
- Recurring aches and pains that don't respond to treatment

If you recently experienced a death or other loss, these feelings may be part of a normal grief reaction. However, if these feelings persist with no lifting mood, ask for help.

U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), National Mental Health Information Center. (n.d.). *How to deal with grief* (Pub. No. KEN-01-0104). Retrieved April 9, 2021, from <https://www.samhsa.gov>

ACHIEVE A BETTER BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE



At times, short-term or permanent changes caused by family situations can make it difficult to find a balance between work and home duties. Changes in your child's school schedule, caring for an older adult, or expanding your family can be overwhelming, but small adjustments to your daily routine can help you regain the balance you lack.

Slow down.

Life is simply too short, so don't let things pass by you in a blur. Take steps to stop and enjoy the things and people around you. Don't make plans for every evening or weekend, and find some ways to distance yourself from the things that are causing you the most stress.

Learn to manage your time.

Avoid procrastination. For many people, most of the stress they feel comes from simply being disorganized and procrastinating. Learn to set more realistic goals and deadlines, and then stick to them. You'll find that not only are you less stressed, but your work will be better.

Share the load.

Even though you may sometimes feel you are the only one capable of doing something, it's usually not the case. Get your partner or other family members to help you with all your personal and family responsibilities. Taking care of the household, children, or parents should not be the responsibility of just one person.

Let things go (don't sweat the small stuff).

It's simpler said than done, but learn to let things go once in a while. So what if the dishes don't get washed every day or that the house doesn't get vacuumed every week? Learn to recognize the things that don't really have much impact in your life, and allow yourself to let them go and then not beat yourself up for doing so.

Explore your options.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with your family responsibilities, get help if you can afford it, or enlist family members and friends for some tasks. Find a sitter

continued on page 10

ACHIEVE A BETTER BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE

(Contd.,)



for your children, explore options for aging parents, and seek counseling for yourself. In many cases, you have options, but you need to take the time to find them.

Talk to your employer.

Find out if there is a way of modifying your employment to better handle your current situation. These changes might include flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting, or part-time employment, or just a temporary adjustment in your job duties.

Take charge.

Sometimes it's easier for you to allow yourself to feel overwhelmed rather than to take charge and develop a prioritized list of things that need to get done. You need to buck the trend. Develop a list. Set priorities. Then enjoy the satisfaction of crossing things off your list.

Simplify.

It seems human nature for just about everyone to take on too many tasks and responsibilities, to try to do too much, and to own too much. Find a way to simplify your life. Change your lifestyle. Learn to say *no* and to ask for help. Get rid of the clutter and baggage in your house and your life.

In the end, the key word is *balance*. You need to find the right balance that works for you. Celebrate your successes, and don't dwell on your failures. Life is a process, and so is striving for balance in your life.

Workplace Options. (Revised 2019). *Achieve a better balance in your life*. Raleigh, NC: Author.