



The Power of Positive Thinking

Everyone talks about the Power of Positive Thinking. Positive thinking is universally accepted by all as an essential element of success. What is not commonly addressed are the symptoms of negative thinking—the opposite of positive thinking. It is important for each of us to understand or at least recognize our underlying problem areas in order to begin the process of *change*. Here are 15 patterns of negative thinking. Don't be surprised or concerned if one or more patterns fit you like a glove. We all experience these patterns at some point in time, *but* it is those one or two patterns when used excessively, which negatively impact one's daily lifestyle.

- Filtering:** You take the negative details and magnify them while filtering out all positive aspects of a situation.
- Polarized Thinking:** Things are black or white, good or bad. You have to be perfect or you're a failure. No middle area.
- Overgeneralization:** You come to a general conclusion based upon a single incident or single piece of evidence.
- Mind Reading:** Without their saying so, you think you know what people are feeling and why they act the way they do. You especially think you are able to discern how people feel towards you.
- Catastrophizing:** You expect disaster. You notice or hear about a problem and start saying "what ifs". What if tragedy strikes? What if it happens to you?
- Personalization:** Thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. You also compare yourself to others, trying to determine who's smarter, better looking, etc.
- Control Fallacies:** If you feel externally controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate. The fallacy of internal control has you responsible for the pain and happiness of everyone around you.
- Fallacy of Fairness:** You feel resentful because you think you know what's fair but other people won't agree with you.
- Blaming:** You hold other people responsible for your pain; or blame yourself for other people's pain.
- Shoulds:** You have a list of ironclad rules about how you and other people should act. People who break the rules anger you. You feel guilty if you violate them.
- Emotional Reasoning:** You believe that what you feel must be true - automatically. For example, if you feel stupid and boring then you must be stupid and boring.
- Fallacy of Change:** You expect that other people will change to suit you if you pressure or cajole them enough. You need to change people because your hopes for happiness seem to depend entirely on them.
- Global Labeling:** You generalize one or two qualities into a negative global judgment.
- Being Right:** You are continually on trial to prove that your opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and you will go to any length to demonstrate your rightness.
- Reward Fallacy:** You expect all your sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, as if someone were keeping score.

Adapted from Thoughts & Feelings by McKay, Davis, & Fanning.

DR. JARROD SPENCER, SPORTS PSYCHOLOGIST
3400 BATH PIKE, SUITE 302, BETHLEHEM, PA 18017
WWW.MINDOFTHEATHLETE.COM
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