

# INSPIRED

## To Make Healthy Choices

### Being optimistic in our outlook impacts many aspects of our life.

Wikipedia defines **optimism as a mental attitude** which can be illustrated with a glass half filled with water. An optimist will tend to see the glass half full while the pessimist sees the glass half empty. A growing body of research indicates that **optimism, a sense everything will be OK**, is linked to a reduced risk of developing mental or physical health issues as well as to an increased chance of a longer life.

"People who are optimistic are more committed to their goals, are more successful in achieving their goals, **are more satisfied with their lives, and have better mental and physical health** when compared to more pessimistic people," says Suzanne Segerstrom, PhD, a professor of psychology at the University of Kentucky.

One of the largest such studies was led by researchers Dr. Kaitlin Hagan and Dr. Eric Kim at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Their team analyzed data from 70,000 women in the Nurses' Health Study and found that **women who were optimistic had a significantly reduced risk of dying from several major causes of death over an eight year period, compared with women who were less optimistic. The most optimistic women had a 16% lower risk of dying from cancer; 38% lower risk of dying from heart or respiratory disease; 39% lower risk of dying from stroke; and 52% lower risk of dying from infection.**

Numerous simple changes have been suggested by studies that can help people improve their outlook on life.

- **Tell yourself that you can change;** adapt your attitude as research shows that the way to be happier is by actually trying to be happier.

- **Focus on the positive in your life** by considering what good things have happened to you today, this week or this year and appreciate what's good in your life.
- **Refuel and re-energize** by making sure that your negative attitude is not a reflection of not having eaten lately and/or due to lack of sleep.
- **Remove yourself or change your negative thought pattern** by going for a walk, reading a book or listening to music you enjoy to short circuit the negative thoughts.
- **Seek out different viewpoints** to assure that you are not focusing only on the negative. This helps you see the positives and opportunities that may not be evident when you are overwhelmed or feeling down.
- **Consider volunteering in projects** that are meaningful to you and assist others in your community. Becoming a mentor, participating in Great Days of Service, spending time engaging with others who need help or assisting organizations not only make the community better but allow you to create positive change.
- **Be kind to yourself by taking good care of your body**, making sure that you are eating well, staying active and getting enough sleep.

- **Find a get-happy strategy that works for you when you start to feel down.**
- **Forgive yourself** for past transgressions (real or imagined) **and move on.** Take the time to apologize if you were wrong or did something that keeps gnawing at you.
- **Seek out good news.**
- **Surround yourself with positive people.**

**Your mind and body will be healthier and safer!**

Your health will benefit when you think positively.

A bad or negative attitude does not help in any situation.

Positive attitude boosts your motivation and helps to achieve your goals quicker and easier.

Being optimistic creates better coping skills during hardships and times of stress.

For more information:  
**BEING OPTIMISTIC**  
[www.guideinc.org](http://www.guideinc.org)

