Glass half full or half empty?

Are you a positive or negative thinker? Few of us see the world as all positive or all negative. Most of us see a mix — but we do tend to be somewhat more negative or positive.

Optimist or pessimist?

Are you likely to see the brighter side of things or the gloomier? For those who have more negative tendencies, there's some good news and some bad news.

First, let's get past the bad news: Studies show there may be strong links between negative thinking and increased depression and illness. On the other hand, positive thinkers often enjoy better mental and physical health.[1]

And now for the good news: Anyone can learn to be more positive.

Negative vs. positive: What's the difference?

Negative people often blame themselves for things that go wrong. They see unhappy situations as being likely to continue or happen again. They often feel like they're victims.

Positive people are more able to cope with problems without getting down on themselves. They see better times ahead instead of a future of doom and gloom. Rather than feeling like victims, they view themselves as having more control over their lives.

You can learn to be more positive

Is it time for you to move into more positive territory? Here are some steps you can take:

- **Change your self-talk.** We all have ongoing internal dialogue. In other words, we talk to ourselves in our heads and critique ourselves constantly. But here's the key question: What do you say to yourself?

  Listen to your self-talk. Do you often think things like, "That was so dumb of me to say (or do)" or "How could I make such a big mistake?"

  If those sound familiar, you could be pounding yourself with negative messages. But you can make a conscious switch to positive messages like, "You did a good job back there" or "You look great today!"

  It may take some time to start patting yourself on the back if you're not used to doing that already. But a shift in thought can help build a better, more positive outlook and self-image.

- **Change your reactions.** Take control of how you respond to situations. When faced with a challenge, you have the choice to see it as a mountain or a molehill. Or something in between that's really manageable.

  Practice seeing problems as exciting opportunities instead of dreaded events. You'll free up more energy to focus on solutions. You're likely to find you're more creative and resilient.

- **Imagine success.** Sports champions can tell you that part of their winning strategy is to start every competition thinking they'll win. They see themselves coming out on top and they go after that vision. See yourself succeeding and then buckle down to making it happen.

[1]**www.futurevisions.org**