

# Opt for Optimism

**Positive Attitude**



**SAMPLE  
PAGE**

**Attitude adjustment**

**Half full or half empty?**

**Put it into action**



# So What?

Think about a person you really enjoy spending time with. Why do you like this person so much? Imagine spending a stressful day with him or her. Your car breaks down, or you're stuck in traffic for an hour on the way to a meeting. Or maybe you have to rush together to finish a project. How would you react? Chances are, you would be disappointed. The disappointment would be the same. That's because most people want to spend time with someone who is positive.

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What about a person you don't enjoy spending time with? How is s/he different from the other person you identified? How would s/he react in the same stressful situations? Perhaps this person would react negatively, complaining and being unpleasant to everyone else. This is the type of person that no one really wants to be around.

Attitude is the way you look at life. Your attitude can be either positive or negative. Learning to develop a positive attitude is a necessary and important skill. Your attitude determines your actions—and your actions determine whether or not *you* will be the type of person others want to spend time with.

## The Importance of Keeping it Positive

### What is attitude?

Your **attitude** is your basic outlook on life. It is based on your thoughts and your emotions. You aren't born with a specific attitude; rather, you develop it over time. Your attitude is influenced by things that happen to you, things you learn, and your interactions with other people. What do you think of when you hear the word "attitude"?

A positive attitude is an outlook that focuses on what's good. People with positive attitudes are often referred to as **optimists**. Optimists can be described as seeing a partially filled glass of water as "half full." In other words, they are looking on the bright side of things. Can you think of any other ways to describe optimists?



A negative attitude is an outlook that focuses on what's bad. People with negative attitudes are often referred to as **pessimists**. Pessimists can be described as seeing a partially filled glass of water as "half empty." In other words, they are looking on the dark side of things. Can you think of any other ways to describe pessimists?



“Life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we react to it.”

## Objectives:

- A** Explain the importance of a positive attitude.
- B** Demonstrate how to maintain a positive attitude.



## What attitudes look like

So, how do positive attitudes and negative attitudes compare to each other in real-life situations? Take a look at these character qualities:



- **Positive people are pleasant and smiling.** Have you ever passed a stranger on the sidewalk who looked you in the eye and smiled at you? Maybe that person also held a door open for you or said, “Excuse me,” if you accidentally bumped into each other. These are all signs of a person with a positive attitude. Negative people often wear frowns or act unfriendly toward other people.

- **Positive people are interested and enthusiastic.** Jesse and Caitlin have been asked by their boss to work on some special reports for the annual shareholders’ meeting. Although the work won’t be easy, Jesse dives in full-

steam-ahead. He’s excited about the chance to add a few new skills to his resume. Caitlin, on the other hand, has a negative attitude. She couldn’t care less about the reports, and it shows. She’s quite content to “space out” while Jesse does most of the work.

- **Positive people are respectful.** They respect themselves, and they respect others. Luis and Cassandra are both making presentations in a sales meeting. They have two different and equally good ideas, but their supervisor can choose only one for the next quarter. During Luis’s presentation, Cassandra looks bored. During Cassandra’s presentation, Luis snorts and rolls his eyes. He’s clearly disagreeing with her. His negative attitude is quite apparent.

- **Positive people are understanding.** Paul and Angela’s friendship is in trouble. They both have faults, but Paul can’t seem to let Angela’s go. He often gets angry and impatient with her, as well as with the other people in his life. Paul’s negative attitude keeps him from understanding that no one is perfect.

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- **Positive people are uncomplaining.** Things don’t always go right, and everyone experiences setbacks and disappointments at one time or another. People with positive attitudes don’t complain when these things happen. They believe that things will get better and take action to make that happen. People with negative attitudes tend to sit back and focus on what has gone wrong.

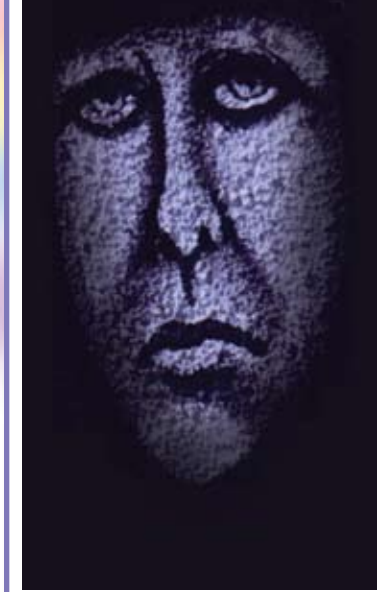
**When life gives you lemons—  
make lemonade!**



- **Positive people are helpful, cooperative, and generous.** Juan and Greg are next-door neighbors. Recently, when Greg’s lawnmower was broken, Juan offered to let him borrow his. “I wonder what he wants in return,” Greg grumbled to himself. His negative attitude kept him from understanding that Juan just wanted to be helpful. Greg rarely considers reaching out to help others because his negativity keeps him focused on himself. Can you think of some other ways that positive people are helpful, cooperative, or generous?
- **Positive people are flexible.** Not only are positive people flexible when there’s a change of plans, they are also willing to change *themselves*. Allison and Lindsey both received constructive criticism from their boss during their semiannual performance reviews. Allison is already thinking of ways to improve her performance using this information, but Lindsey is sulking. She thinks she’s doing a great job and doesn’t see any reason to change. Her negative attitude makes her inflexible and resistant to change.

“The only disability in life is a bad attitude.”

—Scott Hamilton





# The Gray Zone

**J**oanna works hard to maintain her positive attitude. She monitors her attitude regularly to make sure she is thinking and acting positively. She also makes every effort to surround herself with positive friends. Lately, however, Joanna's friend Annette has been very negative. She's been acting rude, complaining a lot, and being generally unpleasant to be around. Joanna has tried everything she can think of to get to the root of the problem. Annette won't listen. Joanna doesn't want to dump Annette as a friend, but she needs a little time apart. Annette's negative attitude is having a big impact on Joanna. What do you think Joanna should do?

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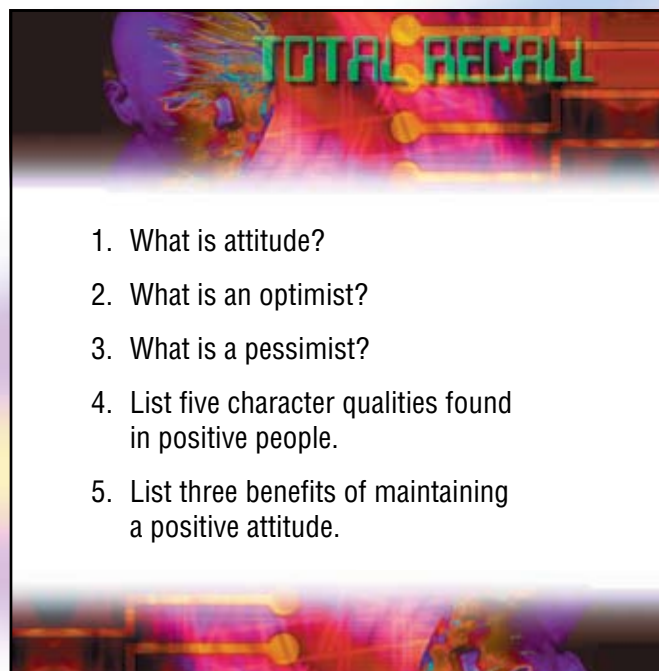
- **Coping with everyday life more effectively.**

Everyone has problems in life, but those with positive attitudes handle them better. This is because their general outlook on life is good, and they view problems as temporary aggravations that can be endured and overcome. A positive attitude helps put problems into perspective and keeps them from becoming overwhelming. In short, optimism is great for battling stress.

- **Enjoying better personal relationships.** People like to be around others who have positive attitudes because they are cheerful, kind, considerate, and interested in others. Positive people usually have many friends who enrich their lives. The friends they attract are likely to have positive attitudes as well, and these attitudes reinforce each other.

## Summary

Your attitude is your basic outlook on life. A positive attitude is an outlook that focuses on what's good. A negative attitude is an outlook that focuses on what's bad. Positive people are often called optimists; negative people are often called pessimists. There are many character qualities that positive people possess, including enthusiasm, respect, and flexibility. There are many benefits to maintaining a positive attitude, including achieving your goals and coping with everyday life more effectively.



1. What is attitude?
2. What is an optimist?
3. What is a pessimist?
4. List five character qualities found in positive people.
5. List three benefits of maintaining a positive attitude.

***“If you aren't fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired with enthusiasm!”***

—Vince Lombardi