

# To accomplish my goals at Carolina I need to...

think positively.

Adapted from the Mayo Health Clinic

TIPS:

## Understand the Benefits of Positive Thinking

- Positive thinking helps with stress management and can improve your health.
- Positive thinking doesn't mean that you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations. Positive thinking just means that you approach the unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way.
- Positive thinking is associated with:
  - Lower rates of depression
  - Lower levels of distress
  - Greater resistance to the common cold
  - Better psychological and physical well-being
  - Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
  - Better coping skills during hardships and times of stress

## Put an End to Negative Self-Talk

- Positive thinking often starts with self-talk. Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head every day. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information.

Negative self-talk	Positive thinking
I've never done it before.	It's an opportunity to learn something new.
It's too complicated.	I'll tackle it from a different angle.
I don't have the resources.	Necessity is the mother of invention.
I'm too lazy to get this done.	I wasn't able to fit it into my schedule but can re-examine some priorities.
There's no way it will work.	I can try to make it work.
It's too radical a change.	Let's take a chance.
No one bothers to communicate with me.	I'll see if I can open the channels of communication.
I'm not going to get any better at this.	I'll give it another try.

### Identify and Limit Negative Thinking

- **Filtering** is negative thinking in which you magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all of the positive ones. For example, say you performed very well on an exam. But you are certain you got one question wrong. That evening, you focus only the wrong question and forget about all of the other questions you answered correctly.
- **Personalizing** is when something bad occurs and you automatically blame yourself. For example, you hear that an evening out with friends is canceled, and you assume that the change in plans is because no one wanted to be around you.
- **Catastrophizing** is when you automatically anticipate the worst. You misplace a book for your 8 a.m. class and you automatically think that the rest of your day will be a disaster.
- **Polarizing** is when you see things only as either good or bad, black or white. There is no middle ground. You feel that you have to be perfect or that you're a total failure.

### Focus on Positive Thinking

- **Identify areas to change.** If you want to become more optimistic and engage in more positive thinking, first identify areas of your life that you typically think negatively about, whether it's Biology lab, your daily commute or a relationship, for example. You can start small by focusing on one area to approach in a more positive way.
- **Check yourself.** Periodically during the day, stop and evaluate what you're thinking. If you find that your thoughts are mainly negative, try to find a way to put a positive spin on them.
- **Be open to humor.** Give yourself permission to smile or laugh, especially during difficult times. Seek humor in everyday happenings. When you can laugh at life, you feel less stressed.
- **Follow a healthy lifestyle.** Exercise at least three times a week to positively affect mood and reduce stress. Follow a healthy diet to fuel your mind and body. And learn to manage stress.
- **Surround yourself with positive people.** Make sure those in your life are positive, supportive people you can depend on to give helpful advice and feedback. Negative people may increase your stress level and make you doubt your ability to manage stress in healthy ways.
- **Practice positive self-talk.** Start by following one simple rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else. Be gentle and encouraging with yourself. If a negative thought enters your mind, evaluate it rationally and respond with affirmations of what is good about you.

TRY THIS ACTIVITY EVERY NIGHT FOR THE NEXT WEEK:

Each night, before you go to sleep, write down 3 good things that happened that day and 3 things you are thankful for. Taking just a few minutes to focus on these positive things, will help you think more positively overall.