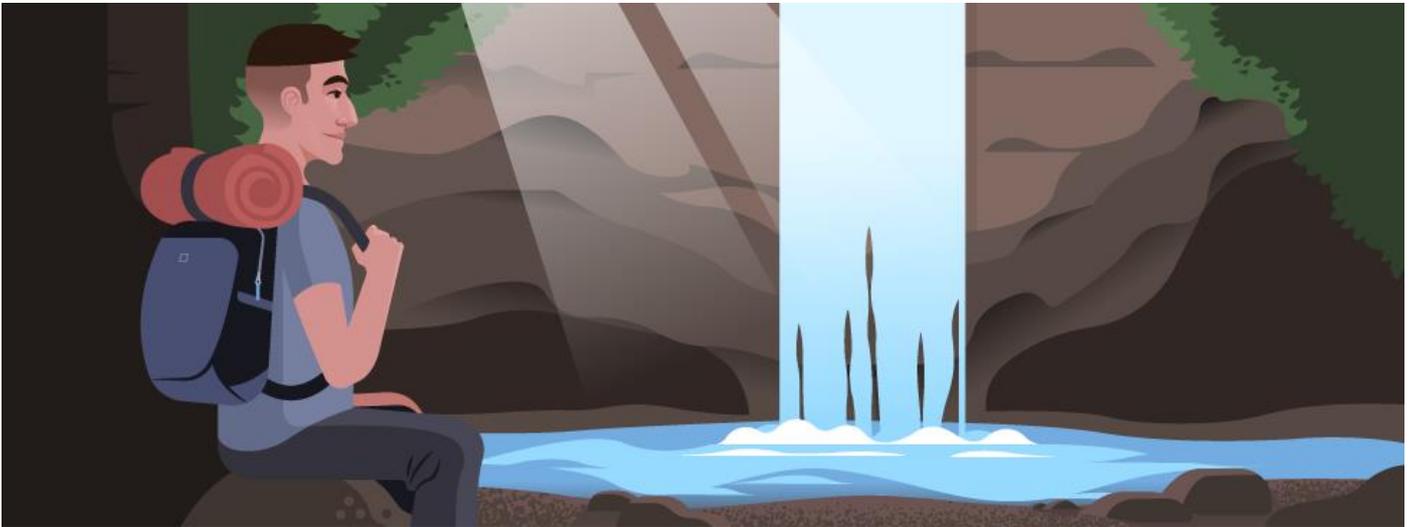


Building Personal Resilience in Twelve Steps

Step 6: Positive Thinking



“One step each week. You will be amazed at the difference it will make”

It’s not always easy to stay positive. There are some situations so tough, seemingly so unrelenting that being positive flies in the face of reality. Of course, people should be allowed to voice negative thoughts and concerns as they may well be pointing to something very important and should be heard. So, my point is not that we should always be uber positive - it’s just that for our own wellbeing, and for our support of others, positive thinking is very helpful.

There is also well-researched evidence of the benefits, both neurological and biological, to positive thinking. It reduces stress, strengthens our immune system, heightens our sense of wellbeing. As a coaching principle, we aim to inspire individuals to act powerfully and positively in their own situations and to remain optimistic and have the self-belief to overcome obstacles.

Easier said than done, but with practice and a few relatively straightforward approaches we can alter our mindset, nurture our positive thinking and build our resilience. So, the goal this week is to try each of the following to see if you can notice a difference.

Purposefully remember positive memories. Visualise those memories in full-colour HD. Listen to those memories in full Dolby sound. Linger on these thoughts for long enough to relive them. Then store them in your memory and revisit them regularly through the week. Smile to yourself and keep these memories to hand. This week remember at least five people or situations. Remember, linger and relive.

Limit your exposure to negative news. Endlessly following bad news on the TV, or social media, or in your calls with friends can set your own thinking spiralling down. You can become obsessed with the negative and your thought processes grind you down and this can become exhausting. Try switching the TV to something lighter and amusing, limit the times you look at your news feeds to maybe just twice a day. Achieve a balance between staying in touch and swamping yourself in a quagmire of speculation and repetition. Try this as a seven day “detox”.

Listen to the good things people say about you. We tend to focus too much on what might be said to us which is negative. Adopt an internal mindset that filters and holds in the memory those positive views of you and use them to build your self-belief. Write down the positives people have said about you or you know about yourself. Create a montage of “speak bubbles” with a comment in each. Ensure that every one you write down is positive. Put it up somewhere eye-catching. This does not mean you are ignoring the areas where you, like me, need to improve - but it does create a more complete and balanced view at times when all we can see is the negatives about ourselves. Create speech bubbles of the good things people say about you.

Give yourself a good talking to. We now know that we have to “dump our drains”, those situations and people who drain us of our energy. Equally we should apply the same approach to ourselves and learn to dump our negative thinking. Stand in front of a mirror when all you have been able to do all day is thinking negatively. Stare at yourself and literally shake off your negative thoughts. Make this a purposeful act --- using the mirror in this way and physically shaking yourself, ludicrous as it may seem, ensures you kinetically connect to the issue. This week face the mirror and ‘shake yourself up.’

Read about Sisu. (A starting point is given at the end of this Blog) In Finland there is a wonderful word “Sisu”. It does not translate easily but essentially means that ability we have in the face of adversity, difficulty and when there is no light at the end of the tunnel to dig deep into our reserves, go beyond what we know we can endure, and press on relying on pure grit to get through. We may not be able to change harsh realities, but we can change how we respond to them and “Sisu” builds on our positive thinking that we can and should keep going despite everything and no matter what is the eventual outcome. Spend time this week learning more about Sisu.

Please allow yourself some room to be negative if appropriate. As I said at the beginning, there are some situations where positive thinking is simply unrealistic. You will be able to judge for yourself and trust in your judgement.

But this week do see if you can focus on your positive thinking - you will feel better for it and it has an impact on those around you.

One step each week. You will be amazed at the difference it will make.

The Wellbeing Team

Next Week Step 7: Eat and Drink for Energy and Strength

For more on “Sisu” try: <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20180502-sisu-the-finnish-art-of-inner-strength>