

Act or React: Healthy Habits for a Positive Mindset



To start this year off right, I thought I'd work on my attitude. I'm generally a "tomorrow will be better" kind of person, but lately, I've been feeling that tomorrow is going to suck, too. Every day I wake up and I expect things to be better, but they're not.

I used to face each day as if anything was possible. I viewed MS more as a nuisance than the insidious disease it can be. But almost 18 years later, my positive attitude has dimmed. I find it harder to find the bright side of things. Little by little, symptom by symptom, I feel pieces of me chipping away.

I've recently experienced months of unrelenting stress by circumstances beyond my control. Stress is not just in our heads. When the body feels threatened, the nervous system responds by releasing stress hormones. Research suggests chronic elevated cortisol levels can suppress the immune system and people can become unable to regulate the inflammatory response, [leaving them more susceptible to cold or virus.](#)

We can't avoid stress, but we can develop better habits to learn how to deal with it more efficiently. One skill to practice is changing the mindset. All that really means is the ability to change your attitude toward something, such as trying to reframe a negative scenario in a more positive light. This practice has been proven to help people [deal with future setbacks more effectively.](#)

Sometimes things really are that bad, and it's difficult to imagine a positive outcome. We

may not always be able to control our circumstances, but we can control our perspective and decide how we let circumstances affect us. We can choose to act by making conscious choices or react by just responding to external stimuli. Only we can give significance to events or situations. It's all about point of view. That is the key to overcoming adversity.

Our lives are shaped by the choices we make and the actions we take. That is what determines outcome.

Need an attitude adjustment? Practice these healthy habits:

- Ask yourself if you have jumped to any conclusions or added judgement to the distressing issue.
- Think of the same situation with a good outcome.
- Choose to respond to distressing situations with calm and acceptance. The brain will release serotonin, the body's natural tranquilizer.
- See a challenge as something to motivate you.
- Focus on beneficial things in your life and what you can control.
- Visualize what you want your life to look like. Be specific, identify barriers, find solutions to overcome them.
- Redefine your goals if they are not working for you.
- View a failed attempt at something as an opportunity to learn.
- Don't be a perfectionist; accept that good, is good enough.
- Stop comparing yourselves to others; it's emotionally threatening to your self- esteem.
- Celebrate the small victories; they build momentum.
- Acknowledge that situations only have the meaning you've given them.
- View problems as temporary setbacks. Look for effective options to work through any complications and stumbling blocks.
- **Expect a good outcome.**

Who's with me?