

# Reflections

## Look on the Bright Side

**T**here's a proven connection between positive thinking and a number of life benefits, including a stronger immune system, lower stress, and better coping skills.

If thinking positively has so many advantages, why don't we all live in a state of complete bliss and happiness? The answer is twofold: Consistently adopting a positive attitude is not always easy, and few people care to admit that they are negative in the first place.

In researching this article, I spoke with dozens of men and women to find someone who would admit to battling negativity. My success rate? Zero. These same people were also (understandably) hesitant to talk about those they know who tend to have a more pessimistic outlook.

If you acknowledge that you have a negative streak, take heart. You're not doomed to an unhappy life. There are practical ways you can become a less critical and more-optimistic person. While this won't happen overnight, making small steps in the right direction will be well worth the effort.

With this in mind, let's look at a handful of ideas that will help you integrate positive changes into your life.

*(continued)*

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By Carol Heffernan • Reprinted with permission from [vibrantlife.com](https://vibrantlife.com).

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**THIS MONTH:**  
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*There are practical ways you can become a less critical and more-optimistic person.*

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### 1 | Think about what you think about.

Throughout the day, pause to evaluate the thoughts running through your head. In her book *The Writing Life*, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Annie Dillard states, “How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our life.” Certainly, this applies to our attitudes—whether positive or negative—that naturally become habitual. If you notice your thoughts have spun in an unconstructive, critical, or just plain depressing direction, quickly assess how you can incorporate a more positive twist.

Frustrated with a complicated problem? Try tackling it from a different angle. Facing another frenzied day with the grandkids? Look for ways to improve the situation. Annoyed by your meddling relative, noisy neighbor, or complaining coworker? Make a conscious effort to hone in on something you enjoy about that person.

You are in charge of your thoughts, and shifting your focus is a terrific first step toward triumphing over persistent negativity.

### 2 | Identify and avoid triggers that lead to negative thinking.

“We all have our own struggles, and I think awareness of what ‘sets you off’ is key toward developing more positive thinking,” says California counselor Kristi Hussain. “The bottom line is that negativity can become a bad habit that is hard to break. When you identify your triggers, finding positive things about that particular event or situation is helpful for maneuvering around negative thought patterns.”

For some people a downturn in thought can come from an activity as routine as watching the nightly news, paying the bills, or picking up after a spouse. When you catch yourself taking a negative turn, intentionally cancel it out with a positive thought or redirect your attention elsewhere. Awareness of these triggers will help you curtail obstacles to optimism.

### 3 | Choose your friends wisely.

If the coworkers, neighbors, and friends (including social media contacts) you spend time with are constantly complaining about their stressful jobs, looming financial pressures, or unruly kids, you may want to think about

developing relationships with people who have a more positive perspective.

Proverbs 13:20 says it well: “He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.” After spending time with a friend, ask yourself this simple question: “Do I feel better or worse than I did before?” If you find yourself drained or just plain unhappy, it may be time to develop new relationships. Certainly, this is easier said than done, but replacing negative influences with positive ones will help you take strides in improving your lifestyle.

### 4 | Regularly do something you enjoy or are good at.

I saw a bumper sticker the other day that said, “The more people I meet, the more I like my dog.” You’ve got to wonder how much of the population shares in this sentiment! It’s all too easy to allow the humdrum nature of life to lead to cynicism or even deter you from trying new things.

That’s why it’s crucial to give yourself something to look forward to each day. It can be as simple as playing a game of pickleball or taking a refreshing walk outside. A healthy dose of anticipation adds a pleasurable element to even the most routine life.

### 5 | Remember every day is a fresh start.

Consider the timeless wisdom of Romans 12:2: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” We’re not transformed by attending conferences on positive thinking or by being nicer people. We’re transformed by renovating our thought life.

Each of our inner thoughts and desires emerges in one way or another—no matter how hard we may try to mask them. When Jesus said, “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks,” He certainly knew what He was talking about.

Conquering negativity is about more than putting on a happy face and learning to say and do the “right” thing. The real issue is a matter of the heart and mind. Without a doubt, nurturing inward transformation will lead to a positive, healthier view of yourself, the people around you, and the life you are leading. ■

## An easy way to get an HRA reimbursement

A few months ago, we offered upon request a list of eligible expenses which can be submitted to your Health Reimbursement Account (HRA). While the HRA is primarily designed to assist in paying for your medical premiums and copays, there are numerous expenses you may submit for reimbursement, including Medicare Part B premiums paid to Social Security.

To submit Medicare B premiums for reimbursement, you must submit a claim form along with a copy of your annual statement from Social Security showing what your Medicare B deduction is each month. To get your latest copy of your Social Security benefits, log into your account at [ssa.gov/myaccount](https://ssa.gov/myaccount). Request claim forms through Alight by calling 844-360-4714. Remember that if you are married and your spouse has their individual retirement benefits and HRA account, each of you must use your own claim form.

Keep in mind that if you worked prior to 2000, and are receiving a monthly pension, you are already receiving a partial reimbursement from Adventist Retirement. For more information on what can be reimbursed through your HRA, send us an email to [SHARP@NADAdventist.org](mailto:SHARP@NADAdventist.org) and ask for the HRA Eligible Expense List. ■

## Tips for communicating with your adult children

As post-retirement parents age there is often a role-reversal in the parent/child dynamic when it comes to making decisions for the aging senior. Adult children may become self-appointed protectors of their parents which can lead to tensions in the parent/child relationship. Often, open communication can diffuse the conflict. Here are some strategies that may be helpful:

### FOR EVERYONE:

- ▶ Accept that aging is inevitable
- ▶ Put politics and disagreements aside
- ▶ Listen and reflect
- ▶ Work together proactively for solutions
- ▶ Treat one another with love and respect

### FOR THE SENIOR PARENT:

- ▶ Acknowledge the good intentions of your child(ren)
- ▶ Be open to the concerns of your children, avoid being defensive

### FOR ADULT CHILDREN:

- ▶ Discuss rather than dictate
- ▶ Support, don't preach or take over
- ▶ Agree that the aging senior is the one to make final decisions
- ▶ Express concerns as feedback, not instructions
- ▶ Listen to the concerns of your parents
- ▶ Empower; don't infantilize ■

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