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*Think Outside The Box*

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## Positive Solutions

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You are already well on your way to uprooting that unnecessary negativity from your life, and becoming a happier person. Let's continue on that journey!

Making the necessary changes to eliminate your negative outlook on life is not an easy task. In fact, many pessimists may be inclined to be skeptical, and even cynical, when it comes to this matter.

However, remember that those attitudes are nothing more than defense mechanisms, which your mind uses to protect itself from the effort of making a change. Of course, you know that a positive change is always for the better and have the strength to do it.

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center, with the text 'EXPLORABLE' in a large, bold, white font and 'Quiz Time!' in a smaller, white, cursive font below it. Below the logo are three quiz cards, each with a white border and a white background. The first card shows a pair of red roller skates on a wooden deck, with the text 'Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2' below it. The second card shows a fan of colorful pens, with the text 'Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2' below it. The third card shows a Ferris wheel at sunset, with the text 'Quiz: Flags in Europe' below it. To the right of the cards is a white button with the text 'See all quizzes =>'.

## Failure

If your first assumption tends to be negative, then the primary goal of this phase is to reconsider your negative projections of the future. As we have noted in Part I, pessimistic people tend to describe unfavorable situations as:

- Out of their control (negative events just happen to them and they can't do anything about it)
- Stable (consistent in time)
- General (one negative situation is generalized to all situations by an "Everything is

black” principle).

Instead, what you need to do is perceive the same events as:

- Within your control (although the circumstances might not have been in your favor, you still have a say in the matter)
- Unstable (just because something negative has happened once, it does not mean it will always happen)
- Specific (whatever negative event might have occurred, it is specific to this situation, and cannot be applied in all other aspects of life)

## **Example**

Let's look at an example. If you cannot find a job right now, it is only a temporary state, which may be the outcome of a variety of conditions, such as the poor socio-economic status of the country you live in.

However, it does not mean you will never find a job, nor does it mean that you are failing in life. Although your current status may be influenced by external factors, you can still take purposeful and determined action, to improve things for yourself.

## **What Can You Do?**

The task we'd recommend for this phase, is to write down at least one positive sentence about a negative situation. Use what you learned below, and acknowledge that the circumstances are specific, unstable, and while they may be influenced by external factors, you can still take action.

## **Example**

“The country's economy may not be in a good place, but that doesn't mean I can't find a job if I try hard enough - I will sign myself up for some courses, talk to advisors, and learn how to write better motivational letters.”

## **Setting Goals**

Self-sabotage is a strong component in the development and sustention of pessimism. Our goals organize our behaviors.

Lack of goals, or setting unrealistic goals, is characteristic of individuals who struggle with negativity. When you are focused on what is bad in your life, you tend to feel helpless in reaching your aims. “It's not me; it's you,” you keep saying to all those dead plants you didn't water enough.

Perhaps you are more focused on giving up, rather than standing up and taking action. To crush your inner saboteur, you need to start with taking smaller bites. In other words – your goal is to set small, realistic targets.

## **What Can You Do?**

Define realistic, small steps, in a positive context. You don't need to change your life right now; you just have to take a step towards making a slight improvement.

For example, say to yourself, "I want to look better," instead of, "I don't want to look this fat." Your goal needs to be achievable in a short period, and needs to be under your control.

## **Example**

"I am going to exercise once per week and I am going to lose a few pounds in a month", instead of, "I am going to workout every day and I am going to lose 20 pounds in two weeks". Make your goals as specific as possible, whether they are short-term or long-term.

When you set the main goal, it is important to define smaller sub-goals and specific behaviors that will lead you to the very end. Keep track of the relationship between the energy you put in achieving the sub-goals, and the changes in your mood.

## **Rewards and Motivation**

What you need to become aware of is that you can reward yourself. Start by evaluating your progress and think about the obstacles you've had to overcome, while you were heading towards your accomplishments. Positive, constructive rewards are a variable that has an enormous impact on our behavior.

Most importantly, the way in which we speak to ourselves can have the function of self-rewarding or self-punishment. What you don't want happening, is letting pessimism make you incapable of self-rewarding, and susceptible to self-punishment.

### **What Can You Do?**

Talk to yourself like lovers do. Make a list of rewards that you can provide for yourself when you achieve something positive, no matter what the accomplishment is.

Remember to focus on specific, realistic rewards that matter to you and that you can provide on your own.

While you do this, don't forget to write down how you felt when you received your prize. In the future, choose only those rewards that stimulate you to put more effort when you are working on your sub-goals.

### **Constructive Awards**

One crucial aspect of this strategy to remember is that you should only focus on positive rewards, that help with your goal. For example, if you have been trying to become healthier and get in shape, it would be counterproductive to reward yourself with a big piece of cake, at the end of the week.

Instead, do something you enjoy, which is also in harmony with your goal. To continue the example above, you could get a massage, plan a weekend getaway, buy a nice book, get an article of clothing, etc.

## **Productive Self-Talk**

Now that you are aware of the previous tip, it is important to realize you can use affirmative sentences as rewards. It is only natural not to be satisfied with yourself 100% of the time, but what matters is the perspective you choose to have. Productive self-talk can be helpful and motivating while beating yourself up will only lead to more useless negativity.

### **What Can You Do?**

Identify self-rewarding sentences that are focused on accomplishments – they should keep you motivated and help you be more confident. Write down at least five of those sentences. Most importantly - start using them as soon as possible. The time has come for you to honor yourself.

## **Positive Self-Image**

A negative self-image is best friends with hopelessness and helplessness. Of course, this also makes it your biggest enemy! Negative evaluation of yourself can lead to a vicious cycle of self-blame and mistrust in yourself, as well as everything around you.

In such situations, it is very challenging to see any progress in whatever you do, and you may be inclined to think that you are not good or worthy. Luckily, you can take charge of your self-image, since it can be defined as a list of inner dialogues.

### **What Can You Do?**

Your task is to write down five general positive sentences about yourself. For example: “I am loyal to my friends”, “I am great at graphic design”, “I am determined in achieving my goals”, etc. Try to come up with a couple of examples for each sentence.

This process might be difficult, depending on how deep into negativity you might have found yourself. So, you might need to say those sentences out loud - don't be modest.

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