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## Sunny Self-Talk: Seeing Through the Storm

Anger, depression, anxiety. How much control do you have over your negative feelings?

According to research, a lot more than you might think. In fact, there is always more than one way to view an event, and how you view any situation has a lot to do with how you then feel.

Your views also influence your actions. Let's say on the day of one woman's wedding, it rains. She might think, "Oh, this is awful. My wedding is ruined." She might even think, "Bad things always happen to me!" But what if the woman thought, "The rain is a disappointment. Still, I'm going to make the best day out of this anyway." Which way would you view the situation?

### **The dark cloud of negativity**

Negative thinking patterns can distort your view of what's really going on in your life. They can make you feel down, worried, or stressed-out, and they can provoke you into ill-chosen actions.

Learning to take a positive view on life and on yourself has major rewards, not just in terms of happiness, but also in terms of health. Studies support this. Research has linked a positive outlook with a number of health benefits—better coping by people with medical conditions ranging from AIDS to surgery, higher levels and better functioning of key immune cells in healthy people, fewer physical problems and a more active role in maintaining health by people who are trained to dispute their negative thoughts.

### **Talk back for a rosier view**

For some people, the slightest slipup automatically leads to harsh, self-critical thoughts that distort reality. Many blow a sense of threat out of proportion, discount the positive, magnify the negative, or anticipate failure as the likely outcome. These kinds of thoughts can keep you from achieving high self-esteem, your goals, and good relationships.

So how can you become a more positive person? The key is to learn to recognize what distorted thoughts you have. Ask yourself, "What evidence do I have for this?" "Is this really true?" and "Is this thought hurting me?" Then learn to substitute more realistic thoughts. It's a very simple idea really—pinpoint your distorted thoughts, dispute them, then replace them with realistic thoughts. Below are some examples of how to challenge some common negative thoughts.

Negative thought: I never do anything right.

Evidence: None.

Positive thought: I do plenty of things right.

Negative thought: I'm not OK unless everybody likes me.

Evidence: None.

Positive thought: No one person is liked by everyone. It's unrealistic to expect that.

Negative thought: My accomplishment is not enough. Anybody could have done it.

Evidence: None.

Positive thought: I still accomplished something and I deserve to be proud.

Negative thought: I should do this perfectly.

Evidence: None.

Positive thought: There is no such thing as perfection. I can only do my best.

Learn to challenge your negative thoughts. As you practice on a daily basis, positive, more realistic thoughts can become automatic.

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# A Personal Maintenance Guide to Cholesterol



Managing your cholesterol may seem complicated these days -- especially if you like to keep up with the latest research. Trying to remember the difference between "good" and "bad" cholesterol and maintaining the proper levels of each can seem intimidating.

To manage cholesterol men and women, adolescents and children over age 2 -- should do at least two things:

- Follow a prudent pattern of eating. If your total cholesterol level is high, eating right will help bring it down.
- Have your cholesterol level checked. If your total level is high -- 240 or above -- ask your doctor to help you design a program to lower it. If it's borderline -- between 200 and 239 -- you can probably manage on your own unless you have two or more other risk factors for coronary heart disease, such as obesity or a sedentary lifestyle. If it's good -- below 200 -- continue eating a healthful low-fat diet.

It's also important to know what your HDL and LDL cholesterol levels are, as well as your triglycerides. Evidence suggests that a higher level of "good" cholesterol (HDL) can help prevent coronary disease, just as a higher level of "bad" cholesterol (LDL) points to increased risks. An optimal LDL level is less than 100. A high triglyceride level appears to increase your risk for heart disease.

To lower total cholesterol:

- Cut down on dietary fat. Overall, no more than 30 percent of your daily calories should come from fat.
- Avoid foods high in saturated fats, such as prime beef; "dark meat" poultry and poultry skin; butter and other whole-milk dairy products; and tropical oils such as coconut, palm and palm kernel.
- Limit intake of other high cholesterol foods such as eggs, butter and cheese. Consume less than 200 mg of cholesterol per day.
- Replace most saturated fats (butter, lard) with polyunsaturated oils (such as safflower or soybean oil) and monounsaturated oils (such as olive oil). These oils should account for no more than 7 percent of your daily calories.

To raise HDL cholesterol:

- Eat more fatty fish, such as salmon or cod. They contain omega-3 fatty acids, which may help raise HDL and lower total cholesterol.
- Include more soluble fiber in your diet. Fruits and vegetables, beans and bran are popular sources.
- Get regular aerobic exercise. An inactive lifestyle is now considered a full-fledged risk factor for heart disease. Even moderate exercise, such as walking, done for 30 minutes at least three or four times a week will lower your overall risk.
- Lose weight if you need to. Excess weight raises total cholesterol and lowers HDL levels. Fortunately, combining a low-fat diet with a regular exercise program makes it easier to take weight off -- and keep it off.
- Stop smoking. Cigarette smokers have lower HDL levels and an increased risk of coronary disease.

## How to Survive the Sniffles



Going out in cold weather without a coat will not cause a cold. Wearing wet clothing will not cause a cold. A cold virus causes a cold. And one of the best ways to prevent a cold is to reduce the chances that someone will pass the virus on to you.

"Colds are caused by viruses passed by person-to-person contact, not by getting a chill or wearing wet socks," says Jack Gwaltney Jr., M.D., head of the Department of Epidemiology and Virology at the University of Virginia School of Medicine in Charlottesville. "Someone with a cold rubs his or her nose then touches your hand. As soon as you touch your nose or wipe your eyes, you're infected."

### Protect yourself

Because cold viruses enter the body through the nose, mouth, and eyes, you can protect yourself most effectively by keeping your hands away from those areas. These preventive measures also help:

Wash your hands often, especially after playing with children, shaking hands with someone who has a cold, or touching things used by a person with a cold.

Teach children to use disposable tissues and throw them away.

Move away from someone who is coughing or sneezing. The spray that may carry the virus travels about three feet before falling to the ground.

Keep your face clean. Keep long hair out of your eyes.

Wash your eyeglasses often with water or cleaning solution. Avoid sharing eyeglasses, sunglasses, or goggles. Always wash your hands before touching contact lenses.

### Soothe the symptoms

"Not everyone infected with a cold virus gets sick," Dr. Gwaltney says. "You may help your immune system fight a virus by getting enough rest and exercise and by keeping stress at a manageable level."

If you do develop a cold, Dr. Gwaltney recommends the following self-care treatments for your symptoms:

For nasal congestion, nose drops are more effective than oral decongestants and have fewer side effects. But use the drops for only two to three days. The drops have a rebound effect after that, making congestion worse.

For coughs, use a medicine with a cough suppressant such as dextromethorphan. Expectorant-only cough medicines are less effective.

To soothe a sore throat, mix a teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water and gargle, or use throat lozenges with topical anesthetics.

To relieve muscle aches and fever, take aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen.

Apply petroleum jelly or lip-chap ointment to a raw, red nose. Both products act as a protective barrier between sensitive areas and nasal secretions.

### When to call a doctor

Most colds get better in five to seven days without medical attention. Call a doctor if:

- Symptoms seem especially severe or different from those you usually experience with a cold.
- The cold lasts longer than usual.
- A fever of 101 degrees or higher lasts more than three days.
- You have trouble breathing or swallowing.
- You're suffering severe ear pain.
- Mucus or sputum is thick, green or rusty or odorous.