

NEUROPSYCHE
NETWORK

A YEAR OF



**POSITIVE
THINKING**

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Experience a year of positive thinking.

Where you are is exactly where you should be right now.

It doesn't matter if that place is boring or scary. It doesn't matter if you're excited or your heart is broken. Don't fight what you're feeling. Sit still and surrender to the experience. When you're ready, you can let go and move on.

It's been said that to counterbalance every negative thought you have, you need three positive ones. This is because your brain has a negativity bias – it looks for what's wrong rather than looking for the positive. But it doesn't have to be that way. Through the repetition of mantras, affirmations, and mental activities, you can retrain your brain to seek out the positive.

In this Neuropsyché short to Cyndie Spiegel's A Year of Positive Thinking, we can't give you an idea for every day of the year. Instead, we've selected a few reflections and exercises for each month to inspire you to live your best life.



The following applications are now being studied, either clinically or via community / citizen science

JANUARY

Kintsukuroi – meaning “golden repair” – is the Japanese craft of fixing broken ceramics using lacquer mixed with gold. The repair becomes part of the history of the object. And a new, more resilient, uniquely beautiful artwork emerges.

In the same way, you may fall, fail, and break in life. But you'll get up and repair yourself, over and over. You may never be the same person you were before, but your imperfections will make you more beautiful, stronger, and a better person.

So, live your life to the fullest. Don't rely on others to make you happy. Create that happiness yourself. Stare in awe at the beauty around you. And appreciate yourself for the person you are – imperfections and all.

During January, why not try these two great exercises?

First, get a notepad and pen. Write a list of things you would do if other people's opinions were unimportant. Prioritize your list. Which ones excite you? Make a plan to do all the things you've prioritized. Live your life as you want it to be.

Now think about what you're grateful for in your life, and write down three positive things about your day. Do this for the next ten days. Then share your list with three close friends. Together, experience the impact these things have had on your life.



FEBRUARY

February is the month of love. And loving yourself is your first step. Just as you can't expect perfection from others, don't expect it from yourself either. Think about what you love about yourself: Are there certain aspects that need more self-love? What could you do to love yourself more?

And when it comes to your partner, remember that love also requires compromise. But if a prerequisite for love is change – either an expectation from your partner for you to change or vice versa – walk away. Loving someone unconditionally allows you to see them as they really are. But when you love someone conditionally, what you actually see is them as you are!

You'll likely experience a broken heart at some point in your life – once, or many times – but you will survive the heartache, loss, and grief. Feel what you feel in its fullness, but don't allow yourself to become hard-hearted. Eventually, you need to let the sunlight back in and reflect that in your heart and the world around you.

This short weekly ritual will let love pour into your life:

Light a candle – Spiegel suggests either red or pink. Sit comfortably with your feet firmly on the ground or, if you prefer, lie down. Read and repeat phrases about love as many times as you want. Try phrases like, “May I choose love and allow it to break open my soul and enter my heart.” “May I choose love courageously.” “May others love me, and I return that love with all my heart.”

MARCH

Loneliness is something everyone feels at some point in their life. But you're never really alone. Reach out to your community and friends. And even though it may seem scary, allow yourself to speak to strangers too – they may even become your friends.

And when adversity comes calling, think about it as an opportunity for growth. You may fall apart, but you'll put yourself back together again. Through it, you'll learn to hope, to believe, and to dream. Not only will you survive the hard times; they'll also teach you how to thrive!

Now think back to the gratitude exercise you did in January. For March, try this extended version:

Take a blank sheet of paper and write "I am grateful for ..." at the top. Beneath it, start a list and keep writing until you can't write anymore. Include everything you think of. Don't stop to judge or criticize your list. When that's done, put it up on a wall where you can see it, share it with friends, and take a photo of it to use as a background on your phone or computer. This list is just the beginning; now try to add to it regularly!

APRIL

Just as caterpillars can transform into butterflies, ordinary people can become extraordinary too – including you! Here are three positive things you can implement this month to transform into a better you.

First, don't be judgemental. If someone does something you dislike, hold back your disapproval. After all, tomorrow it may be you who's doing something someone else disapproves of.

Second, forgive. In reality, this is a service to yourself. When you forgive, it doesn't mean that you've accepted what happened. It just means you've let things go so you can move on in peace. Don't be a hostage to negativity!

Third, show compassion. Be kinder than necessary. Give up your seat to a stranger. Believe in what others want to do. Smile. And be generous in your thoughts. Being compassionate could change someone else's life. And it will definitely change yours.

MAY

Let's start May with a small exercise in positivity.

Think about five things you really enjoy. Maybe it's reading novels – or maybe it's exploring nearby towns or other places on weekends. Whatever those things are, write them down. Next, share your list with someone else, and ask them to do the same. Over the next month, make time to do the things on your lists together. When you get to the end of the month, share your experience with a third person. And then? Well, you're ready to write a list for the next month.

Don't forget to make some time for yourself too. Set aside ten minutes toward the end of each day to spend alone. Contemplate your day and connect with yourself – the person you really are. Breathe deeply and wind down.

JUNE

Once there was a farmer who owned a horse. His neighbors told him he was lucky to own a horse. “Maybe,” he replied.

One day, the horse ran away. His neighbors came around and sympathized with him. “Such bad luck!” they said. “Maybe,” he answered.

The horse returned a few days later, accompanied by some wild horses. His neighbors thought this was wonderful. The farmer simply said, “Maybe.”

The farmer’s son tried to tame one of the horses, but it threw him to the ground and he broke his leg. The neighbors offered their sympathy once more: “How unfortunate!” “Maybe,” the farmer replied.

The next day, soldiers came to take young men away to fight in the army. The farmer’s son was left behind. “You’re so lucky,” the neighbors said. “Maybe,” said the farmer, once again.

This Taoist parable teaches us that fortune and misfortune are a matter of perspective – we can’t truly know how things will turn out. Think about how you view your own circumstances. Do you view yourself as fortunate or unfortunate? Instead, doesn’t it make sense to stay open-minded and neutral, just like the farmer?

And while you’re contemplating what comes next, remember that even if something seems important to you today, tomorrow it may be completely irrelevant. Why not start a list of things that, in reality, didn’t matter to you much at all? Return to it anytime you feel things are piling up, and get a fresh perspective on your problem.

JULY

However the world might seem right now, don't stop dreaming. Take stock of how strong you are. Let your spirit rise to the top of every mountain, and believe that everything is possible. Let the magic of your optimism imbue you with the sense that your hopes and dreams can become reality.

Now take a moment to think about all of the things that you should do. Take a pen and paper, and write them down. When you're done, consider each item and ask, Who told me that I should do this? You may be surprised to find that many of the items on your list are obligations or beliefs others have placed upon you, or they're a result of some guilt you feel. Think about whether these "obligations" are stopping you from living the life you really want to live. Cross out anything on the list that's holding you back. Take a deep breath, and enjoy your newfound freedom of decision!

AUGUST

For a friendship to flourish, you don't need to have common interests or similar personalities. What's more important is that your connection comes from the heart – and that you both value your connection equally. Nurture relationships that take you out of your comfort zone; these will optimize and sustain your own growth and bring you joy, love, and happiness. And make space for your true friends as they'll be by your side not only for the good times, but also during times of turmoil.

Only you are responsible if your life becomes boring. So notice the magic moments each day. They're all around you, from bumping into a friend you haven't seen for a while to a smile from a stranger on the train – or just a rainbow after a storm.

As August progresses, be kind to yourself. Eat wholesome foods. Take some time to relax. And if you want to be especially kind to yourself, try this exercise:

Write yourself a series of short, affectionate notes on small pieces of paper. It shouldn't take you more than about ten minutes. Then find places to leave these notes – perhaps in your wallet, under your pillow, or in your cookie jar. When you discover them later, they'll act as little reminders of what an extraordinary person you are.

SEPTEMBER

Start this month by making a list of what you consider to be your best qualities. Then make your list into a series of affirmations. You can do this simply by adding “I am” before each one. So if you’ve written “caring partner,” you’d make it “I am a caring partner.” If you have “generous to my friends,” make it “I am generous to my friends,” and so on.

Say each of your affirmations out loud. How does that feel?

Now record them. When you feel the need, listen to your recording and remember how amazing you are.

Breathing is the essence of life. It’s so automatic to most of us that we forget how powerful it is. We can use a simple breathing technique to calm us when we feel angry, anxious, or deflated.

First, breathe in and breathe out fully. Then inhale deeply while imagining a white ball of light moving up your spine. Hold that breath for about two seconds. And then exhale, imagining that white ball of light descending as you do so. Repeat this ten times. If you can, make each breath in and out slightly longer than the last. Find your calmness again.

OCTOBER

Every moment of your life up until now has contributed to the person you've become – and will continue to become. And that includes the beauty in your life as well as the trauma. Your past experiences allow you to show empathy to others going through similar circumstances. But your past also creates possibilities for you – if you give it permission to do so. Only you can decide whether your past lies on you heavily or lightly.

When things in your life aren't going as you'd like, think about how you can change things. Are you only reading negative things? Seek out something positive instead. Are the people around you down in the dumps? Allow yourself to be happy, and maybe your happiness will rub off on them too. If something isn't going right in your world, seek out ways to change course.



NOVEMBER

Do you ever feel like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders? How does it make you feel? Regretful? Futile? Helpless?

We all need help sometimes, so don't be shy about asking for it! Actually, being willing to ask for help is a sign of strength. What you're demonstrating is that you want to take care of not only yourself, but also everyone around you. You don't need to face things alone; there's a whole world out there. Just ask!

It's great when life is going swimmingly – you can't help but be positive when you're experiencing great joy and happiness. But at other times, you likely experience grief, sadness, fear, and anger. Don't shut out your feelings. They're all important because they help you get through difficult situations successfully. So feel them to their fullest, knowing that soon joy and happiness will return.

DECEMBER

You are extraordinary ... so stop spending so much time criticizing yourself! Spend some time thinking about what it is you love about yourself – your physical traits, your qualities. Write them down, and don't stop until you have 25 things. Read your list, and then file it away somewhere. Make a calendar note to revisit your list six months from now. Repeat this yearly. You could even do this as part of your birthday celebration each year.

Next time your inner critic – that voice inside you that questions everything you do – starts to bully you, tell yourself the exact opposite, even if you don't really believe it. For example, if your inner critic says, "Nah, you don't have enough experience to do that," you say, "I have plenty of experience to tackle this task." You'll eventually come to believe what you tell yourself. Be patient; it may take some time, but it will happen.

And here's a final thought to bring us to the end of December: if something you do makes you happy, just do it.



FINAL

SUMMARY

“Take a moment now to reflect on your year: What have you done? What have you learned about yourself? Did any of your experiences change your perspective on life?

Now think about the year ahead, and the possibilities that lie before you. How do you want to spend your life?

And finally, take a moment to come up with three words that best express how you wish to move forward into the new year.

Remember how we started this year of positive thinking? Where you are is exactly where you should be right now.

