

SafetyNet: Winter 2017

Let's Talk About Positive Mental Health

What is positive mental health?

Mental health is about the way you think and feel and about dealing with life's ups and downs. If you have positive mental health you can:

- Cope with changes in your life
- Deal with all kinds of feelings and emotions
- Make the most of your life – at home, at work and in the community.



Supporting positive mental health.

As a supporter, you can encourage positive mental health. Keys to positive mental health include:

- Having friendships and connecting with others
- Maintaining good physical health
- Eating right and being active
- Getting enough sleep
- Developing coping skills to deal with stress
- Limiting alcohol and tobacco use
- Doing something that makes you happy every day.

Positive mental health does not mean that you are free from mental health problems. Mental health problems can come from everyday worries and stress. Some mental health problems include depression, addiction, and bipolar disorder. To learn more about mental health problems go to <http://ddssafety.net/health/mental-health/understanding-mental-health-conditions>

To learn more, check out the SafetyNet resource links at the end of this article.

There is another key to positive mental health...OPTIMISM! Optimism is a hopeful attitude about life. It conveys a positive outlook to those around you. The optimist feels that everything will turn out well. The optimist expects the best in all things.

People who think optimistically have a greater sense of well being. When they hope for something, they are hoping for something good. They believe that what they are hoping for is possible.

People who are optimistic enjoy life more. They are generally healthier, and heal faster when sick. An optimistic, hopeful attitude helps people deal with stress. It can help to keep people from getting depressed. It may even help people live longer!

The best thing about optimism is that it can be learned. There are things you can do to help people learn about optimism:

- Be a good role model. Use language that supports positive thoughts and feelings.
- Encourage positive “self-talk.” Help people to be aware of “bad” talk and learn “good” talk.
- Create opportunities for laughter. Shared laughter strengthens relationships. It reduces stress and makes us feel good about ourselves and others.
- Support and recognize accomplishments. Give sincere compliments. Help people recognize what is going well for them.



Be An Optimist! Be a Good Role Model

What you do and say either carries a sense of optimism or pessimism - that things will turn out well or turn out bad. Which of the following statements do you think will get a more positive response?



“You did a great job cleaning your room! I’ll bet you feel good when you look at your nice clean room. Good for you!”

“You cleaned your room? It still looks like a mess to me. You didn’t do a very good job. You never do.”

As a supporter you can set a good example of positive communication. People learn from what you do and say. To be an optimistic role model:

- Focus on the person’s strengths and accomplishments.
- Speak respectfully to the person you support and to others.
- Practice active listening. Pay attention. Look at the person. Make eye contact. Show interest.
- Summarize what the person is saying. Ask questions for clarification.
- Use friendly body language, such as nodding or smiling.
- Do not judge, argue or put the person down.

Positive communication is a skill we can all improve on. Become more aware of what you say and do that is particularly positive or negative. Use what you learn to be more positive.

Be An Optimist! Practice Positive “Self-Talk”

Self-talk is what you say to yourself that no one else hears. It can be positive or negative. Positive self-talk, or self-affirmation, makes you feel good about yourself, such as:

- *I can do it.*
- *I am good at my job.*
- *My friends really like me.*

Negative self-talk makes you feel bad. It can make you feel down and depressed, such as:

- *I can’t do anything right.*
- *Nobody likes me.*
- *I’m no good.*

The good news is that people can learn positive self-talk. As a supporter you can help. Many times people do not realize they are thinking negatively.

Encourage the person you work with to keep a *Self-Talk Diary*



[\[http://ddssafety.net/health/mental-health/tip-sheet-feeling-good-about-yourself\]](http://ddssafety.net/health/mental-health/tip-sheet-feeling-good-about-yourself) for a few days. Use this activity to help them become more aware of their self-talk. Support positive self-talk that makes the person feel good. When you hear a lot of negative self-talk, help the person say “STOP.” Encourage the person to practice positive self-talk, like “I can do it!” Saying good things over and over to oneself can make a person feel better.

Be An Optimist! Create Opportunities for Laughter

It is true! Laughter IS the best medicine. Laughter is good for both physical and mental health. Laughter lowers stress, reduces pain, and makes us feel more optimistic and positive about our lives.

As a supporter you can create opportunities for laughter. You can encourage others to do the same.

- Watch a funny movie or TV show.
- Share a good joke or funny story.
- Put up a funny picture.
- Be playful and silly.
- Do things that are fun!

Laughter is something that can be practiced and learned. It should be enjoyed all the time – every day. You do not even need something funny to make you laugh – just laugh. Laughter is contagious.

Help the people you support to laugh - to see the lighter side of life. Looking for humor in a bad situation can only make it better. When something is getting a person down, ask these questions:

Is it really that bad?
Is it worth getting upset over?
Is it really your problem?

Watch the SafetyNet video, *Just Laugh!* [\[http://ddssafety.net/node/962\]](http://ddssafety.net/node/962) and laugh together. Use humor to create optimism and hope.

Here are some jokes to tell the people you support:

- ☺ What do you get when you play a country song backwards? *You get your wife back, your dog back, and your truck back!*
- ☺ What do you call a bear with no teeth? *A gummy bear!*
- ☺ Where does a snowman keep his money? *In a snow bank!*
- ☺ Did you hear about the guy who got hit on the head with a can of soda? *He was lucky it was a soft drink!*

Be An Optimist! Support and Recognize Accomplishments

Celebrate accomplishments regularly!
Celebrate small things - like taking a ten minute walk - and big things - like getting a job. Share a snack, eat a special meal, enjoy a cup of coffee...go somewhere fun! Help the person you support focus their attention on:

- Good things that happen in their lives, and,
- Good things that others do to show support.



Encourage keeping a *Three Good Things – A Daily Diary*

[\[http://ddssafety.net/health/mental-health/tools-positive-thinking\]](http://ddssafety.net/health/mental-health/tools-positive-thinking) to record and talk about things that went well each day. Talk about what went well and what the person can do to increase good things in their life. Talk about a *Best Day* [\[http://ddssafety.net/health/mental-health/tools-positive-thinking\]](http://ddssafety.net/health/mental-health/tools-positive-thinking), what made it that way, and how the person could have more best days.

By practicing optimism and being hopeful you CAN and WILL support the people you work with to live healthier and happier lives.



SAFETYNET RESOURCE LIST - Keys to Positive Mental Health (Click the title or copy and paste the URL)

All About Supporting Healthy Friendships

GUIDELINES FOR SAFETYNET LEARNING TOOLS Topic: Supporting Healthy Friendships. Use the materials below to help others learn more about supporting healthy friendships. <http://www.ddssafety.net/everyday-life/friendships-and-relationships/all-about-supporting-healthy-friendships-0>

All About Eating Right and Being Active

GUIDELINES FOR SAFETYNET LEARNING TOOLS Topic: Healthy Living Use the materials below to help others learn more about eating right and being active. <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/eating-healthy-and-staying-active/all-about-eating-right-and-being-active>

All About Stress Management

GUIDELINES FOR SAFETYNET LEARNING TOOLS Topic: Stress Management Use the materials below to help others learn more about how to deal with stress. <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/stress-management/all-about-stress-management>

Drinking and Smoking

Drinking too much alcohol and smoking are bad for you. Find out how to stop. <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/drinking-and-smoking>