

Positive Works II

Alberta
HUMAN RESOURCES
AND EMPLOYMENT

the people
& workplace
department

This book is written to help you enhance your positive beliefs, attitudes and skills. It can increase your life and work exploration by helping you:

- understand the importance that positive personal qualities have on creating, getting and keeping work
- explore how being positive about the future can lead to creative and interesting career possibilities
- evaluate your experience and determine which abilities and attitudes contribute to your work activities
- outline and adopt strategies to overcome personal barriers to education and training
- understand how positive skills and attitudes influence success
- connect with further information and resources.

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////// I ntroduction

These days, change is constant. All of us face changes, big and small, in every aspect of our lives. You can make the most of change if:

you have positive beliefs and attitudes
+
you are positively skilled.

Your beliefs, attitudes and skills affect every area of your personal and work life. They can hold you back or put you on top — it's up to you!

Positive beliefs, attitudes and skills will help you succeed in your work, work search, learning and relationships.

This book is full of suggestions, tips and activities to help you explore and develop your own positive beliefs, attitudes and skills. And when you put your “positives” to work for you, you'll discover that...

Positive works!



SECTION ONE:



Getting to Know Your Positives

ARCHIVED



Archived

Positive Beliefs

What are Beliefs?

Beliefs are the opinions or points of view that we develop over time as a result of what we learn and experience. Our beliefs affect the way we behave. For example, Shelley believes that hard work is the key to success — she puts a lot of energy into her work search. Milos believes in treating people as he likes to be treated — he’s well-liked and respected among his friends. Darlene believes that the only way to find out is to ask — she asks a lot of questions in class.

Your beliefs can support you or hold you back.

“Whether you think you can or can’t, you’re right.”

– Henry Ford

Beliefs as Barriers

In some cases, your beliefs may be holding you back from achieving your goals. A belief may be a barrier if it causes you to:

- doubt yourself or your potential
- withdraw or quit.

Here are some examples of beliefs as barriers.

WORK

Belief: Perry believes that management has already decided who’s going to get that new position.

Outcome: Perry decides not to bother applying for the new position. He’s disappointed to learn that someone less qualified got the position he really wanted and was qualified for.

WORK SEARCH

Belief: Tamara believes there are no jobs out there.

Outcome: Tamara puts little or no effort into preparing her résumé and conducting a targeted work search. She settles for a minimum wage position she really dislikes.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Belief: Cal believes he’s not very smart.

Outcome: Cal tunes out in class, doesn’t complete his assignments and sets himself up to fail.

RELATIONSHIPS

Belief: Jina believes that nobody understands her or cares what happens to her.

Outcome: Jina keeps her worries to herself so her friends and family are unaware of her needs and offer her little support.

Empowering Beliefs

How well are your beliefs serving you? Do they act as barriers or do they support you? You can replace your barrier beliefs with empowering beliefs — the kind that help you to achieve your goals.

Use the following exercise to help you discover the beliefs that empower you and those that hold you back:

- In each category (work, work search, and so on), write down some of the things you believe. Be honest with yourself. Don't write down what you think you *should* believe or what others might believe. Write down what **you** believe.
- For each belief, decide whether it's a barrier or whether it empowers you.

BELIEFS

Empowering Barrier

Work:	<i>Example:</i> I'll never get a promotion.	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
Work Search:	<i>Example:</i> There are no jobs out there.	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
Learning Opportunities:	<i>Example:</i> Learning can be fun.	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
Relationships:	<i>Example:</i> People are basically good.	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
Leisure:	<i>Example:</i> I have no time to exercise.	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___
_____	_____	___	___

"We tend to get what we expect."

– Norman Vincent Peale



You can turn your barrier beliefs into empowering beliefs. Here's how:

- Rewrite your barrier beliefs from the previous exercise into the following table.
- Change the wording by switching negatives for positives. Use the example as a guide.

OLD BARRIER BELIEFS

Example: I'll never get a promotion.

NEW EMPOWERING BELIEFS

I am good at my job. I will get a promotion if I keep improving my skills and learning more about the company.

Put your empowering beliefs to work for you:

- Write out your empowering beliefs on a piece of paper. Read them aloud every day.
- Write out each of your empowering beliefs on a separate piece of paper. Tape or tack them up where you'll see them — for example, on your bathroom mirror or refrigerator door.
- When you hear yourself using a barrier belief (whether you think it or say it aloud), turn it around into a positive statement, like you did in the exercise above.

As you put your empowering beliefs to work for you, pay attention to how you feel about yourself and your goals. We hope you notice a positive difference!



////// P ositive Attitudes

What Are Attitudes? How Do They Affect Us?

Attitudes are ways of responding to the world around us. We develop our attitudes based on what we learn and what we experience. Attitudes affect the way we think, act and feel. Positive attitudes can make the difference between success and failure. For example, Paula has a positive attitude towards her customers. She's always willing to help them find what they need, to answer their questions and to make suggestions. Aaron, on the other hand, has a less positive attitude. He tolerates the customers who shop at the store where he works. He doesn't like answering their questions and he resents tidying up after them. Who's going to succeed in the retail business — Aaron or Paula?

Fortunately, as we learn and experience new things, we can change our attitudes.

Being Positive

Being positive works! It can help you to:

- succeed at your job
- be chosen for other positions or promotions
- hold on to your job in tough times
- have a more satisfying personal life.

Being with positive people feels good. When you're with them, you pick up on their energy, their excitement. You feel charged up and ready to tackle anything. Being with negative people, on the other hand, doesn't feel so good. They can drain energy away from everyone, including themselves.

If you adopt a positive attitude, you'll have a positive effect on the people around you, from co-workers and customers to family and friends. And then your attitude will be working for you, not against you.

Your attitude determines your altitude!

Are You Positively Charged? An Attitude Survey

Here's an opportunity for you to figure out how positive or negative you tend to be. Beside each question, write the number that most closely represents how you'd react, most of the time. For the best results, go with your first reaction!

3 – Mostly Yes

2 – Sometimes

1 – Mostly No

1. ___ Are you friendly?
 2. ___ Do you try not to complain?
 3. ___ Can you be optimistic when others aren't?
 4. ___ Do you have a sense of duty and responsibility?
 5. ___ Do you control your temper?
 6. ___ Do you speak well of your employer or your instructor?
 7. ___ Do you feel well most of the time?
 8. ___ Do you follow directions willingly, asking questions when necessary?
 9. ___ Do you keep your promises?
 10. ___ Are you organized?
 11. ___ Do you admit to your mistakes?
 12. ___ Is it easy for you to like most people?
 13. ___ Can you stick to a boring task without being forced to?
 14. ___ Do you know your weaknesses and work to improve them?
 15. ___ Can you take being teased?
 16. ___ Do you try not to feel sorry for yourself?
 17. ___ Are you courteous?
 18. ___ Are you neat in your personal appearance and work habits?
 19. ___ Do you respect other people's opinions?
 20. ___ Can you adapt easily to new and unexpected situations?
 21. ___ Do you tolerate other people's beliefs?
 22. ___ Can you stop yourself from sulking when you don't get your way?
 23. ___ Are you a good listener?
 24. ___ Are you the kind of friend you would like others to be?
 25. ___ Can you disagree without being disagreeable?
 26. ___ Are you normally on time?
 27. ___ Do you consider yourself to be a courteous driver?
 28. ___ Do you usually speak well of others?
 29. ___ Can you take being criticized without feeling hurt or resentful?
 30. ___ Do you generally look at the bright side of things?
 31. ___ Can you work with someone you dislike?
 32. ___ Are you pleasant to others even when you aren't pleased about something?
 33. ___ Are you enthusiastic about other people's interests?
 34. ___ Do you tend to be enthusiastic about whatever you do?
 35. ___ Are you honest and sincere?
- ___ Total
(Maximum score: 105)

Total your score and rate yourself according to the following scale:

- 95 - 105 Your positives are positively terrific!
- 75 - 94 Your positives are definitely admirable!
- 45 - 74 Your positives need work in certain areas.
- Below 45 Your positives have almost fizzled out. Take a close look at your attitude.

Did you answer any of the survey questions with a “1”? If you did, select up to five of those areas and list them below:

POSITIVES TO WORK ON

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

To begin working on your positives, take the following steps for each item on your list:

- Think about how this attitude may be holding you back.
- Rewrite the statement as a positive. For example, if number 25 is on your list, rewrite it as “I can disagree without becoming disagreeable.” Place this positive statement where you’ll see it often.
- Starting today, promise yourself that the next time this situation comes up, you’ll react positively to it — just this once. For example, if number two is on your list and you have the opportunity to complain — don’t. Notice how being positive makes you feel. (Remember, you only need to react positively to each situation on your list once a day — unless it feels so good you want to try it more often!) Take the same step tomorrow and the next day.

Read on for more tips and activities to help you keep building your positive attitudes!

“Positive thinking is reacting positively to a negative situation.”

– Bill Havens



Positively Skilled

If you want to put your positive beliefs and positive attitudes to work for you then you'll also need positive skills in:

- communication
- stress management
- change resilience
- career self-reliance.

These skills can help you to achieve your goals in every area of your life, from work to learning to relationships. This section of *Positive Works II* describes each skill and provides you with exercises so you can put each skill to work for you.

Positive Communication

Positive communication is a two-way flow, an exchange of information. It:

- is open, honest, direct
- shows mutual respect
- values the thoughts, ideas, opinions and feelings of the other person(s)
- strives for a winning outcome for everyone involved.

But remember, communication is more than just the words we say. It also involves:

- *body language*, the visual part of communication. It includes your posture, gestures, facial expressions and the way you dress and groom yourself. Body language says a lot about who you are and how you feel.
- *voice*, the emotional part of communication. Fast or slow, loud or soft, high or low — how your voice sounds often communicates how you feel about yourself and what you're saying.

Tips for Positive Communication

1. Own your messages. Use personal pronouns like "I" and "my." For example, "I would like to discuss the options in detail" instead of "Maybe there should be some discussion about the options."
2. Make your messages clear, complete and specific. Plan what you want to say before you say it. That way, you can avoid saying something you might regret later. Be straightforward in what you say. Talking around a topic can cause confusion and uncertainty. This also can apply to giving instructions.
3. Ask questions — what? when? how? — to make sure you understand what's required. Don't assume you know what the speaker means. Paraphrasing (expressing what was said using different words) helps to confirm that you understand what was said.

-
4. Be genuinely interested in discussions and give listeners or speakers your full attention. Don't interrupt. Allow the person who's speaking to finish before you respond. This courtesy will always be viewed positively.
 5. When giving feedback, be tactful, firm, patient and sensitive. Focus on the behaviour or the specific task rather than on the person. For example, "There's a gap between the window frame and the drywall" instead of "You did a lousy job framing that window." Point out what worked well. Suggest alternatives. Give feedback in private.
 6. Invite feedback about your own work. Be open to it. Regard it as an opportunity to improve the quality of your work and not as a personal attack.
 7. Believe in yourself. Value what you have to say. Your insights could benefit others.

Here's What Positive Communication Sounds Like...

- "I'm very interested in having an interview for this position. I'm looking forward to showing you how I could add value to your organization. Unfortunately, I'll be out of town at the time of the interview. I'd like to schedule another time."
- "Mr. Edwards, I'm confused. Would you please clarify what you want in this assignment?"
- "I want this family gathering to be a success. Do you have any suggestions for how we should get started organizing it?"
- "I understand the Tuesday deadline is really important. However, as a result of the computer problems we've had today, I won't have it completed on schedule unless I have some help. Which other staff would be able to work on it with me?"

Communicate effectively! Believe in yourself. Believe in your right:

- to be listened to and respected
- to information, help and access to resources.

Practice Your Positive Communication Skills

Read the following statements. If you actually spoke like this to people in these situations, they would likely react negatively.

How could you rewrite each of these statements more positively? Have some fun with this exercise — practice some different lines with a friend.

“Your radio’s too loud! Turn it off. It’s really bothering me.”

“I can’t make it in for an interview by 2 o’clock — there’s no way!”

“That’s a dumb idea. We tried it before and it didn’t work!”

“Doing it that way is wasting time and costing us money!”

“You never give us enough warning about assignments and tests.”

“When is somebody going to do something about the number of phone calls we’re getting?”

“I can’t stand listening to her complain about her boyfriend all the time.”

“Somebody better get this photocopier fixed or I’m going to lose my temper. How can anyone work with this equipment?”

“No way am I staying late to get this done. My son’s got a hockey practice at 6.”

Positive communication takes practice!

You can practice positive communication every day:

- In conversation at least once a day, focus on really listening. Look at the speaker and nod or say “uh-huh” to signal that you’re hearing him or her. Don’t fiddle or fidget with your pen, your hair or your hands. Try not to use your listening time for thinking about what you’re going to say. What do you learn when you listen this closely?
- Practice paying attention to body language. Notice the body language of the people you speak with. Does it match what they’re saying? Try watching TV with the sound turned down. How well can you follow what’s going on, even when you can’t hear what’s being said?
- Several times a day, pay close attention to your own body language. Can you change how well people “hear” you by changing how you sit or stand or by making eye contact?
- Take 15 minutes or so each evening to review the day’s communication. Which conversations were successful? Why? Which ones were less than successful? Why? What could you do to improve your positive communication?

Asking improves your chances of receiving by 200 per cent!

Stress Management

Too much work, too much pressure, too much responsibility...these are the situations that create stress — even in the most dedicated, ambitious and energetic people.

Stress is a physical, chemical or emotional reaction that can cause tension in our minds and bodies. A certain amount of stress is normal and positive. For example, the rush a performer or an athlete feels before a show or competition adds spark and energy to their performance. It’s a motivator.

On the other hand, the stress of too many demands at work, at school or at home can take away your energy and leave you less able to succeed. You can also experience stress when:

- you feel trapped
- your values are compromised
- your expectations are not being met.

Stress can cause a long list of problems:

- headaches and backaches
- inability to fight illness
- skin, heart and digestive problems
- tiredness
- depression
- difficulty in sleeping
- eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
- feeling short-tempered and/or worried all the time.

The good news is, you can do something positive about stress! You can learn to manage it by making changes that will help you:

- avoid stress
- deal better with the stress you can't avoid.

The first step in stress management is to find out what you're dealing with. How much stress do you have in your life? Take our survey and see...

STRESS, STRESS, S T R E S S !

For each of the situations in the list below, rate how you would usually respond. Go with your first reaction.

4 – Always 3 – Usually 2 – Sometimes 1 – Never

Do you:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ___ 1. always have a lot to do and no time to do it? | ___ 11. need to win the games you play in order to enjoy them? |
| ___ 2. worry about what would happen if you ever had to take a day off sick? | ___ 12. feel guilty if you take time to just do nothing? |
| ___ 3. speed up the car to beat the red light? | ___ 13. have trouble saying “no” to requests for your time? |
| ___ 4. expect everyone, especially yourself, to do their very best all the time? | ___ 14. keep your problems and worries to yourself? |
| ___ 5. consider “small talk” to be a waste of time? | ___ 15. tend not to ask for help? |
| ___ 6. always know what time it is? | ___ 16. think of yourself as a “go-getter”? |
| ___ 7. feel sorry for yourself because of how hard you have to work? | ___ 17. need to have other people admire you? |
| ___ 8. have a tendency to be short-tempered with family or friends? | ___ 18. find yourself still working when everyone else has gone home? |
| ___ 9. have trouble dealing with a change in plans? | ___ 19. always have a deadline or set one for yourself? |
| ___ 10. find it hard to make time for exercise? | ___ 20. have almost no time for your hobbies or yourself? |
| | _____ TOTAL |

To find out how stressed you are, rate yourself on the following scale.

If your total was ...

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 20-30 | A little more positive stress in your life could help you achieve the things you want. |
| 31-50 | You've found a good balance between handling stress and avoiding it. You're managing your stress! |
| 51-60 | You could be dealing with one or more stress-related problems. Read the next few pages for some help managing your stress. |
| 60 plus | Stress alert! Time to take some positive action to manage your stress. Read on! |

To Manage Stress

- change the situation that's causing your stress
- OR
- change how you respond to the stress.

Raj and Petra are learning to manage their stress. Here are their stories:

Raj is busy — he works, he has a young family and he volunteers. He used to feel as if it were his responsibility to help out whenever he could. As a result Raj always said “yes” to requests for his time and he always felt overwhelmed. Now he's learning how to say “no” to requests that aren't a priority. Raj is changing the situation that's causing his stress.

Petra doesn't like the stress of writing final exams. Last term, she didn't give herself enough time to study. During her finals, she was tense and worried and didn't do as well as she thought she could. Since the beginning of the current term, Petra has been reviewing and studying every subject in depth. Petra's changing how she responds to stress.

Tips for Managing Stress

Here are some strategies to help you manage your stress:

1. When you feel under pressure at work, at home or at school, take regular breaks (go for a walk, do some stretches) or switch to a less stressful task. Share your workload, if you can. Realize that asking for help doesn't mean you can't handle the job — it means you want to do the job well and on time.
2. Know the limits of your time and energy. Set priorities. Learn how to say no. If you always feel like you're just about at your breaking point, you're less likely to achieve your career and life goals.
3. Discuss your workload with your instructor, supervisor, co-workers or family. Tell them how much of the workload you can reasonably handle and suggest other ways to get the rest of the work done. Work out an arrangement that everyone can live with.
4. Focus on the positive aspects of your situation: the people, the physical environment, the atmosphere, the actual tasks you're doing, the opportunities for self-improvement and growth.
5. Listen to your self-talk. Try not to lay a guilt trip on yourself. Instead of the words "I should," say "I would" or "I could do such and such." Answer each negative thought with a positive response. For example, say:
 - "I've succeeded at many things" instead of "I'm a failure."
 - "I've done my best to prepare" instead of "I'll never be ready."
 - "I'll handle myself with confidence" instead of "I'm going to fall apart."
6. Be kind to yourself. Focus on your own abilities and limitations. Avoid comparing yourself to others. Believe in yourself. You can do it!
7. When you're facing a stressful situation, create a picture of it in your mind. See yourself handling the situation well. (Many performers and athletes use this visioning technique to prepare for a performance or a competition.)
8. Seek out positive people who'll give you emotional support. Talk to trusted co-workers, family members and friends about your concerns. If these people are interested, invite them to help you brainstorm ideas for managing stress.
9. Energize yourself with regular sleep, good nutrition, physical exercise and recreation.
10. Learn to relax. Have some fun. Keep your sense of humour. Laughter is a wonderful way to release tension, so use it as often as you can.
11. Seek personal fulfilment. Get involved in activities that you enjoy.
12. Live a balanced life. Make time for work, family and play.

You'll know you're managing stress successfully when you:

- no longer feel trapped
- can use stress positively as a motivator
- feel as if your life belongs to you and you're deciding how to live it.

Make Leisure a Priority

You may see your work or work search or learning as a priority in your life. Leisure time, play time, down time — do you make it a priority, too?

Leisure time is a vital part of a balanced life. Satisfying leisure activities:

- are important for personal growth and development
- can make unpleasant personal, work or learning situations more tolerable
- provide the opportunity to learn new and valuable skills
- provide the opportunity to develop new friendships and interests.

The three R's — rest, recreation and relaxation — can renew your outlook and help you keep your perspective. So, recharge your positives! Make leisure a priority, too.

Balancing Work and Play

In our fast-paced, changing world, it's a challenge to find time for both work *and* play. This exercise will help you take a look at your lifestyle and decide on your own priorities:

1. Put on the brakes. Stop everything. Look at what's happening in your life at home and at work or school. Make a list of all the things you do in a typical day.
2. Which items on your list:
 - meet your personal, intellectual, physical or spiritual needs?
 - reflect or support what you value?

Which items on the list don't meet your needs or don't reflect your values?

Which items on the list could you give up?

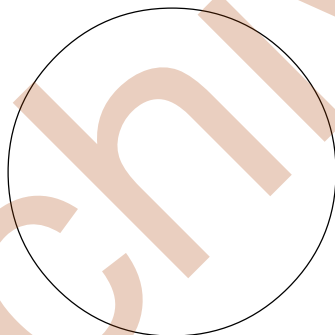
3. To create a fuller, more rewarding life, you may want to establish some priorities. You'll need to decide which tasks and activities are most important to you. Ask yourself:
 - What tasks and activities do I need to/want to do for work or school?
 - What work or school tasks and activities are less important to me?
 - What home or family tasks and activities do I need to/want to do?
 - What home or family tasks and activities are less important to me?
 - What would I like to do to renew myself and build up my positives?
4. Write down your answers to the questions in steps 2 & 3. Use this information to help you create an action plan in the *Planning for Balance* exercise on page 20.

Spending Time

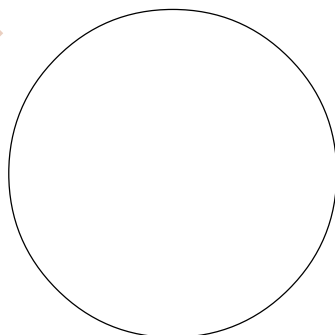
Everyone has just 24 hours in a day. How you spend those 24 hours can have a big impact on your stress level.

To create a picture of how you spend your time, follow these steps:

- Imagine that the circle below represents the 24 hours of your normal day.
- Divide the circle into pie-shaped sections to show how much time you currently spend
 - at school or work
 - on household responsibilities
 - with family
 - with friends
 - on leisure
 - on community involvement
 - sleeping
 - ... and on any other activities that apply to your life.
- Remember — the larger the section, the more time you spend in that area.



Again, divide the circle below into sections. However, this time, show how you would *like* to spend your time.



- How are your first and second circles the same? How are they different?
- What steps could you take to make your life look more like your second circle?
- Use what you've discovered in this exercise to help you plan for balance.

Planning for Balance

Create an action plan that will help you find a healthy balance between work and leisure. Here's how to get started:

- Use the information you've gathered in the exercises *Spending Time* and *Balancing Work and Play*.
- You want to spend your energy and time on the tasks and activities that are most important or necessary to you. Write down your priorities in each area of your life (work or school, family, household responsibilities, for example). Be as specific as possible. Make a chart like the one below for each area.
- For each of your top priorities in each area, list two steps you'll take to increase the amount of time you spend on that priority. Be specific.
- Put your plan into action. Take those steps!

Here's an example of how your plan might look.

AREA: LEISURE

Priority #1: Spend more time gardening.

Step 1: Teach the kids to do their own laundry.

Step 2: Spend the half hour I save each day (thanks to Step 1!) gardening.

Priority #2: Play the piano.

Step 1: Get the piano tuned.

Step 2: Play for half an hour after supper before turning on the TV.

AREA: WORK

Priority #1: Spend more time with customers.

Step 1: Spend less time on paperwork. Ask my supervisor if I can file reports less often.

Step 2: Return customer phone calls first.

Priority #2: Learn more about the new product line.

Step 1: Read the product information on my lunch hour.

Step 2: Ask for time off to attend the product seminar.

The difference between a stumbling block and a stepping stone is in the way you approach it.

Your Leisure List

What activities give you energy? What things do you enjoy? Use the categories in this table to explore your favourite things to do. For the best results, be specific.

Favourite Things
To Do by Myself

Favourite Things
To Do with Others

Favourite Places
To Be

Favourite Smells

Favourite Foods

Favourite Exercise

Favourite Subjects
or Interests

Favourite Ways
to Learn

Use the items on your leisure list to help you balance work and play:

- Put your leisure list where you'll see it often. Use it to remind yourself that leisure time is a priority!
- Set aside time each day, week and month to spend enjoying the items on your leisure list. Write your leisure plans into your calendar!
- When you're under stress, make sure you schedule items from your leisure list even more often than you normally would.
- Update your leisure list often.

Change Resilience

Resilience is the ability to recover or bounce back into shape. When you learn how to be change resilient, you learn how to respond successfully to the changes in your own life and in the society around you.

These days, change seems to be happening faster and more often. To succeed in the midst of change, you have to be able to adapt. Fortunately, even though change resilience is a skill many people have never been taught, it's one you're never too old to learn.

The most important step in developing change resilience is to realize that:

Change is a process that takes time.

Clive found out that his position would be cut in three months. He spent the first month trying to get used to the idea of losing his job, being very good to himself, doing everything he could to manage his worry and stress.

During the second month, he updated his résumé, took advantage of the career counselling his organization provided, considered his options — and still took very good care of himself.

During the third month, Clive had a meeting with his manager. She told Clive that she would be able to offer him a certain amount of contract work every month. She also suggested other organizations that might hire Clive on a contract basis. Still making sure he got lots of rest, exercise and “down time” every day, Clive took some time to find out more about self-employment.

Today is Clive's last day of work. Tomorrow he has two job applications to hand-deliver. Then he has a meeting at one of the organizations he may be able to do contract work for. After that, he's going to go for a long bike ride, then treat himself to a movie.

Clive isn't in a rush to make any decisions right now. He's keeping his options open. And he's taking good care of himself.

When her youngest child started school, Anna enrolled in a college program. She knew she'd have to work hard to make sure she did her best. As a result, Anna had to lead her family through a number of changes at home.

Anna couldn't always be there when the children got home from school and her eldest son, 15, took responsibility. Anna couldn't always have supper ready on time so she asked for help with the cooking. Her husband and her children took on more of the household responsibilities. They didn't always do the work as Anna would like to see it done. Anna had to learn to accept their way of doing things. Sometimes her family would complain about their new duties.

Anna had always been proud of her spotless house, her great cooking and the time she'd been able to spend with her children. At first, it was hard for her to switch her focus from homemaking to schoolwork. Her program was challenging and she wondered if she'd be able to keep up. To help herself through the change, she spent a lot of time with her children on the weekends — and a lot of time cooking Sunday dinner!

Now that she's given the process some time, she can see her children growing into their new roles — they're learning important lessons in responsibility and co-operation. Her husband likes cooking and her eldest son has started to iron his own clothes and some of hers!

These days, Anna's enjoying school more and feeling positive about this change in her life. As she reminds family members who complain about their duties, her long-term goal is to get a good job so she can help them pay for their education!

Anna and Clive are staying positive about their situations because they're practicing an important skill — change resilience.

Developing Change Resilience

Change resilience is a skill that involves:

- allowing yourself time to process change
- seeing the opportunities change creates
- making change a part of your life.

If you're facing a change, keep it in mind as you work through the following steps. If you're not facing a change right now, apply the steps to a situation from your past.

Change is a process that takes time. Write this phrase down and put it up where you'll see it. Say it to yourself often. When you're facing change, give yourself lots of time. Use your stress management skills. Take good care of yourself.

Step One:

Describe the change. What will you lose as a result of this change?

EXAMPLE:

Change: Job loss

Losses: Income; sense of belonging; purpose; social contact with co-workers.

Step Two:

Find out everything you can about the change and how it affects you. Look for the positives.

EXAMPLE:

Information: The job loss was a result of cutbacks, not poor performance; I'll get a positive reference from my supervisor; the job had no future.

Positives: Job loss forces me to explore other options that may have more opportunity; I can take a break from work; I know I can perform successfully at a new job.

Step Three:

Allow yourself some “down” time to process what you’ve learned about the change and about yourself.

EXAMPLE:

Go for a walk; read a book; do some of the things on your *Leisure List*.

Step Four:

Explore the positives that result from this change. Find out more about what’s available, what your options might be. Based on what you discover, make some decisions about how you’ll respond to this change.

EXAMPLE:

Options: Do the same kind of work for another employer; change my occupation; try self-employment.

Decision: Based on what I’ve found out, I’ve decided to change my occupation.

Benefit: Greater job satisfaction.

Challenge: I will have to re-train.

Next step: Enrol in training program; figure out finances.

Change can have a negative side. It can force us to confront loss and to face the unknown. But change also has a positive side — growth, opportunity and personal development.

Change resilience will help you find the positive part of change.

“To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.”

– Henri Bergson

Flexibility

Flexibility is a skill in great demand these days. When you’re flexible, you know how to adapt, to “go with the flow.” Flexibility is a vital aspect of change resilience.

If you’re flexible you’re, ready, willing and able:

- ready for the unexpected
- willing to change your plans
- able to compromise.

When Anna went back to school, her husband and children took over many of the household chores. Anna learned to live with a little more dust and a little less organization in her home. She knew how to be flexible.

Flexibility will make a positive difference at work or school and in your personal life.

Test Your Flexibility

Situations that test your flexibility pop up everyday. How do you respond? For each of the situations below, create a positive solution that shows your flexibility. Here's an example.

EXAMPLE:

Situation: Your racquetball court was double-booked and the other players have already started their game.

Flexible Response: We'll play badminton. There's a court available and I've always wanted to try it. I'll convince my partner that it's a good idea.

Situation: Your lunch date is 15 minutes late.

Flexible Response: _____

Situation: Your co-worker calls in sick on the day of an important team task.

Flexible Response: _____

Situation: A blizzard has closed off the highway on your travel day.

Flexible Response: _____

Situation: Your supervisor/co-worker decides it's time to change the current procedures.

Flexible Response: _____

Changes, delays, interruptions, unexpected events — you can use flexibility to help you find the positive, productive solution.

"It's not the situation...it's your reaction to the situation."

– Bob Conklin



Career Self-Reliance

Self-reliance means you rely or depend upon yourself. When you have career self-reliance, you put yourself in charge of your own career.

In the past, workers often relied on their employers to determine their career paths. Supervisors decided who would be trained or given special project work. Employers selected and groomed employees for promotion. Organizations often took responsibility for training and course work.

Today, fewer organizations provide funding for training and career development. However, they still stress lifelong learning and training. As a result, workers who want to succeed must learn to be career self-reliant.

The office where Verna works has recently ordered a new software program. Verna and her colleagues attended a one hour demonstration about the program. It was interesting but it didn't give Verna any hands-on experience. She didn't feel she knew enough about it to use it in her work.

Verna asked a colleague to help her. Together, they spent some time getting to know the program and using the Help features for guidance. Verna knows she still has lots to learn, but now she feels confident enough to give the program a try. Verna took charge and is learning a new skill that will help her in her work. That's career self-reliance.

Career self-reliance means getting clear about what you want in every area of your life, whether or not you're working. When you're career self-reliant you:

- have a "take charge" approach in each area of your life, from learning opportunities to relationships
- take the responsibility for your own career
- plan and manage your own learning and development at work.

When you're career self-reliant, you look beyond the traditional career path (moving up in the organization). You know that growth and development can mean:

- moving sideways, downwards or growing in your current position
- changing employers
- changing occupations
- specializing or generalizing
- choosing self-employment.

Career self-reliance helps you to create a career plan that leaves your options open. It increases your ability to achieve career success and personal satisfaction.

Test Your Career Self-Reliance

The statements below describe the steps involved in developing career self-reliance. Put a checkmark beside the statements that are true for you:

- I know what my major interests and values are.
- I can describe my skill strengths.
- I have direction and focus. I know what I want to achieve.
- I take responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the quality of my work.
- I have a plan for achieving my work goals.
- I have a plan for achieving my learning goals.
- I have a plan for achieving my relationship goals.
- I have a plan for achieving my leisure goals.
- I'm committed to lifelong learning.
- I'm satisfied with the balance I've created between work and leisure.
- I have plans for my personal development.
- I have plans for my career development.

If you put a checkmark beside every statement, you are positively career self-reliant!

If you didn't, try the next exercise. And read on...

Building Career Self-Reliance

To build your career self-reliance, follow these steps:

Step One: Look back at the previous exercise. The statements that you didn't check off identify the career self-reliance areas for you to work on. Rewrite those statements as learning or growth opportunities. Put them in the left-hand column of the following table.

Step Two: Think about the steps you could take to learn or grow in each of the career self-reliance areas you've identified. Brainstorm for ideas and suggestions on your own or with family, friends and co-workers. Decide which steps you'll take and write them in the right-hand column of the table. This is the plan you'll follow to build your career self-reliance.

Step Three: Put your plan into action. Take the steps!

"Joy comes from using your potential."

– Will Schultz



SECTION TWO:



Applying Your Positives

Archived



/////// Positive Works

Most of us will work at least 10,000 days in our lifetimes. Forty per cent of our waking time is spent at work — more than on any other activity in our lives. If we're going to spend that much time at work, shouldn't we enjoy it? And not just a little — a lot!

Whether you're looking for work or already working, it's within your power to create a positive, rewarding work situation for yourself. And these days, you may be able to take advantage of a growing number of options like work sharing or contract work.

What does a positive work situation look like? It all depends on who's looking! A situation that seems positive to you may seem quite different to someone else.

Mikko loves her job as an assistant to the president of an oil company. Her employer values efficiency and professionalism and so does Mikko. She often works under the pressure of tight deadlines and she enjoys the challenge. Mikko's found a positive work situation — for her.

Parker, on the other hand, isn't very happy in his new job in at a large engineering firm. The atmosphere is very business-like. Nobody seems to take breaks or have lunch together. After a month on the job, he still hardly knows the person in the cubicle next to his. Parker feels he isn't really able to use his skills as a graphic designer in the kinds of projects he's been working on. Parker liked his old job better.

A positive work situation is one that reflects your values, priorities, interests and skills.

Your Positive Work

Whether you're working now or seeking work, this exercise will help you to discover what your most positive work situation might be like:

- Close your eyes and picture your ideal job. Imagine as many details as possible.
- To discover as many details as you can, ask yourself some questions: "Where am I working? What are my surroundings like? What tasks am I doing? Am I working with people, information, numbers, machines, tools, animals? Am I outside or inside? Is it nighttime or daytime? What is it about this work that makes me feel good? What are the positives about this situation?"
- Record what you discover in the space below.

Read over what you've written about your positive work situation, then answer the following questions:

- In what ways does your current work situation (or the work situation you're seeking) look like your most positive work situation?
- In what ways is your current work situation different?
- Are you working within the occupation that you pictured in this exercise? If not, why not?
- What steps could you take to change your current work situation so that it looks more like the one you described above?

Why Work?

The answer to this question may seem obvious — we work because we need to make a living, to support ourselves and our families. However, work can be important to us for other reasons as well. Work may also offer us:

- a sense of purpose and fulfillment
- a sense of belonging and acceptance
- contact with other people
- recognition
- opportunities for growth.

Why are you working, or seeking work? Look back at your response to the previous exercise. What positives did you discover in your ideal work situation? These positives will give you some insight into what you hope to get out of work.

Take a moment to write down a few reasons why work is important to you:

Reason #1: _____

Reason #2: _____

Reason #3: _____

Reason #4: _____



Work Values

Your success and satisfaction at work often depend upon your work values. In a positive work situation:

- the tasks you perform reflect your work values
- the people you work with support your work values.

Trevor values independence and hard work. He works for a landscaping company. He's in charge of the truck and equipment he uses. He deals directly with his customers. Once a day, the supervisor visits him on site to exchange information and clear up any problems. The organization Trevor works for reflects and supports his work values.

When your workplace supports and reflects your work values, you feel more positive about what you're doing. And you're more likely to experience the rewards of working — beyond the paycheque!

Not many of us have the opportunity to express *all* our values through our jobs. We often need to explore options outside the workplace in order to reflect the full range of our work values. For example, Flora has a responsible job that she enjoys but it doesn't give her the opportunity to show her caring side or her leadership ability. However, Flora's volunteer work allows her to express these values.

Sometimes, the values your workplace emphasizes may be in conflict with your own. For example, your workplace may emphasize teamwork and you may value independence. You may be able to resolve a conflict like this if you:

- understand why your workplace supports a particular value. Ask your supervisor to explain how teamwork helps the organization reach its goals.
- look for an opportunity to learn and grow. You're more likely to value teamwork if you've developed teamwork skills.
- share your values. You could talk to your supervisor about opportunities for you to work independently.

Your values may be so different from those of your workplace that you feel uncomfortable and unhappy. If this is the case, you may choose to think about looking for a different job and/or occupation.

Exploring Work Values

Use the following chart to help you explore your own values and the values emphasized in your workplace:

- Circle the work values that are most important to you. Choose as many as you like.
- Circle the values that are emphasized in your workplace.

Work Values Most Important to Me	Values Emphasized in My Workplace	Steps to Take in Dealing with the Difference in Values
competition, being the best	competition, reputation	
status, prestige, money	reputation, competitive salaries, profit margin	
providing direction, leadership, having vision, seeing the "big picture"	leadership, expansion	
sense of self-worth, well-being, pleasant work environment	commitment to workers' well-being, environment supports co-operation, sharing	
self-improvement, growth, quality service/work	commitment to training workers for growth, improved performance, quality products/service	
working with people	teamwork, customer satisfaction, integrity and honesty with both employees and clients	
creativity	creativity, innovation	
hard work, recognition, promotion, sense of achievement or accomplishment	reward, recognize hard work, workers encouraged to set and reach goals	
enjoyable, interesting work	workers selected for projects of interest to them, strengths put to use	
working independently	workers encouraged to be independent, creative, critical thinkers	
taking part in decision-making process	workers' opinions considered important to decision making	



Work Values Most Important to Me	Values Emphasized in My Workplace	Steps to Take in Dealing with the Difference in Values
commitment, responsibility	employees' loyalty	
time flexibility (no specific working hours required)	flexibility (shifts, work sharing)	

You've used the previous chart to identify your values and the values emphasized in your workplace. Now think about:

- In what areas are your values similar to those in your workplace?
- In what areas are your values different from those in your workplace?
- In the third column of the chart write down what steps you can take to improve the situation if your values are different than the values in your workplace.

Getting and Keeping the Work You Want

Getting and keeping the work you want may not be as easy as it has been in the past. Downsizing, cost-cutting, more people searching for work — these are all signs of increasing competition in the marketplace.

As a result, it's more important than ever to develop your positives. Whether you're searching for work or wanting to hold on to your job, your positive attitudes, beliefs and skills can give you a competitive edge.

Getting Work

If you're currently searching for work, you might want to take some time to examine your beliefs and attitudes about work search. Positive beliefs can energize you for the hard work of searching for work. Positive attitudes can make all the difference in a job interview.

Carey and Paul are both chefs — and they've both been looking for work for about six weeks. Carey's using all her work search and stress management skills to stay positive. She believes it's just a matter of time before she connects with the "right" café or restaurant. On the other hand, Paul is letting his worries stress him out. He's working on his job search but he's beginning to give up hope of ever finding a suitable position.

Carey and Paul are both interviewed for the same position. Because she has stayed positive and taken care of herself, Carey comes to the interview well rested and full of energy. Paul wasn't able to sleep the night before his interview. He's tired and finds it hard to focus.

If you were the restaurant owner in this situation, who would you hire — Carey or Paul?

Work Search Beliefs and Attitudes

To explore your beliefs about work search, try this exercise:

- For each work search area, write down your belief(s) and attitude(s) in the middle column of the table below.

Work Search Area	My Beliefs/Attitudes	My Positive Beliefs/Attitudes
Example: job availability	There are no jobs out there.	There are opportunities out there.
Example: marketing yourself	I hate selling myself.	I like describing my skills to a potential employer.
my qualifications		
my network		
my past experience		
chances of landing a job I like		
my work search skills		
networking		
preparing a résumé		
filling out applications		
making phone calls		
going to interviews		
researching the job market		

- Review what you've written in the table above. Which of your beliefs and attitudes are positive and which are negative?
- Copy your positive beliefs and attitudes in the right-hand column.
- Next, look at each of your negative beliefs and attitudes. How could you rewrite them to turn them into positives? Use the examples to get started. Add these rewritten beliefs and attitudes to the right-hand column.
- Clip out or copy this list of positive beliefs and put them up where you'll see them often. Read them out loud every day.

Based on what you discovered in the previous exercise, you may want to develop or update your work search skills.

And remember — your positive skills:

- communication
- stress management
- change resilience
- career self-reliance

will energize your work search!

Keeping Work

Your positives can help you hold on to your work in a competitive market. Positive beliefs, values and attitudes can help you increase:

- your effectiveness
- your value to the organization you work for
- the likelihood you'll keep your work situation
- your satisfaction and success.

Building Your Positives at Work

The first step in keeping work is to develop your positives on the job. This step begins with your attitude toward the tasks you're responsible for and the relationships you build with co-workers and/or customers.

Use this exercise to help you find out if your positives are working for you. Put a check mark beside the statements that are true:

- I try to maintain and improve the quality of my work.
- I try to maintain the quantity of my work and improve it (if that's appropriate).
- I use my time effectively.
- I work well with others.
- I use positive communication.
- I do each task well the first time.
- I try to improve because it keeps my work interesting.
- I lend a hand to my co-workers when they need me to.
- I ask for help when I need it.
- I try to maintain a pleasant, co-operative working environment.

- Out of 10 possible check marks, how many did you score? _____
- Take a close look at the statements you didn't check off. Think about how these could be affecting your success and your chances of keeping your work.
- For each statement that you didn't check off, think of two steps you could take right now to build your positives in this area. For example, if you don't use your time effectively, how could you improve? Could you set up your work area differently? Could you chat with your co-workers less often? Are issues from your personal life making it hard to concentrate?

Attitude Check

Your attitude is showing...All the people you work with can see it. It affects every task you do. What does your attitude look like? Try this exercise and see.

At work, are you...

YES	NO	
___	___	Enthusiastic?
___	___	On time?
___	___	Dependable?
___	___	Neat?
___	___	Organized?
___	___	Flexible?
___	___	Tolerant?
___	___	Motivated?
___	___	Sincere?
___	___	Friendly?
___	___	Able to take criticism well?
___	___	Courteous?
___	___	Respectful?

- If you answered mostly "Yes," you're putting your positive attitudes to work for you.
- If you answered "No," to some items, take a closer look at them. How are they holding you back? How might they make it harder for you to find and keep work?
- Think of two steps you can take to begin to change each of your "No" attitudes. For example, if you're not motivated, could you talk to your supervisor about taking on a special project in an area that interests you? Could you set small daily goals for yourself and compete against your best performance? Could you look at opportunities for promotion or other moves within the organization and work towards that goal?

Adapted from *Canada Prospects 1995/1996*. Canada Career Information Partnership.

Tips for Improving the Quality and Quantity of Your Work

How well and how effectively do you do your work? Doing your best, meeting your deadlines, producing your quota — these can have a big effect on how positive you feel about your work and on how positive your employer feels about you!

Here are some tips and strategies for improving the quality and quantity of your work. Which ones apply to you?

- Be sure you understand your tasks and responsibilities. Ask questions. Make notes if you need to. Follow instructions exactly. Ask your supervisor to check that you're doing tasks correctly.
- Do your work as well and as carefully as you can. Go over your work and make any corrections before handing it on to customers or co-workers.
- Work at a steady pace. Strive to be known as a person who gets things done on time!
- Ask for feedback. Learn from your mistakes. Challenge yourself to improve the next time.
- Have confidence in your ability and in your potential to learn new skills. Learn all you can from people with more experience. Be willing to accept new ideas or try new approaches if they'll improve your work.
- Take responsibility for your work. Keep up-to-date on new developments in your field. Read, use the Internet, talk to co-workers and colleagues.
- Show initiative and leadership. Start new tasks, improve on the way things are done, find new ways to do things.

Adding Value

You can meet your employer's expectations, maintain the quality and quantity of your work and use all your positives on the job. But all this still might not ensure that you keep your work in today's competitive marketplace.

These days, employers expect you to add value to the organization. This means that they expect you to find ways to:

- increase profits
- decrease costs
- increase quality
- increase customer satisfaction.

Len is a tow-truck operator. During big snow storms, he always carries a thermos of hot chocolate and a box of doughnuts in the cab of his truck. He knows his customers will be chilly and grumpy after waiting in the cold for him to arrive. Before Len looks after their vehicles, he offers his customers a hot drink, a snack and a chance to warm up in the cab of his truck. Len's customers praise his service. They tell his supervisor. They recommend Len's towing company to everyone they know. Len is adding value to his organization.

How can you add value to your organization? Think about your current work situation (or the situation in which you'd like to work) and answer these questions:

1. **How and where does my organization make money? How can I make more money for my organization?** For example, many gas stations make more money on candy, pop and convenience items than they do on gas. If the person who pumps the gas can also sell a chocolate bar or a can of pop to customers, then she or he is adding value. What's the parallel situation in your workplace? What other ways to increase profits can you think of?

2. **How and where does your organization lose money?** What tasks need to be done over again? Or take longer than they should? How much time is wasted explaining mistakes to customers? The key here is to figure out how to work more efficiently. The classic example is a server who carries the coffee pot with him or her, topping up cups on the way. One trip keeps customers happy, speeds up the pace of service and increases the number of customers the restaurant can serve. What's the parallel situation in your workplace?

3. **How can you work "smarter" and better?** How can you improve the quality of your work? How can you become more efficient? For example, do you know the short commands for the computer programs you use? Which supplies could you use less of or use longer?



Remember, adding value to your organization can benefit you by helping you to:

- gain knowledge
- learn skills
- use abilities
- experience satisfaction
- receive recognition.

Adding value almost always involves making changes. Use your communication skills to make sure these changes go smoothly:

- Talk to your supervisor about what you'd like to do before you do it. Sometimes things are done in certain ways for very good reasons.
- Let your co-workers know what you're doing and ask for their input.
- Ask your customers and suppliers for suggestions and reactions to the changes, where it's appropriate to do so.

Adapted from *Engage at Work: Lifework*. Day, Redekopp & Ross. Life-Role Development Group Limited, Edmonton: 1995.

Tips to Energize at Work

Use these tips to renew your energy and refresh your attitude at work:

1. Compete with yourself. See if you can better your last day's performance. When you've done something well, tell yourself you did a great job.
2. Change your daily routine. Try a new approach or change the order of your tasks. Complete a task you don't like and then do one you enjoy.
3. Personalize your work space. (You may need to talk to your supervisor about these changes first.) Put up posters or pictures. Put a plant on your desk. Listen to music. (Use a walkman so your music doesn't interfere with others.)
4. Make the most of your lunch breaks. Meet a friend, go for a brisk walk, do crafts, catch up on your reading or personal correspondence.
5. Get to know your co-workers. Bring in a favourite cartoon or comic strip and share a giggle. Help organize staff functions and activities.
6. Talk to your supervisor about taking on additional tasks or learning new skills. Offer to share some of your expertise and knowledge.
7. If your present work doesn't offer you all the stimulation or challenge you want, view it as a stepping stone to something more fulfilling. You can benefit from every experience.

Finding Work Satisfaction

How positive do you feel about your current work situation?

- Super positive?
- Positive?
- Okay?
- Negative?
- Totally negative?

If you're not positively charged up about work most days, then it's time to find out why:

- If you already know why, read on. The following section offers you some suggestions for what to do next. And remember — if you're feeling negative about your work, think of it as an opportunity to practice your career self-reliance skills.
- If you're not sure why you're feeling negative about your work, turn back to the sections listed below.
 - *Positive Beliefs*
 - *Positive Attitudes*
 - *Your Positive Work*
 - *Career Self-reliance*

Your Career Goals

Planning your career goals is an important part of creating a positive work situation. Use your change resilience and career self-reliance skills to determine your career goals and you'll be ready to make the most of any change.

If you're unhappy in your present situation, your career goals will help you decide on your next step. Even if you're happy with your current work, it's a good idea to create some career goals. Your work situation might change or your needs might change. And of course, if you're searching for work, your career goals will help you to focus your search.

Teresa is a sales associate in a women's clothing store. The store's manager announces that she'll be moving to a new position in six months. The assistant manager will likely become the new store manager. Thinking about the changes in her workplace, Teresa sets a career goal: in six months, she'll be ready to apply for the assistant manager's position. Teresa knows she has a lot to learn before she can reach her goal. She offers to help the managers with cashing out. She works extra hours to learn more about ordering. She discusses company policies and structure with her managers. She spends her lunchbreaks checking out her store's competitors. Teresa may not get the assistant manager's job — this time. But Teresa's learning a lot and her work has become much more interesting in the process.

Like Teresa, you can use career goals to build your positives at work. Here's how to start:

- Review your work priorities from the exercise *Planning for Balance*.
- Review the sections on *Change Resilience* and *Career Self-Reliance*.
- Review the exercise *Your Positive Work*. What steps could you take to bring your most positive work situation closer to reality?
- Describe what you'd like your work situation to be:

Three months from now _____

Six months from now _____

One year from now _____

Five years from now _____

List the following:

Skills I want to develop _____

Projects I want to take on _____

Workshops/courses I want to take _____

Using the ideas above write down your career goals. Make each one concrete and specific. Set each goal in a timeframe — for example, “in three months,” or “in one year.” For each goal, think of at least two steps to help you get started working toward that goal.



Use the following example as a guide.

EXAMPLE:

Career Goal: In six months, I will be part of the quality control team.

To reach that goal, I will:

Step 1: Tell my supervisor about my goal and ask for her suggestions for reaching it.

Step 2: Take the weekend teamwork skills seminar offered at the tech school.

Step 3: Take a quality control team member (Jan? Pat?) for coffee or lunch and find out more about what it's like being on the team.

Career Goal #1: _____

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Career Goal #2: _____

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Update your career goals often!

When you know your career goals and begin to take steps towards achieving them, your work life becomes more enjoyable and more rewarding. And that's a positive!

"You can make a living, or design a life."

– Jim Rohn



Positive Learning

These days, more than ever before, learning is for life. Whether you've completed junior high or a graduate degree, if you want to succeed, you need to keep on learning.

And this makes sense when you consider that:

- the information available worldwide *doubles* every few years
- technology (especially communication technology — computers, the Internet) is part of virtually every workplace
- employers value knowledgeable employees who can work “smart”
- knowledge is power.

Tom is ready to give up on his goal of finding work with a software company. He has sent out over 40 résumés and hasn't been called for a single interview. His friend Kay encourages him to revise his résumé using a book she knows about. She also suggests that he hand-deliver his new, “targeted” résumés to the potential employers, rather than mailing or faxing them. Kay's knowledge of work search strategies helps Tom get an interview and a job.

Reva wants to get on a special project team. Many of her competent co-workers are lobbying management to choose them for the team. Reva spends three hours on the Internet researching issues related to the special project. She shares what she has learned with her managers. Impressed by her knowledge and initiative, they invite her to join the team.

It's true — knowledge is positive power. What you learn can help you achieve your goals.

Learning Opportunities

When you think about learning you may tend to think of a formal classroom situation. This kind of learning can be important and valuable but it's only one of many learning opportunities that are open to you. You can learn:

- at work
- on your own
- from mentors and role models
- from co-workers and friends
- through magazines, journals, books and newspapers
- on the Internet
- by volunteering
- by teaching others what you know (this helps you to improve your skills and insight)
- through seminars, workshops and courses
- by attending classes at an educational institution.

You can take a positive approach to every learning opportunity if you:

- **know why you're learning.** When you know the purpose of what you're learning, you're more likely to be motivated and to remember what you learn.
- **analyse what you need to learn.** What do you know? What do you need to know?
- **know how to learn.** Listening, asking questions, study skills, time and stress management skills — these will all help you learn more effectively.
- **apply what you've learned.** Skills are like tools — unless you use them, they tend to get rusty and unworkable.
- **have a positive, confident attitude toward learning.** You learn much better when you believe you can! Read on...

Positive Learning Beliefs and Attitudes

Successful learners have positive beliefs and attitudes towards learning.

Eileen is the oldest person in her college program. It's been twenty years since she wrote a paper or studied for an exam. However, in the fifteen years that she's stayed home to raise her children, Eileen has mastered stress and time management skills, teamwork skills, budgeting skills and more. She's read a lot, chaired community committees and coached several soccer teams. She knows she can polish up her report writing and study skills and do well in her program. Based on her own experience, Eileen believes that "old" dogs are eager to learn new tricks!

Like Eileen, when you have positive learning beliefs and attitudes, you can relax, remember, focus and absorb information as you learn.

Use this exercise to explore your attitudes and beliefs about learning. Put a check mark beside the statements that are true for you:

- I believe that lifelong learning will help me achieve my goals.
 - I'm willing to make mistakes and learn from them.
 - I'm aware that learning opportunities are all around me.
 - I take charge of my own learning. I use every opportunity I have to learn something new.
 - I'm willing and eager to learn.
 - I know what skills and knowledge I need/want to learn.
 - I know where to find out about formal learning opportunities (courses, workshops, lessons, seminars, training sessions).
 - I know who to approach about informal learning opportunities (mentors, co-workers, friends, supervisors, family members).
 - I set new learning goals regularly.
- Out of nine possible check marks, how many did you score?
 - Take a close look at the statements you didn't check off. Think about how these could be affecting your success as a learner.
 - For each statement that you didn't check off, think of two steps you could take right now to build your positives in this area. For example, if you don't know what skills and knowledge you need to learn, how can you find out? If you're working, could you talk to your supervisor? If you're not working, could you talk to a career and employment consultant or find the information in a book or magazine or on the Internet? If you're involved in some kind of formal learning, you could ask your instructor(s) for help.

Your Learning Goals

As you think about your learning goals, it's important to remember that learning goals are not the same thing as career goals!

Some of your career goals may be learning goals (learning new technological skills, for example). However, it's important to remember that learning is a vital part of developing your positives in *every* area of life, including personal relationships and leisure.

With this in mind, follow these steps to create your learning goals.

- Think about what you need to/would like to learn in the following areas:

Work _____

Work search _____

Leisure/stress management _____

Relationships/communication _____

Career self-reliance _____

Change resilience _____

Flexibility _____

Other _____

- Think about what you'd like to be learning:

Next week _____

One month from now _____

Six months from now _____

One year from now _____



Based on the steps above, create your learning goals. Make sure they're concrete and specific. Give your goals a time frame. Write them down. Then think of at least two steps you can take towards achieving them. Here's an example to get you started.

EXAMPLE:

Learning Goal:

Over the next six months I will learn about budgeting, saving and investing.

To achieve this I will:

Step 1: Keep track of my income and expenses.

Step 2: Ask the accounting staff at work to recommend some books.

Step 3: Enrol in a personal financial management course at the college.

Learning Goal #1: _____

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Learning Goal #2: _____

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Renew and revise your positive learning goals on a regular basis. They'll help you to enrich your life, your work and your relationships.

"Schooling is what happens inside the walls of the school, some of which is educational. Education happens everywhere ..."

– Sara Lawrence Lightfoot



////// Positive Relationships

Family members, co-workers, fellow students, team members, friends, supervisors, customers, store clerks — think of all the people you interact with in your day! When you get along well with people, you're creating positive relationships. They can make a huge difference in your life and your attitude.

When it comes to creating positive relationships, there are two ingredients, both of them vital, both of them positive:

- respect and consideration
- positive communication.

You can use these positives to:

- make good relationships better
- make new relationships easier
- build trust, understanding and acceptance
- find mutually acceptable compromises and solutions.

Paul works at the customer service counter of a large hardware store. One of his tasks is to handle returns and exchanges of products. He has to deal with several upset customers every day. Paul makes it a point to listen carefully, ask questions, be courteous and professional and keep his cool no matter how frustrated or angry his customer is. Paul often finds that his attitude rubs off on his customers — they calm down and are ready to work with Paul to find a solution to their problems.

In certain situations, some people can be difficult to get along with — and a few people seem to be that way most of the time! However, like Paul, you can rely on respect, consideration and positive communication, even when you have to deal with difficult people or situations. You might find that things work out better than you thought possible.

Respect and Consideration

Respect and consideration are the foundation of the golden rule “Treat others as you would like to be treated.”

We show respect and consideration when we:

- value people, including ourselves
- think of other people's needs and feelings as well as our own
- show an awareness of how our actions affect others
- treat the property and privacy of others with care.

Respect and consideration can be contagious — when you behave this way towards others, they tend to behave the same way towards you.

More Positive Communication Practice

Do you remember the characteristics of positive communication described earlier?
Positive communication:

- shows mutual respect
- matches body language, voice and words to the message
- values the thoughts, ideas, opinions and feelings of the other person(s)
- strives for a winning outcome for everyone involved.

Positive communication skills will help you build more positive relationships in both your work life and your personal life.

Practice your skills in the following exercise. For each item below, read the statement and identify the underlying need. Then, rewrite the statement with a positive approach that's more likely to:

- meet the need
- resolve the problem
- build good relationships.

EXAMPLE:

1. No one asks me to join them for coffee breaks. I don't feel included.

Need: to feel accepted

Your Positive Approach: Tomorrow morning I'll ask Cal if I can join his group for coffee. That will give me a chance to get to know some of the others, too.

2. No one ever says hello or good morning around here. They aren't very friendly.

Need: _____

Your Positive Approach: _____

3. I do more work than anyone else around here because I come in on time and I don't fool around and waste time. I'm sure a sucker.

Need: _____

Your Positive Approach: _____

4. Sally really bugs me with her constant complaints about her husband and kids. Why can't she learn to keep her problems to herself?

Need: _____

Your Positive Approach: _____

-
5. If she brings me work to do at the last minute one more time, I'll scream! I can't believe how inconsiderate she is.

Need: _____

Your Positive Approach: _____

How Well do You Work with Others?

We can't always choose who we work with. But we can choose what kind of attitude and approach we bring to our workplace.

The list below outlines attitudes and approaches that will help you work well with others. Put a check mark beside the statements that are true for you:

- I'm positive about myself.
- I'm friendly, approachable and co-operative.
- I'm a responsible member of the team.
- I'm considerate of others. I show respect for their feelings, thoughts and opinions. I use positive communication.
- I focus on people's good points. Everyone has some worthwhile qualities.
- I avoid discussing personal matters (mine or other's) because I don't want that information repeated.
- I make the best of any situation. Even the bleakest situation can have a positive side.
- I ask for help when I need it.
- I offer sincere compliments. Everyone likes to be valued.
- I take pride in my accomplishments without bragging. I recognize other people's accomplishments.

Take a close look at the statements you didn't check off. Think about how these could be affecting your relationships at work and also in your personal life. For example, if it's hard for you to recognize other people's accomplishments, spend some time thinking about why that's so. Are you concerned that your own accomplishments aren't being noticed? If so, could you talk to your supervisor about this? Could you make a point of congratulating your co-workers the next time there's an opportunity?

Your Relationship Goals

After completing the previous exercises, you may be ready to set some relationship goals. Here are some steps to help you begin:

- Think about what you want to achieve in your work and personal relationships. Do you want to express more closeness at home? Show more professionalism in your workplace? Listen to other people's ideas more openly, at home and at work?
- Think about your relationships in the following areas. What would you like to change? Write down your thoughts.

Immediate family _____

Extended family _____

Support group/close friends _____

Recreational teams/groups _____

Extended network/contacts _____

Co-workers _____

Supervisors _____



With the previous exercises and steps in mind, create your relationship goals. Make them concrete and specific. Give your goals a time frame. Write them down. Then think of at least two steps you can take towards achieving them. Here's an example to get you started.

EXAMPLE:

Relationship Goal: Over the next month, I will stop talking about my personal issues at work.

To achieve this I will:

Step 1: Share my personal issues with family and friends rather than co-workers. I'll call my sisters more often.

Step 2: Before each coffee/lunch break, I'll move my watch to my other wrist to remind myself of my goal.

Relationship Goal #1: _____

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Relationship Goal #2: _____

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____



////// **Y**our Positive Goals

Throughout this book, we've invited you to set some goals for your career, your learning and for your relationships. When you set a goal, you take a positive approach towards the things that you want to accomplish and the changes you want to make.

Positive goals give you a sense of direction and purpose. They support your positive beliefs and attitudes about yourself and what you can achieve.

When you write down a concrete, specific goal and the steps you'll take to achieve it, you're creating a positive vision of your future. Taking steps towards your goal can be very satisfying — positive action feels good!

Keep a list of the goals you accomplish. If you're ever feeling down or overwhelmed, read your list. It will remind you of what you can achieve when you focus on your positives. You can also use this list to update your résumé.

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

– Lao-tzu

A Positive Attitude Makes the Difference

Nowhere is this principle better illustrated than in the story of the young bride from the East who, during the last war, followed her husband to an army camp on the edge of the desert in California. Living conditions were primitive at best and he had advised against it, but she wanted to be with him.

The only housing they could find was a run-down shack. The heat was unbearable in the daytime — 115 degrees in the shade. The wind blew constantly, spreading dust and sand all over everything. The days were long and boring. Her only neighbours spoke no English.

When her husband was ordered farther into the desert for two weeks of manoeuvres, loneliness and the wretched living conditions got the best of her. She wrote to her mother she was coming home — she just couldn't take it any more. In a short time she received a reply which included these two lines:

Two men looked out from prison bars
One saw mud, the other saw stars.

She read the lines over and over and began to feel ashamed of herself. And she didn't really want to leave her husband. All right, she'd look for the stars.

In the following days she set out to make friends with her neighbours. She asked them to teach her weaving and pottery. At first they were distant, but as soon as they sensed her interest was genuine they returned her friendship. She became fascinated with their culture, history — everything about them.

She began to study the desert as well. It soon changed from a desolate, forbidding place to a marvellous thing of beauty. She had her mother send her books. She studied the forms of cacti, the yuccas and the Joshua trees. She collected seashells that had been left there millions of years ago when the sands had been an ocean floor. Later, she became such an expert on the area that she wrote a book about it.

What had changed? Not the desert; not the neighbours. Simply by changing her own attitude she had transformed a miserable experience into a highly rewarding one.

Author Unknown

/////// **C**onclusion

Positive beliefs, positive attitudes and positive skills will help you find satisfaction in every aspect of your life. Your positives will help you:

- adapt to change
- find work and keep it
- build your career
- balance your lifestyle
- make the most of learning opportunities
- create more satisfying relationships.

We hope that you'll use the suggestions, strategies and exercises in *Positive Works II* to make the most out of everything you do.

We hope you enjoy each and every one of the positives you put to work for you!

Positive Resources

Whether you're planning to make positive changes in your life or you're already in the process of making them, the following Alberta Human Resources and Employment resources might be useful:

- Click on the **Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) Website** at www.alis.gov.ab.ca

ALIS is Alberta's on-line source for career, learning and employment information. You'll find the resources you need for making the most of your future. This includes print, audio and video career and workplace related resources. Visit www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop for more information or to view on-line. You can also view or pick up copies at any Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centre. Many of the publications are available free of charge to Alberta and NWT residents.

- Call the **Alberta Career Information Hotline** for answers to your questions about:
 - career planning
 - educational planning
 - occupations
 - work search skills
 - the workplace.

Phone: 1-800-661-3753 toll-free in Alberta

Phone: (780) 422-4266 in Edmonton



Deaf and hard of hearing callers with TDD units call (780) 422-5283 in Edmonton or 1-800-232-7215 in other Alberta locations for message relay service.

E-mail: hotline@alis.gov.ab.ca

Website: www.alis.gov.ab.ca/hotline

- **Come in** to one of the **Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres** located throughout the province. They have information on occupations, career options, education programs and funding, and finding work. Many offices have a career resource centre with books, newspapers, magazines, and software and audiovisual materials. They also may have computers for Internet use and word processing, and phones and fax machines to use with your work search. These resource areas may be called Labour Market Information Centres (LMICs) in some offices. You can also talk to a career and employment consultant. These services may be offered by other agencies in your community. Call the Alberta Career Information Hotline for the office closest to you.

Other Provincial Government Resources

Contact **Service Alberta** for general inquiries on Alberta Government programs and services. Visit the Service Alberta website at www.gov.ab.ca or call 310-0000 toll-free anywhere in Alberta. Outside of Alberta call long distance at (780) 427-2711. Phone lines are open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Monday to Friday) and voicemail is available after hours.



Deaf and hard of hearing callers with TTY equipment call (780) 427-9999 in Edmonton or 1-800-232-7215 in other Alberta locations.

We'd Like To Hear From You...



Date: _____

Positive Works II

Did you find the information in this publication useful? _____

In what way?

How could we improve it?

Do you have any suggestions for other products that would be of value to you?

Would You Like to Receive a Catalogue of Our Products?

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Notes

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