

A Positive Mindset

Taking Stock of your Mindset...
With Your *Mind* in Mind!

*A positive mindset gives you power over your circumstances,
instead of your circumstances having power over you.*

by
Rochelle Morandini
Director, Member Health & Well-being
BCPVPA

New Mindset Chapter One

It was a dark rainy
January day, like all
the other days in that
month that seem to
blend together.

It was a dark, rainy January day, like all the other days in that month that seem to blend together.

I was in the car listening to the radio, and the host was taking calls from listeners. It was the 'one year anniversary' of when the world learned of this new virus that would ultimately change all of our lives. The theme from every caller was similar:

"OMG, last year at this time, I was sure everything would be fine by the end of last summer! And here we still are with no end in sight!"

"I can't believe we still have many more months to go in this same situation, I just can't take it."

"Between not being allowed to go anywhere and this awful weather on top of it, everyone is so down".

I switched off the radio in frustration.

How can we possibly move forward, and enjoy the gift of life, if all we want to do is wallow in misery?

The appearance of a global pandemic was not surprising. Before COVID-19, over the past two decades, the global community has experienced a variety of dangerous virus strains that – thankfully – were contained.

I do not know about your previous impressions, but my vision of a potential pandemic was influenced by depictions in Hollywood films, or apocalyptic literature of 'the day in the life of' a catastrophic pandemic. Certainly, my anxieties soared when COVID-19 appeared on far shores. We all watched the news and were shown some of the 'expected' horror of deaths and shutdowns not only in China but in Europe and in my own ancestral home of Italy. It was a fear, but still a distant fear. When it appeared in our country, and then our province, we discovered that while terrible in terms of sickness and death, and the severity of the impact on both vulnerable people and the economy, the 'hell' that movies predicted did not come to pass:

- We did not see population death rates in the 30% range or higher

- We did not see a complete shut down of hospitals, city services such as water and waste management, electricity, internet, courier services, food transportation, gas stations, schools, or even retail.

- We could access our necessities by going to a store and feeling relatively safe by complying with simple safety protocols. Or, we could have whatever we needed delivered to our door.

Many of us were fortunate that we could work from home and continue to receive a paycheck. While this was not necessarily the case in the K-12 sector, it was for some of our partners and families.

Deep down we know that this pandemic could have been so much worse.

There is no doubt that this year has been challenging and – to use the word forever associated with 2020 – 'unprecedented'. I have very deep empathy and respect for our members and their school communities, and recognize the hurdles and losses that people have experienced along with the monumental effort that it has taken to make everything work. The dedication, commitment and continuing resilience of our member population and school staff across the province is immeasurable.

I believe that for our current **and** our future health, we will benefit from fostering a positive, 'adapt as we go' mindset. We – as individuals and as a community – need to find a way to simultaneously take stock of and acknowledge the challenges and efforts, but to avoid getting stuck there drowning in a defeatist mindset. We can be so much more.

"Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind." - Bob Marley

Foster your well-being through an open, adaptive mindset.

The point is simply this: life is precious, and we can recognize that now more than ever. So is our overall health and well-being which – for many at this time – is fragile.

Our lives have changed over the past twelve months, and those who are surviving – even thriving – recognize that they can let go of the image they believed would be their life at this time, and turn their attention to appreciating their 'now'.

Yes, the pandemic is an inconvenience. Yes, we need to take precautions for ourselves and others. And most of us have done well, and have woven safe behaviours as regular habits into our daily lives.

Healthy people appreciate that *their lives are not on hold* until this pandemic is over. Their lives proceed forward with continued moments of joy, growth, and gratitude.

It is exhausting to carry a mindset that continuously casts a dark cloud over our heads, fraught with the constant pressure from the pandemic and its impact. If we look for a problem, a concern, a worry, we will often find it as that is what our thoughts are creating. You can thank our brains for that scenario, as we are hard-wired and programmed to perceive and address threats whether to our physical being or to our ego. Maintaining these busy thoughts in the deluge of this pandemic is a subconscious burden on top of an already tired mind. *It is also a considerable mental health risk, not only now, but possibly in the future when the imminent risk of this pandemic is over.*

Welcome healing now. Learn to enjoy the story you are actually living and creating. Adopt the mindset that you can create your own reality. Just like those people on the radio show created their own reality, one evocative of being trapped, victimized and stagnant. Create the world you want to experience at this point, with all that you can control. If you are going to create a reality, why not create a positive one?

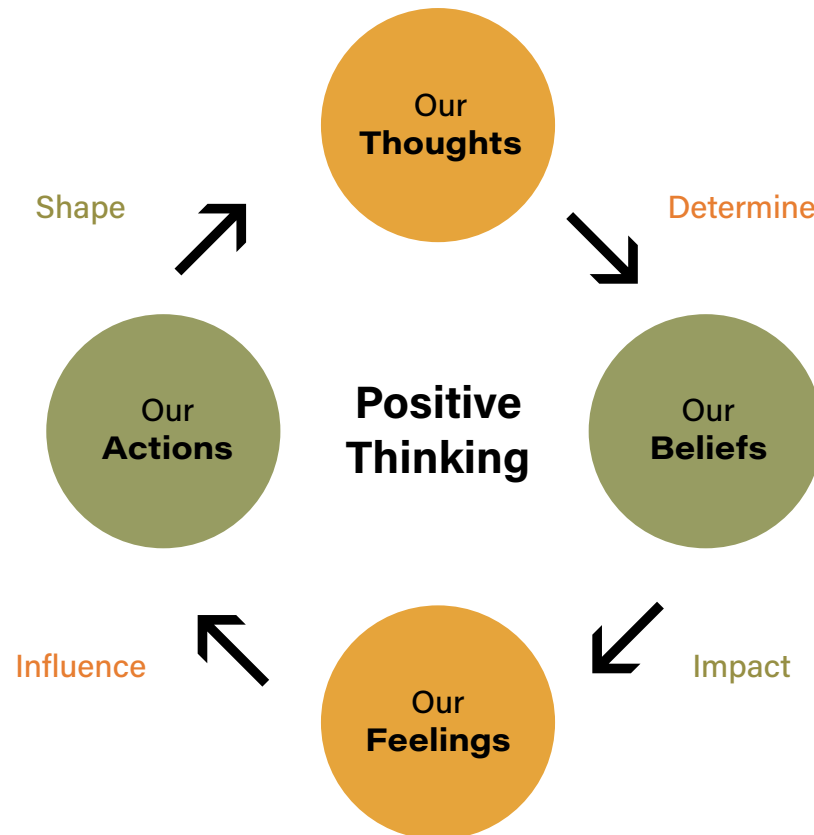
Our lives
become a
product of
what occupies
our minds
the most



How do I adopt this mindset?

Research the power of positive thinking. It really is a 'science' that can have a tremendous impact on both your mental and physical health.

You hold incredible power to truly change your mindset and – ultimately – your life and well-being. Changing or being mindful of your thoughts triggers a cyclical process that determines your beliefs, impacts your feelings, and ultimately influences your actions. With practice, regular positive thinking will override your brain's natural tendency to focus on the bad, and to consider any stressor a threat. This will reduce your mind's and body's tendencies towards anxiety and tension and – instead – encourage increased control and calmness.



And your actions ... change your outcomes!

"Happiness is not
something ready made.
It comes from
your own actions."
- Dalai Lama XIV

When you have a setback, positive thinking helps you navigate and appreciate your blessings both now and on your journey.

Losses and changes may be shocking, and can cause a troubled mental state. Fortunately, positive thinking helps you rise above negative thoughts and facilitates growth.

Positive thinking trumps fear. When we are afraid, we refuse to venture, to discover, and to try new things. A positive mindset can help you to leap over fear. While danger can be real, all fear is illusion-based.

Every situation in your entire lifetime presents you with different options. As they say, it's 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.

A positive mind finds opportunity in everything. A negative mind finds fault in everything.

Other ways to maintain or 'launch' your new positive mindset:

- **Limit your media intake:** watching the news on TV, browsing social media, or listening to the radio. Ask any news anchor and they will tell you the 'recipe' for any story: Start with an opening line that causes fear in the listener; share some scary points to support your opening line, and end with something that gives the reader a level of 'comfort' that they are okay, for now.

- **Seek only what you need to know** from reliable resources – don't dive deep, and continue to ruminate for more dirt, or perhaps something to ease your angst. You are searching because your brain is feeding your anxiety. Learn to let go and focus on the sphere around you.

- **Take responsibility** for speaking and sharing positively to your peers.

- **Practice gratitude** (See BCPVPA's *ReFresh* column from January 13, 2021)

- **Cherish the time** you have with the people around you.

Honestly, it comes down to this: appreciate life. Happiness exists in one place – inside of you, at any given moment, and right now.

Be cognizant of the precious privilege it is to be alive, and let your body and mind thrive!

