



Fit For Sisters

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Columnist

The health effects of optimism

Everyone knows that person who is always singing the sweet song of optimistic, encouraging, and happy thoughts. To an outsider, this person may seem blind to the struggles, strife, and sirens of the crumbling world around us. They may even be an annoyance when they cannot seem to care about how bad the weather is, or the results of the previous election cycle.

These people cruise through life with a rose-colored shade. Are they on to something? Do people who see the bright in everything live a longer, healthier life? When terminal illness does arrive, do they live longer?

Science is now saying that the outlook a person has generally affects their longevity in two distinct areas: when they are faced with a serious condition, and while aging into the later years of life. Outlook definitively predicts quality of life despite the challenges they faced, according to the researchers. This

revelation was so profound that some treatment therapy now includes positive emotional training for conditions such as cancer and HIV.

Our brain reacts to the world around it with different responses. It would be impossible to say that minor annoyances don't provide a negative reaction in the brain; they do. The trick seems to be how fast the negative response is turned around and thoughts recover. Neuroscientists from the University of Wisconsin show that people whose brains recover slower from a negative emotion (ie. they stew in negativity) are much more likely to suffer from a variety of health conditions.

Our minds, however, are trainable, and the researchers focused on a six-week training course to support positivity. They found that in as little two weeks in some they were able to make changes in the brain's circuitry.

In *The Journals of Gerontology*, one study published the effects of compounding positivity.

A single simple positive thought can get the ball rolling, building a chain of positive thoughts. The interesting discovery was that people with the mindset training to produce positivity had lower blood levels of C-reactive proteins. This is a marker of stress in the body, which can cause inflammation, heart conditions, and a whole host of other problems.

What are some ways to turn that frown upside down? Dr. Barbara Fredrickson, a positive thinking researcher from the University of North Carolina recommends: Doing good for others; take a moment to appreciate; develop strong relationships; establish and work towards a goal; learn something new; accept yourself, flaws and all; practice resilience; practice mindfulness.

Take a moment, relax, and flip the switch to a more positive mindset. It'll change your perspective on the world around you, and impact your health for the better.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Garden-focused education is taking off in Central Oregon – and especially in Sisters.

Garden educators meet in Sisters

Last week, the Central Oregon Garden Educators Network met in Sisters for a garden tour. They started at Seed to Table Farm, then the Sisters High School greenhouse, followed by a work party at Sisters Elementary School.

"We believe successful school gardens require well-informed educators that can learn from and support each

other," said Lauren Williams, membership and communications manager for the network. "That's why we launched the Central Oregon Garden Educators Network last fall. Going forward, we will expand and sustain our network to provide regular training, networking events for peer-to-peer learning, problem-solving, resource sharing; and garden tours."

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