

Positive Thinking: How Your Students Can Take Charge of Their Thought Patterns

"Do not think of your fault; still less of others' faults. Look for what is good and strong and try to imitate it. Your faults will drop off like dead leaves when their time comes." --John Ruskin

I don't imagine any of your students ever struggle with negative thoughts getting in the way of motivation to get things done? And surely these thoughts don't ever cloud the big picture long range dreams of any of your students, right? I didn't think so. Wait! Surely I didn't I read that right....I am only kidding. This is an age old dilemma with so many students. We as teachers, counselors, and school leaders see the potential in so many students—really the aptitude to do amazing things, but it's frustrating to see negative thoughts or attitudes creep in and distract and derail our students from meeting their full potential.

Many times these negative thoughts and beliefs about self are truly distractions that interfere with the productivity of our students. And for some students, these thoughts are a sticky quagmire, paralyzing any progress forward. It's helpful to realize where these come from, perhaps some negative thoughts come from what a student has been taught to believe in the past, or present circumstances at home. Perhaps for other students they perceive an academic or personal struggle as a failure and internalize this to affect them on their next attempt. There are many more, but no matter the source, you have likely observed this grip of negative thinking being so strong so as to sabotage success in your students. Very frustrating, I know!



The support network we provide as counselors, teachers, and principals is crucial in helping our students work through these issues. The support network shows a place of strength when it is able to observe and recognize what is blocking a student's success and find ways to

help students past these obstacles. At [Tri-County Early College](#), we try to do this by emulating for our students what is *good and strong*. In essence this is what the NC New Schools design principals are all about, showing in various focus areas how to make a school great, which filters down to direct impact on helping our students be great. So what does all of this have to do with eliminating negative thoughts, resulting in a renewed progress toward a student's dreams?

We recently began piloting an online tool that helps organize an individual's productivity. The program acts as a planner, allowing the user to make to do lists, prioritizing everything from thoughts and goals, to routine daily tasks. One of features allows users to make various lists. I recently created a *Power of Positive Thinking* lesson that incorporates a counseling psychology technique of replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. You can see the steps outlined below. The principles can be adapted to use in other planning tools or programs where users can make lists. I am hoping this lesson may help you in your work with your own students:



Increase your Positive Thinking by Using Lists

Students, use the following tips to help you increase your positive thoughts while managing the productivity in your day.

1. Go to your Dashboard and click on Lists. On the left hand side, click on the little folder at the top that says Add List
2. Name it Positive Thoughts, Mantras, or use whatever creative name you come up with. Then select standard and save.
3. From there you can add any positive thoughts you have about yourself, the things you are thankful for, quotes that give you encouragement, etc. It could be anything. Focus on things that are good, strong, and true, whatever good it is that transcends the circumstances we face. Once you have that set up, you can come back to it, change it, add to it, etc. It will be there for you in your Lists.
4. Whenever you find yourself having negative thoughts during your day, perhaps ignore it once, but if the thought comes back, enter it into your dreamcatcher.
5. **Now, here is what is really powerful:** when you plan the next day, many times the thought will seem insignificant or silly to you. Either way, when you see it, **immediately click the Dump it button.** That will train your mind to dump or delete

negative thoughts! Your unconscious mind will respond to you physically clicking the dump it button and you will see what you wrote disappear in real time. Pretty cool, aye!

6. Then as a part of your morning routine, simply pull up your positive list, which will solidify in your mind that you are replacing any negative thoughts with positive ones.

I am confident that when you use this routine over time, you will train your mind to be in control of your thoughts, and your glass will be more than half full! I'll be sharing more tips in the future as I discover them. And please share yours with me. As we discover these together, we will share them so that we all get better. Let me know your thoughts, Mr. Alt

I posted this assignment during one of our recent snow days as a classroom guidance E-assignment. I'll be sure to stop back by to share how our students have used this tip. Others can adapt this easily with either written lists or lists made on smartphones, etc. It is my hope that other students may be able to benefit from this tip by deleting their own harmful thoughts and replacing them with thoughts that are good, strong, and true.

Rodney Alt is currently the School Counselor at Tri-County Early College in Murphy, NC, having served the students in this position since 2006, the school's inaugural year. You can find out more about Rodney by following him on LinkedIn.