

Most employees in business organizations must answer to someone else. From the top of the organizational chart to the bottom, nearly every manager and employee must look to a supervisor, a director, or even a customer to establish priorities, assign tasks, set deadlines, and evaluate results. Whoever gives this direction is called the boss. On one level, the boss decides how well an employee meets requirements and determines whether that employee succeeds or fails. On another level, the judgment of an external boss isn't enough to make a job personally fulfilling and rewarding. That's something all employees of an organization decide for themselves. Everyone who works must also answer to an inner boss, a personal, internal voice that provides guidance on whether a job is worth doing and whether it is done well. Accepting personal accountability for your work means your inner boss sets demanding standards that you're willing to commit to meeting.

Personal Accountability

Personal accountability allows you to move away from a mindset where things happen "to you" in your life without your consent or influence, and embrace your role in the way your life is shaped. It determines the levels of success you will achieve.

Instead of blaming others for why you aren't successful, look within and ask yourself, "who am I?" and "where am I now?" Answering these questions leads to self exploration and truth telling. And telling the truth allows us to shed our old skin to be ready to recreate ourselves and our futures through setting goals and being accountable for them.

5 Ways to Tell the Truth About Ourselves

Telling *your* truth is scary. Many people are willing to go miles out of their way to avoid the truth. That way we avoid the pain that comes with telling the truth. Although denial can work in the short term to make things look all right, in the long term, denial keeps us from the possibility of change—it keeps us stuck in our problems, saps our energy and can leave us exhausted. And while telling the truth might hurt, it is also the first step in getting past the hurt. It opens the door to methods we can use to make effective, enduring changes to improve the quality of our lives at work and outside of work.

Step 1: Stop shaming and blaming.

Most people see self-evaluation as a negative process, but there is an alternative. We can learn to see shame or blame as excess baggage and just set them aside. We could acknowledge and even regret our mistakes and shortcomings while accepting ourselves completely. We can begin working with our list of weaknesses by celebrating them. The more successful people are, the more likely they are to be open to looking at their flaws. We can love and accept ourselves and still work really hard to change ourselves for the better.

Step 2: Forgive yourself.

One powerful way to move from shame to acceptance is to forgive ourselves. Before practicing new skills and new ways of being, it's wise to clean house. We don't need to beat ourselves up before we re-invent ourselves. While admitting our mistakes, we can treat ourselves with care. After all, everyone makes mistakes.

Step 3: Let go of the past, but learn from it.

We can focus on

what we have learned from our past, without getting caught up in repeating our mistakes. We can change the way things are without having to be upset about the way things have been. There is nothing you can do to change the past. Acknowledge that what you did in the past is not what you strive to do in the future. This means you have to believe you can change and engage in new ways of being and doing.

Step 4: Face your fears.

Fear will hold us back. To identify our fears we need to pay attention and become an observer of ourselves. We should pay attention to what we fixate on and what we ignore, how we make judgments about situations and how we interpret other's behavior. We need to get to know our mindset—especially patterns like learned pessimism or learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is a mental state in which people feel that they have no control over their failures and that failure is inevitable. When we can let go of fear we can release ourselves in powerful ways and begin believing that we can make a difference in our lives.

Step 5: See the connection between strengths and limitations.

Most people place strengths and weaknesses in separate, unrelated categories. Another way to perceive them is as being closely related. Often the things about ourselves that we label as weaknesses are simply examples of taking our strengths too far. Remember that our assets and liabilities may all be part of the same personal account.

Telling the truth about ourselves is not an easy process, but it is essential. Without it, change cannot occur. Believe that anything is possible and our lives can be amazing. ▀

The Power of Positive Thinking

Positive psychology studies indicate a positive attitude, along with an optimistic outlook and positive thinking, can bring improved relationships, success, better health and greater happiness.

Jerry Lopper

Christopher Petersen, PhD and author of the book, *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, says, "...optimism has demonstrable benefits, and pessimism has drawbacks." He goes on to say, "...optimism...has been linked to positive mood and good morale; to perseverance and effective problem solving; to academic, athletic, military, occupational, and political success; to popularity; to good health; and even to long life and freedom from trauma."

Characteristics of a Positive Attitude and Optimism

Optimists believe they are accountable for good things and that good things will generally come their way. If something bad comes instead, optimists tend to write it off as an isolated incident, an anomaly, or something out of their control; optimists believe things will be better in the future.

Positive Thinking Takes Practice

If you're a person whose first thoughts about the meaning of something that's happened are negative thoughts, be encouraged by the knowledge that the first step toward a positive attitude and positive thinking is to simply think another thought. **Thoughts are under your control.** Your pessimistic way of thinking is habit; habits can be changed.



- When you catch yourself thinking a pessimistic thought about an event in your life, first evaluate the evidence. What are the facts—not the fears—but the facts?
- Next, think of alternate explanations and future outcomes. When your old car suddenly makes a strange noise you may jump to the pessimistic conclusion that repair will be costly, but maybe a minor repair will solve the problem.

Remind yourself to follow this approach with a daily affirmation such as this: *When I have a negative thought I immediately evaluate the facts and think of positive alternatives that also fit the facts.* Think positive and expect only favorable results and situations, even if your current circumstances are not as you wish them to be. In time, your mental attitude will affect your life and circumstances and change them accordingly. By practicing the positive thinking approach, you'll find it soon comes naturally. You may be amazed to realize that you simply feel better with a positive attitude.

Developing the Power of Positive Thinking

- ✦ Always use only positive words while thinking and while talking. Use words such as, *I can, I am able, it is possible, it can be done,* etc.
- ✦ Allow into your awareness only feelings of happiness, strength and success.
- ✦ Try to disregard and ignore negative thoughts. Refuse to think such thoughts and substitute them with constructive happy thoughts.
- ✦ In your conversation use words that evoke feelings and mental images of strength, happiness and success.
- ✦ Before starting with any plan or action, visualize clearly in your mind its successful outcome. If you visualize with concentration and faith, you will be amazed at the results.
- ✦ Read at least one page of an inspiring book every day.
- ✦ Watch movies or listen to music that makes you feel happy.
- ✦ Associate yourself with people who think positively.
- ✦ Always sit and walk with your back straight. This will strengthen your confidence and inner strength.
- ✦ Walk, swim or engage in some other physical activity. This helps to develop a more positive attitude.