

# Positivity

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

## Vs. Discouragement

### I WILL:

- Practice gratitude
- Do good things for others
- Make time to play and relax
- Understand that obstacles are there to challenge me
- Think good thoughts

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### Maintaining a good attitude, even when faced with difficulty

You've heard it before from philosophers to Oprah that positive thinking leads to a more healthy and happy life. Controlling the inner voice so that it is a source of positivity and encouragement is not as easy as it sounds but just like any new skill, practice makes perfect.

Even with the rosiest of outlooks, bad things will still happen. It is how we react to these trials that make us who we are. Seeing obstacles as challenges that help us strengthen our character, helps to keep us seeing the bright side of things and learning from our mistakes and failures.

This month, put on those rose-colored glasses and amp up your positivity.



### PLEASE HELP KEEP THIS BULLETIN FREE!

This monthly publication for educators is a free resource provided by the Character Council of Greater Cincinnati, a non-profit devoted to promoting good character in order to improve the lives of our residents and enrich the spirit of our community.

To assist us with a donation, visit our webpage at [www.charactercincinnati.org](http://www.charactercincinnati.org) and click on the Donate button.

**THANK YOU!**

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# No Matter How You Say It

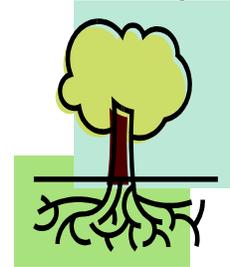
**Positividad** vs.  
desaliento

Mantener una buena actitud, incluso cuando se enfrenta con dificultades



↻ ↻ Go to the Root ↻ ↻

Late Middle English: from Old French positif, -ive or Latin positivus, from posit- 'placed', from the verb ponere. The original sense referred to laws as being formally 'laid down', which gave rise to the sense 'explicitly laid down and admitting no question', hence 'certain'. Can you see where the certainty can bring hope?



## Sign Language

Check out the following website for the American Sign Language interpretation of the word Wise and Foolish

Optimistic <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=1567>

Negative <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=1473> (second sign)

Can you see how both start with thinking but one is positive and one is negative?

From Miriam Webster ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com))

### Synonyms

bullishness, sanguinity

### Words Related

brightness, cheerfulness, perkiness, sunniness, hope, hopefulness, rosiness, idealism

### Near Antonyms

skepticism, apprehension, caution, concern, cynicism, despair, desperation, discouragement, disheartenment, hopelessness, bleakness, cheerlessness, dreariness, gloom, gloominess, pragmatism, realism

### Antonyms of *optimism*

bearishness, pessimism

*“People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first.” -David H. Comins*

## Character Quotables

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think we become.”

~Buddha

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

~Winston Churchill

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”

~Helen Keller

“One of the things I learned the hard way was that it doesn't pay to get discouraged. Keeping busy and making optimism a way of life can restore your faith in yourself.”

~Lucille Ball

“A healthy attitude is contagious but don't wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier.”

~Unknown

“Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.”

~Colin Powell

“I hope the millions of people I've touched have the optimism and desire to share their goals and hard work and persevere with a positive attitude.”

~Michael Jordan

“Optimism is the foundation of courage.”

~Nicholas M. Butler

“Optimism is a happiness magnet. If you stay positive, good things and good people will be drawn to you.”

~Mary Lou Retton

“A lot of times people look at the negative side of what they feel they can't do. I always look on the positive side of what I can do.”

~Chuck Norris

“The positive thinker sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible.”

~Winston Churchill

“In times of great stress or adversity, it's always best to keep busy, to plow your anger and your energy into something positive.”

~Lee Iacocca

“If you have a positive attitude and constantly strive to give your best effort, eventually you will overcome your immediate problems and find you are ready for greater challenges.”

~Pat Riley

“Believe you can and you're halfway there.”

~Theodore Roosevelt

“A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. It is a catalyst and it sparks extraordinary results.”

~Wade Boggs

“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.”

~Maya

Angelou

“Don't let your failures define you—let them teach you.”

~Barack Obama

## Curriculum Connection



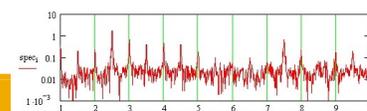
## Science

### Quantum Physics and Positive Thinking

Quantum physics is a branch of science that studies the physics of small particles. described as energy vibrating at a certain frequency, which tend to "come together" or "gather" with other quanta vibrating at the same frequency.

Our thoughts are also energy vibrating. Whatever thoughts we choose, they vibrate at a certain frequency that is drawn to and attracts elements (including other thoughts) that vibrate at the same frequency.

For more information visit: <http://www.the-benefits-of-positive-thinking.com/quantum-physics-and-positive-thinking.html>



# Tommy Morrissey, Model of Positivity

When someone is talking about 6-year old Tommy Morrissey's handicap they are more than likely referring to his golf game rather than the fact that he is missing most of his right arm. Tommy has loved golf all of his short life and has made quite a name for himself in the golf world.

Before the start of PGA tournaments, you can find him challenging the pros to a one arm swing contest and taking home the blue ribbon. Often seen mingling with the pros at PGA tour events, Tommy is using his celebrity to raise money for other families in need. His foundation, Unlimbited, which he started

with the help of his parents, offers limb saving and corrective surgeries to children who may otherwise face amputation as the only affordable fix. They have also donated over 375 sets of clubs to children and military families.

The Morrisseys also talk with people about living with physical differences and standing up to bullies. Tommy hopes to help people realize that they can do things that perhaps they didn't think they could do.



For more information visit:

<http://www.unlimbited.org/>

## Team~Building Activity

Building a culture of good character requires building the class into a community. Here is this month's teambuilding activity:

### Good Graffiti

Each student starts with a sheet of drawing paper and crayons, colored pencils or markers. The object of the activity is for each student to draw graffiti. Explain that graffiti is drawn on public buildings, trains, bathroom stalls, etc by individuals who want to prove they were there. Please include in the discussion that such activity on public property is vandalism. Instruct the students to draw graffiti on the paper that tells something about themselves. They can simply write "John was here!" and draw a picture that explains something about themselves. They can pick a quote that is meaningful to them and write it out with flourish or illustrations. They can write their name in bold block letters and add illustrations within the letters that tell something about themselves. When they are finished, arrange the students into small groups and have them share their drawing. If time allows, you can share as a class. Hang the graffiti on their desks or a bulletin board for all to see.



## The Heat is On

You'll need to do some prep work before this activity. On a sheet of white paper write the words "I can" using milk or lemon juice and a toothpick or something similar. You could also choose to cut it out in the shape of a paper doll. On a second sheet/doll write "I can't" using the same process. (You could also use '+' and '-' signs.) Let the papers dry. You will also need to preheat a clothes iron so that it is hot and ready to use. You will also need to prepare a surface upon which to iron the paper.



Once you are prepared, begin a discussion about optimism and pessimism or age appropriate concepts. Explain that the two papers represent two types of people and their different attitudes. Discuss how people with the two different attitudes react under stress or 'when the heat is on'. Once they understand the difference, use the iron on the papers and reveal and positive and negative attitudes.

## Focus!

Have you ever been in a crowded room and heard your name mentioned in a conversation across the room? How did you hear that among all the noise? This exercise will help to explain that phenomenon. Your brain has a filter that filters out many of the stimuli that is around us. If the brain didn't do that, we would be bombarded with so much input that we couldn't function. Our name is allowed in by that filter so while you may not hear much of other conversations surrounding you, your name will get through. We can train that filter by what we pay attention to. If we have a sour attitude, we will see more negative things. If we have a sunny attitude, we will see more of the positive things.



Begin this exercise by asking the students to find all of the square things in the classroom. Then pick a color that is prevalent in the room and ask for them to name the items of that color. Pick another shape and color and repeat the request for each. To process the activity, ask them if they realized how many items of a shape or color there were before focusing on it. Explain that when we focus on something, we tend to see more of it. Pick a shape or color and ask them to focus on it for the rest of the day. Have them report in the next day how many items they spotted. If the students are old enough to understand the discussion on the brain filter.

For more information on this topic research reticular activating system or brain gating.

# Baby Steps

Based on the book, “One Small Step Can Change Your Life: The Kaizen Way” by Robert Maurer

Practicing positive thinking may feel a bit overwhelming if you take on too much at once. Kaizen is a Japanese word that means "improvement" or "change for the better", and it refers to the continuous improvement of processes in manufacturing. In "One small step can change your life" the author explains how to use the kaizen technique of continuous improvement to achieve personal goals **by taking the smallest step regularly**. For instance, if your goal was to exercise daily for thirty minutes, with the kaizen way you could start by stretching your legs for one minute while you're watching TV. The following day you could increase it to two minutes, perhaps introducing back stretches; the following day you could extend it to three minutes, and so on.



As a class exercise, pick something that would be age appropriate for your class and identify a baby step for the new habit. As a class create a progression of steps to fully develop the new habit or behavior. Then, individually, have your students pick something they would like to work on and create a Baby Step for it and then a progression of steps to follow. They should also create a timeline of how the steps will progress. Have them make a progress chart to keep track of their progress. Periodically let them update their chart throughout the month and then report on their progress at the end of the month.

# Float your Boat

For this activity you will need a small amount of clay and a container of water. Roll 4 small balls of clay and 1 slightly larger, like regular marbles and a shooter marble. While you drop the 4 smaller balls into the water, talk about how sometimes when times are tough, people get all rolled up within themselves and get discouraged about what is going on. When this happens they sink to the bottom. Talk about what it feels like to be at the bottom.

Now take the larger ball of clay and shaped it into a boat. (Practice this ahead of time so you know how much clay you need and how to shape it.) If we open ourselves up to other people either by asking for help or offering to help others, we can stay floating on top. Put the boat in the water and watch it float. Pick out 1 or 2 of the smaller clay balls and place them in the boat. Explain that sometimes when we are down, being around happy people will rub off on us and we can reverse our mood.

**Bully Connection:** One of the reasons that some people turn into bullies is because they are experiencing some type of emotional or physical pain. They mistakenly think that bullying others will make others miserable like and themselves feel better. This usually backfires. If everyone around you is miserable, you'll be miserable, also. The next time you feel miserable, try to do things to make other people happy and you might just be surprised how much better you feel.



## For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Positivity**: Maintaining a good attitude, even when faced with difficulty.

To practice Positivity I will:

- Practice gratitude
- Do good things for others
- Make time to play and relax
- Understand that obstacles are there to challenge me
- Think good thoughts



### Family Activity:

**Rocks in your Socks** - For this activity you will need lollipops and small pebbles to put inside everyone's shoes. After everyone has the pebbles in their shoes and a lollipop have them walk around the house. Ask them to describe what they just felt. In most cases, everyone will focus on how the pebbles felt rather than how they enjoyed the lollipops.

Explain that whenever they are having a rough time with something, to pause and reconsider what good things they could be missing. You can use the following story to illustrate or choose one from your family history.

A family had several visiting relatives and had planned a day of fun outside but the weather that day was cold and rainy and they couldn't go outside. In an attempt to save the day, they set up some of the outdoor games in the basement. When they were done with those, Mom set up several different board games in the living room. She set a timer to ring every few minutes and the youngest at each game had to switch around the room and trade places. They all had fun being together and making up new things. Now, whenever the families get together they talk about how fun that day turned out and how many great memories they made. If they had had a regular day outside, it may not have stood out in their minds.



Other ways to teach character in the home:

- Display the character quality and definition in a prominent place such as on the refrigerator or let each child decorate it for their bedroom door.
- At the dinner table ask if anyone noticed anyone (not just family members) demonstrating the character quality (or not demonstrating it).
- Point out news stories where character was or was not involved.
- Review the "I wills" and see if there are specific actions you can add to this list.
- During car trips, challenge the kids by describing scenarios and having them identify if it describes being the quality or being the opposite.
- Praise with character by recognizing the character quality involved rather than the achievement.
- For more ideas visit [www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php](http://www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php)

Greetings! I hope you made it through the Holiday Season. I am sure you heard all the holiday greetings: Merry Christmas from our family! Happy Hanukkah! I hope you have a great Kwanzaa! And May the Force Be With You! Oh, wait, that last is not a holiday greeting! But as I write this, there IS a new *Star Wars* movie in theaters. And more than enough movie tie-ins in every type of product I can imagine. Of course, being a Baby Boomer, I am more connected to the first three *Star Wars* films: *Star Wars – A New Hope*; *The Empire Strikes Back*; and *Return of the Jedi*. (Please don't remind me that the titles can vary for these films. Thank you.)

## Croskey's Corner

But don't blame me if I confuse *Star Wars* and the holiday season. During the holidays, my neighbor had a cute (?) little Darth Vader figure, about 4 feet tall, standing in his front yard as a Christmas decoration. That got me thinking as to whether *Star Wars* could be considered a Christmas movie. Probably not. But one part of the film may be - if not exactly a "Peace on Earth" message - at least one of Character. Or at least its title relates to Character, That is the *Episode IV* subtitle, *A New Hope*. I guess the re-emergence of a Jedi knight inspires the rebels with New Hope. Hope? Sounds like it might be connected to the recent Character quality, *Resilience*. And, also, to January's *Positivity*, defined as "maintaining a good attitude, even when faced with difficulty."

This year was a year requiring Positivity for the Croskey boys of Cincinnati. Our son, Greg, cut his left leg with a chainsaw. Our dog, Jazzy, got an embolism on his spinal cord and lost control of his back legs for a while; his left leg has been slower to regain strength but he is doing great. I had successful left hip replacement. Left leg-itis, we called it.

As is often the case, we all had to do some rehab. I learned a lot about patience, trying to remain positive, and keeping high hopes. But Greg and I - and the rest of the family - learned the most about an attitude of Hope from Jazzy. At one of Jazzy's veterinary visits, we recounted a story of Jazzy's recovery. My wife, Nancy, had gotten us a harness to use to take Jazzy outside. For weeks, he could not walk without the harness to lift his back legs. In fact, in order even to defecate he had to be lifted. It was a very discouraging time. One day, he got agitated in the family room because a house fly was buzzing around him. He HAD to go out right away. We took him - dragged him - to the backyard and he saw a bee or grass flea. He had always insisted on chasing insects and chomping at them in midair. Well, the bug flew away. Jazzy dug into the grass with his front legs and dragged his back legs and body around the yard, chasing the flying insect. It was riotous to watch. It was sad, too. But also very Hopeful. I had no idea he was so strong in front and I marveled at how resourceful he was in figuring out a new way of mobility. He never gave up hope of walking, and he can run today. We laughed, and then we cried, for it gave US great Hope. So, we told the vet, the magnificent Dr. William Rueger, our story. He reflected for a minute, and said, "You know, that is one of the great things about animals. When they encounter a life-changing illness or injury, they don't sit around and feel sorry for themselves. Or do the poor-me routine (like I had with my hip). They maintain a good attitude. They work on trying to figure out a new strategy for getting where they want to go or doing what they want to do. Humans could learn a lot about how to have a Positive attitude toward life."

I told Dr. Rueger that he should write a self-help book for people; something like *What Animals Can Teach Us About How to Live*. Maybe he should write for this newsletter instead of

me! Instead, I think he will go along as he has, making great diagnoses and providing excellent care for our pets. But I know that I am trying to learn from Dr. Rueger's insights and Jazzy's never-give-up attitude. I worry about stuff and I let it spiral down and sometimes I slip down with the load. I have to remember Jazzy, who never gives up HOPE because he maintains a Positive attitude. If he can't go up and over an obstacle, he goes around. Bill, remember that!

## Croskey's Corner

Positivity is based on a lot of things: one's history, the safety net of family and loved ones; how successful a problem-solver one is. But it is easier to stay Positive when one has a strong model to follow. Or, as the lyrics of the song, "High Hopes" put it:

*Next time you're found, with your chin on the ground  
There a lot to be learned, so look around.*

*Just what makes that little old ant  
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant.  
Anyone knows an ant, can't  
Move a rubber tree plant.*

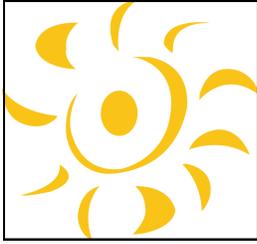
*But he's got high hopes, he's got high hopes.  
He's got high apple pie, in the sky hopes.*

*So any time you're gettin' low  
'Stead of lettin' go  
Just remember that ant.  
Oops, there goes another rubber tree plant*

Now watching that ANT or my dog Jazzy inspires an attitude of Positivity and gives me a NEW HOPE! Happy Hopeful New Year!



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**Character...It Starts With Me!**

## Character in the Classroom *Continuously*

There are many ways that you can teach the Character Quality of Month. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Ask students to make posters to hang in the classroom or around the school.
- Challenge students to find quotes, news stories, current (or classic) songs or movies that portray the character quality of the month. Be sure to share these with the class and “archive” these to use in future years.
- Add the character trait of the month to the spelling word list. (Even if it is posted in the classroom to copy!)
- Offer for students to make a video or write a rap that demonstrates the Character Quality of the Month.
- If you teach younger students, see if you can “borrow” some older students to lead your students in an activity or switch the roles and have the younger students “teach” a rhyme to the older students.
- If you teach older students, you can be the initiator in the previous activities.
- Invite local business leaders or small business owners to talk about the importance of a character trait. If you teach older students, aim to get a representative from a business that typically hires teens so that they can relate the importance of good character when applying for and *keeping* a job.
- Men and women in uniform usually make impressive guest speakers. Police departments, fire departments and military recruiting offices are usually willing to come into a classroom. Do not be afraid to give them specific requests or guidelines for speaking so that it is pertinent to the lessons of the month.
- Always have a generic character activity planned and ready to go that you can use as filler when you have time to kill or that a substitute teacher can use in your absence.