

Long Essay Prompt

Conventional wisdom holds that if we work hard we will be more successful, and if we are more successful, then we will be happy. In his book *The Happiness Advantage*, Shawn Achor draws on large-scale research to show that in fact the opposite is true. When we are positive and happy, we are actually able to be more engaged, creative, and productive, and therefore, become more successful.

Describe how you adopted a positive mindset to be more engaged, creative and productive or to improve your relationship with others.

Jenny Law

Having a positive mindset doesn't mean to be blindly optimistic in all circumstances. Life is always full of ups and downs; it is almost impossible for us to escape from negative emotions. What positive mindset means to me is to broaden our minds with greater possibilities and convert negativity into positivity.

I particularly remember the mock trial competition that was held last year, which was when I understood the value of adopting a positive mindset in life. That was the first time I've ever taken part in such an intensive event held in the High Court. Our team was feeling more anxious than excited because we all knew we were going against teams from prestigious schools. Unfortunately, our performance in court was stifled by stress and anxiety. We lost at our first trial.

The result was predictable. In fact, I did not even dream for a second about winning the other teams - our abilities were so disparate. No matter how, we were never going to succeed. At that moment, quitting the competition was seemingly the last and only choice.

That was when my teacher said something that changed me, "Quitting is the easiest choice, but it's not your only choice." The word "only" clicked in my mind. I realised I had confined myself and shut down all the other possibilities. There were more options, but I chose to give up and focus only on the negative side. Is the glass half empty or half full? The answer is all about whether or not you have a positive Mindset.

Adopting a positive mindset was a magical experience. Before our second trial, we stayed on campus every night for preparation and came up with every possible question that might be asked in court. I could see the tiny sparks of passion and enthusiasm spreading among our team. Nothing was different, our opponents were still strong. But if we couldn't change the external environment, the one thing we could always do was to change ourselves. It was like being in a hurdle race: the

hurdles aren't going to disappear but we can always choose to jump over them doing our utmost. Amazingly, all those late nights were suddenly enjoyable. It was unbelievable because I never thought that stress could be turned into motivation with just a change in mindset. It was simple, but it was really powerful.

We won our second trial. That was probably one of the most remarkable memories I've ever had. Not because of the victory itself, but the feeling of contentment and joy in the process - the feeling of happiness. Even if we didn't win, I'd feel just as happy because I've given it my all and put in my best effort. It turned out happiness was all we wanted, and a positive mindset is what leads us to happiness.

For me, happiness is equivalent to success. Success is an accomplishment of goals in life. Isn't the purpose of life to pursue happiness?

Ben Chu

When life is full of ups and downs; when you trip over a few stones of adversity just on a daily basis; when people around you just keep reminding you of what you 'can't' do, it is normal for the frustration to get you down, thwarting your ambitious goals. But there's one thing that can stem the flow of fear—positivity. My story can prove it.

My family lived on welfare — my father was unemployed and my mum was a housewife. I hated my dad because he was the reason when we had to go through an ordeal; he was an obsessive gambler and an alcoholic and he never considered bring home the bacon. Therefore, arguments and fighting never ceased to exist at home; we just argued vociferously day and night.(My home was literally a battleground!)

There was one time when I felt like collapsing, wanting to give in to the stress and sorrow that would somehow overtake me one day. One night, I got home from school. As usual, the air felt like congealed the moment when I stepped in the doorway. My dad was watching TV and my mum was sitting on the sofa. The expression on my mother's face was a telltale sign that something was wrong. I went into my home, which was a 100 square feet cubicle, my dad shifted around and glared at me in a pair of baleful eyes. Not even realizing how he managed it, but he was abruptly in front of me. He slapped me in the face and barked "I've told you many times not to get your teachers involved! How dare you tell them that I'm starving you? If not for the meagre grant that we get from the government, do you think we had to suffer all along?"

The force almost catapulted me into the air; I fell back a few steps, flinching from the pain. My mum materialized beside me, concerned and shocked. She tried to reach me but I shook her arm off me and instinctively charged at my dad.

It was the most savage fight that we had got into, with bruises flowering under the skin of virtually every part of our bodies. In the following days, I was down in the dumps. Every day when I went home from school, I just hid in my bed, trying to find some courage. Yes, courage and support.

Until one day my mum picked me up at school. As soon as she saw me, she came to my side curling her arms around me. With a wave of warmth and sorrow washing over me, I abruptly broke down in her arms, not even bothering the weight of eyes zoomed in on my way.

Afterwards, I learnt that even though life may present itself with various challenges, sometimes formidable enough to shatter all your confidence and strength, it is vital to know that there's always hope. Your suffering doesn't define who you are or determine your future. They are just some insignificant deterrents on your grand journey to success. Now my mum and I have moved out from this nightmare: We have moved on in life, happily living in some subsidized flat rent out at a low price by an NGO.

This is what I believe: Don't succumb until the last moment because hope will often spring up when you show it enough grit. This is how I become positive about life.

Danby Leung

Due to my underprivileged family background, many of my classmates take a distorted view on me. And thus, a positive mindset is exceedingly important to me. It helps me overcome and endure all the difficulties.

In school, I used to be the student who sit at the back and lack the motivation to study. Fortunately, after having read James Allen's "As a man thinketh", I started to cultivate a positive mindset and lead to the commencement of a positive life. "Always be grateful", "focusing on wonderful things even they are small", and "turn failures to lessons" are suggestive axioms that are leading my daily life. Once I make mistakes, never do I give up easily, and I was extremely grateful that I was able to learn new knowledge every day. Enjoying the sense of achievement, I am very engaged and motivated to study. I still remember how excited I was when I got the first 'full mark' in my life. Although it may be just a piece of cake for some Band 1 students, I can tell this experience has brought great encouragement to me! Since then, I always hold a firm belief of these positive thinking skills together with my hard work on studying, I have improved a lot. And I am now a student who sit in the top desk.

From another perspective, I used to live under people's prejudicial eyes as my family was a case of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, receiving aids from the Social Welfare Department. Thus, I have low self-esteem to make friends and had a

kind of sociophobe, resulting in having poor interpersonal relationship with others. Luckily, I was invited to join a school program which is aimed at helping students like me to be more sociable and to provide us a chance to make friends. There is a part about the importance of positive mindset in the program. By learning the positive thinking skills, I started to be more confident and believing on myself. I still clearly remember the metaphoric statement: 'there must be a light at the end of the tunnel' said by Stanley Cheung. Since I have a positive mindset, I do get more and more friends. Having nicer interpersonal skills, I am brave enough to be the class prefect, house captain, and one of the volunteer helpers of the social program.

I am now living happily, and I know that it is not because my family background has changed, but the changes of my mindset and thinking skills! I understand most of the situations will not be changed easily that's why positive mindset is so essential. I have seen huge improvements on myself in the past three years because of the positive mindset. Although I have not succeeded yet; however, I am sure, I will achieve one day. The day is not long!