

Attitude Activity 6: Think Three Positives

Winifred Gallagher is a science writer, magazine editor and journalist. In her 2010 book *Rapt*, she writes about our attention, introducing the idea that we have something she calls, ‘top-down attention’, that is, attention that we decide upon and control. (*Gallagher, Winnifred, Rapt, Penguin 2010*)

And this top-down attention is like money. We ‘pay’ attention to things, spending attention like cash during the course of a day. Social media companies want us to ‘pay’ them – the more people use their sites, the more they can charge for adverts, and the bigger the bonuses the board-members can get. Adverts want our attention. Online apps want it. Emails want it.

But, Gallagher says, we’re in control of where we spend our attention, not them. We can choose what to pay attention to.

She goes on to argue that, “...the quality of your life depends not on fame or fortune, beauty or brains, fate or coincidence, but on ***what you choose to pay attention to.***”

A Week of Positive Things

In this activity, we’re going to suggest you spend one working week – five days – deliberately paying attention to positive things. (Psychologist Martin Seligman has written entire books about how people who focus on positive events, no matter how small, feel much happier, so maybe this will happen to you as well!)

Your aim is to collect ***three positive things each day.***

A couple of rules: (i) you don’t need to be winning the lottery; your observation can be very modest, just a small change, and (ii) your observation has to be specific to that day. Tempting as it is to focus on your family or home or friends, if you’re lucky, they’re going to be there every day. Instead, you’re looking for something that specifically occurred on the day you’re thinking about.

Some areas of your life to think about:

Your lessons: was there just one moment in a lesson today that was positive? A bad joke, an interesting video, an activity that was OK, a word from a teacher that was positive, a smiley face scribbled in an exercise book, a topic you understood and felt good about?

Your interactions: was there a connection today that was positive? A friend saying something funny or nice? Someone holding a door open for you? A smile from a teacher or an arm around the shoulder from a friend? A member of the canteen staff saying hello?

Your surroundings: was there a break in the rain and the sun came out? A warm classroom after a cold break outside? A decent game of netball in the gym or football on the astroturf? A comfy chair in a common room or study space?

Your journeys: was there a moment on the bus on the way in that brightened your day? A chat while you walked between lessons? A discussion in the lunch queue or a walk with a friend?

For each day, record the three things.

We bet that, by the end of the week, you're feeling more positive about your studies.

Use the table below to record your "*week of positive things*"

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday