Lesson 4: Choosing to Pay Attention to the Positive & Practicing Gratitude

Our attention can focus on the negative, neutral, or positive, with the latter offering resilience benefits. Research shows that people tend to focus more on negatives due to evolutionary survival mechanisms. This negativity bias impacts relationships, performance, and well-being. However, selective attention allows us to shift focus towards positives intentionally.

Practicing attention training helps rewire our brains towards positivity. Strategies include:

1. **Finding Silver Linings** – Seeking positive aspects in difficult situations.
2. **Seeing the Positive in Others** – Consciously appreciating others’ strengths.
3. **Developing Positive Go-To Staples** – Recalling uplifting thoughts during stress.

Gratitude enhances resilience, reduces stress, and improves well-being. Effective gratitude practices include:

* **Weekly Gratitude Journaling** – Listing five things weekly, reflecting on their absence.
* **Thank You Notes** – Expressing appreciation for people or experiences.
* **Gratitude Letter & Visit** – Writing and reading a letter to someone who has positively impacted you.

Lesson 5: Managing Intense Negative Emotions & Cultivating Positive Ones

Emotions shape our experiences, influence learning, and motivate actions. Negative emotions like anxiety or anger narrow focus, while positive emotions like joy and interest broaden perspectives.

Uncontrolled intense emotions impair decision-making, causing regretful actions. Self-assessing emotional reactions ensures they fit situations. For instance, sadness after a loss is normal, but prolonged distress disrupting daily life signals a need for management.

Effective emotion regulation involves:

1. **Recognizing Emotional Triggers** – Identifying situations that cause distress.
2. **Practicing Mindfulness** – Staying present without overreacting.
3. **Reframing Negative Thoughts** – Shifting perspective towards constructive interpretations.

Managing emotions allows for rational decisions, fostering resilience and well-being.