



Focus on the Positive

Level 3 Project



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Focus on the Positive

About Focus on the Positive

In this project, you will learn strategies for improving your personal interactions. You will note your attitudes and thoughts and recognize your successes to enhance leadership and collaborative skills. Focusing on the positive in your life helps you reach out to others in constructive ways.

Resources

The following is a list of resources available in your digital project on Base Camp. Some of these resources, such as evaluations, are also available on the Resources section on Base Camp.

Project Checklist

Evaluation Resources

Project Completion Form

Introduction and Assignment

Introduction

In order to become a successful communicator and leader, you must consider your perception of the world. Your attitude and state of mind impact nearly every facet of your life. Focusing on the positive is an integral part of achieving success.

The Toastmasters culture of supportive club meetings provides a safe environment to foster positivity.

Your Assignment

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to practice being aware of your thoughts and feelings, as well as the impact of your responses on others.

Overview: Keep a daily record of your moods and attitudes for a minimum of two weeks, noting when you feel positive or negative, your successes and efforts, and three things for which you are grateful. Record and evaluate any changes in your behavior or the behavior of those around you. At a club meeting, share some aspect of your experience. You may choose to schedule a 2- to 3-minute report or a 5- to 7-minute speech. After completing your speech, submit your signed Project Completion Form to your Vice President Education to indicate you completed the journal.

Your speech can be persuasive, humorous, informational, or crafted in any style that appeals to you and supports your speech content.

Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



Video: Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



Interactive Activity: Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



Resource: Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.



Weblink: Return to your digital project when you see this icon to link to a website or Base Camp location.

For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist.

Learning in Focus on the Positive

Assess and Reflect



To assess and track your knowledge, complete the activity below by listing what you already know and what you wonder about the topic today. Add up to five items to each list. After you complete your project, you will have an opportunity to review your answers and add what you have learned.

Know

For example: I know how to be confident when speaking to others.

Wonder

For example: I wonder how to understand my behaviors in conversations.

Competencies

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Reflect upon negative thoughts that may disrupt happiness and productivity.
- Acknowledge the need for active listening.
- Recognize the impact of different types of behaviors when interacting with others.
- Display confidence when talking to others.
- Demonstrate confidence in your ability to build positive relationships and environments.
- Reframe interactions with others in a positive light.

Pay Attention to Your Thoughts

Staying Positive

According to a study conducted at the University of North Carolina, there is a significant link between positive thinking and the ways skill sets can be enhanced. The researcher theorizes that a person's daily experiences of positive emotions will, over time, result in lower stress and higher resilience. By paying attention to your thoughts, you can make meaningful changes in your life.

If you maintain an upbeat, clear, and open-minded approach with the people around you, you have the power to create positive interactions. As you assess your thoughts and become aware of them, use the following guidelines to redirect negative thoughts.



Watch a video on Base Camp to learn more.

Gratitude

Be grateful for what you have and your accomplishments.

Challenges

Acknowledge challenges and problems you would like to overcome.

Acceptance

Accept that you cannot control every situation.

Goals

Set realistic goals that challenge and excite you.

Feedback

Ask for feedback and apply the best suggestions.

Replace Negative Thoughts

Identify Negative Thoughts

Identify your negative thoughts. It is both healthy and productive to acknowledge negativity. Any time you feel yourself prioritizing negative thoughts over positive ones, remove yourself from the situation and recognize what is happening. Look for patterns in the activities, events, and interactions surrounding your negative thoughts. When you do this, you can analyze why they occur.

Recognize a Pattern

Once you recognize a pattern of negative thoughts, acknowledge them and try to replace them with positivity. Focus on what's right instead of what's wrong.

Practice Positive Thought Replacement

The more often you practice positive thought replacement, the more natural it will become. With practice, positive thinking will be the norm.

Reflecting Upon Success

As you eliminate negative thoughts, reflect on your successes and identify the behaviors that led to your accomplishments. For example, if you received feedback that you perceived as negative on one of your initial speeches, you might feel reluctant to speak in front of your club again. Instead, consider that your evaluator was motivated by the desire to help you become a better speaker.

Remember that meetings are a safe place to learn and practice your skills. If the evaluator gave you positive feedback too, focus on that. Use these positive thoughts to propel you toward success.

We can all grow and learn from our missteps. View moments of doubt as opportunities for reflection and change. Take time to evaluate your experience and move on. There is nothing gained from berating yourself.

From time to time, negative thoughts will undoubtedly enter your mind. Take a moment and consider how you can look at the same thought in a positive light.

NEGATIVE THOUGHT	POSITIVE THOUGHT
I always use filler words.	If I do my best and learn from my mistakes, I will succeed.
My club notices when I am nervous.	My club supports me in all situations.
I am not experienced enough to be a strong public speaker.	I am good at what I do, and I am capable of learning more.
My speeches are not great.	My fellow club members are here to help me.
I do not contribute enough during meetings.	I can share valuable information with my club.

Promoting Positivity

You can take simple steps every day to turn negatives into positives. Begin by being aware of how your behavior and attitude influence others.

Change How You Listen

Hearing is the physical act of processing sounds in your environment. It is passive. Listening is the practice of taking what you hear and extracting meaning. Active listening is the ability to comprehend and repeat what you have heard.

Make it your goal to be an active listener. This skill will help you identify key information and improve your daily interactions.

Tips for Becoming a More Active Listener:

- Respect the speaker's point of view.
- Relax and remain engaged.
- Avoid passing judgment.
- Be aware of nonverbal cues; body language and gestures influence how you interpret the information you receive.
- Avoid interrupting.
- Ask clarifying questions to ensure understanding.
- Give nonverbal cues to demonstrate your interest.
- Conclude with a summary statement to demonstrate you understood what the speaker said.

Cultivate Positive Environments

You affect those around you in direct and indirect ways. Positive or negative, your attitude can influence others even if you are unaware.

When you begin to nurture positive thinking, you can foster a positive environment around you.

Giving Feedback

In Toastmasters and other areas of your life, there are times when you are required to give constructive feedback. When giving feedback, always lead with a positive remark.

Positive Feedback vs. Constructive Criticism

Use active listening and be responsive to requests for particular types of feedback. Positive feedback calls out something that has been done well, while constructive criticism focuses on areas that require improvement.

Reinforcing the positives encourages the person being evaluated to accept complimentary remarks and recognize personal strengths. Leading an evaluation with constructive criticism may be interpreted as negative and the person receiving the feedback may minimize, or even ignore, positive statements.

There is always something positive to say. Look to the speaker's experience, preparation, and presentation to find places to praise their efforts.

Reinforce Positives

If you feel constructive criticism is necessary, keep it succinct. The most successful feedback has a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative comments. Some Toastmasters prefer the “sandwich method” of providing feedback: The evaluator begins with positives, adds some areas needing improvement, and then ends with more positive feedback. This method helps to create positive interactions and facilitates the acceptance of important constructive feedback.

Gratitude

It is important to appreciate the people around you. Expressing gratitude can improve the mood and happiness of both the recipient and the giver. Saying “I appreciate it” after thanking someone or perhaps sending a note or small gift are ways to acknowledge your gratitude.

People who kept gratitude journals reported the benefits listed below.

Your journal can be kept in a book, notepad, or online. Feel free to use any method that is effective for you.

Gratitude Journal

Daily Journal

- More enthusiastic
- More determined
- More attentive
- More energetic
- More perceptive
- More likely to help someone with a personal problem
- More likely to offer emotional support

Weekly Journal

- More likely to exercise regularly
- Improved outlook on upcoming week
- Improved attitude about life as a whole
- More likely to have progressed toward attaining a personal goal (over a two-month period)

Volunteer to Help Others

Helping other people can give you a new perspective on your own thoughts and feelings. Look for opportunities to assist those around you and encourage a culture of positivity. These opportunities may take the form of an official role as teacher or mentor, volunteering to organize a Toastmasters event, or identifying ways in which you can make your club meetings run more smoothly and efficiently. When you help others, you inspire them to help each other.

Exercises

In addition to the project assignment, you can practice positivity by completing one or more of these exercises. They will help you gain experience but are not required to complete the project.

- Pick a specific challenge in your life in which you harbor negativity, and think of solutions to replace your negative thoughts.
- Make a list of goals you've accomplished and celebrate those achievements. Acknowledge your efforts in less successful ventures.
- Select a day in which you focus on the positive. Make notes about how this affects your interactions with others as well as your mood.

Review and Apply

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- List some different types of behaviors and describe the impact they have on others.
- How will you organize your journal or other tool for tracking your thoughts during this project?
- Describe the value of active listening.

Complete Your Assignment



Project Checklist

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report. First, review your assignment.

This project includes:

- Recording your daily moods and attitudes for a minimum of two weeks.
- A 2- to 3-minute report or a 5- to 7-minute speech.
- The Project Completion Form

The following list includes tasks for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You can use the checklist here or complete the digital version in your project on Base Camp.

Keep a daily record of your moods and attitudes for a minimum of two weeks.

Note when you are feeling positive or negative, your successes and efforts, and three things for which you are grateful. (Remember, you will not be required to share the intimacies of your journal with any member of your club.)

After noting your feelings, make note of any changes in your behavior or the behavior of those around you.

After two weeks, evaluate changes and trends.

Schedule your report or speech with the Vice President Education. You may choose to deliver a 2- to 3-minute report or a 5- to 7-minute speech.

Write your report or speech.

Rehearse your report or speech.

Submit your signed Project Completion Form to the Vice President Education.

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Evaluation Criteria



Review the criteria for the evaluation in this project. Your evaluator will use the following scale:

5 – Exemplary 4 – Excels 3 – Accomplished 2 – Emerging 1 – Developing

Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs

- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
- 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs
- 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice
- 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

Topic

- 5 – Delivers an exemplary speech about some aspect of experience completing the assignment
- 4 – Delivers a compelling speech about some aspect of experience completing the assignment
- 3 – Shares some aspect of experience completing assignment
- 2 – Mentions some aspect of experience completing the assignment but does not fully address
- 1 – Speaks on a topic other than some aspect of experience completing the assignment

Complete Your Project



Once you have delivered your speech and received your evaluation, take a minute to review what you recorded under “Know” and “Wonder” in the Assess and Reflect section at the start of this project. Then add what you have learned while working through this project. Add up to five items.

Learned

For example: I learned how to build positive relationships with others.

Before You Move On

Review Your Learning

Review all the material in this project.

Deliver Your Speech

Plan, practice, and deliver your speech.

Receive Your Evaluation

Receive your evaluation and complete any other tasks required by your club.

Assess and Reflect

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Congratulations!

If you have completed every task, CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed your Focus on the Positive project and you are ready to move on to your next project.



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