

# Positive Thinking - Negative Thinking – Reality

Reality Thinking: A Level Playing Field

By Rick R.

Ever since I was a child, anytime I had doubts about an event that was about to happen, someone would suggest “You’ve Got to Think Positive.” As much as I would have liked to be positive, I was seldom able to overcome my doubts simply by willing them away. Eventually I dismissed the idea that positive thinking would make any difference at all. As I got older, and in the grip of alcoholism, my cynicism grew, and I thought that I was always getting the bad breaks. It was easier to complain about everything than it was to take responsibility for myself. Fear of humiliation, responsibility, social activities, and all the other fears that alcoholics are plagued with, was my comfort zone, as long as I could drink myself into oblivion. When that no longer worked for me, I came to AA and have been sober ever since. I learned that alcoholics are plagued with *irrational* fear and that these fears far exceed the normal, God given instincts that we were born with and that these fears are the root cause of our problems. Positive thinking may work fine for normal people but for me it translates into *expectations*, and disappointments. In Dr. Paul’s story in the Big Book pg. 417, he said (“My serenity is inversely proportionate to my expectations”) and I agree with him. Negative thinking, on the other hand, has undesirable effects on the alcoholic. It seems that when I am cynical about an issue, it gives me a built-in excuse not to perform. It makes it much easier to sit in a bar and complain about the issue than to take the risk. This plays right into the *irrational fears* that have paralyzed me during my drinking days and still have the potential to keep me from growing in the program. AA does not stop life issues from happening, but it does help me to stop doing damage to myself. Over the years of exploring the cause and effect of my experiences, I have become very pragmatic about this issue. Like other issues in my AA development, I have learned that moving away from the two extremes and closer to the center, which I refer to as, “Reality Thinking,” has taken the artificial emotions (drama) out of my decision making, and that has served me well. I do not get too high when I am on a winning streak or too low when things are not going well. I live my life on a “Level Playing Field,” and it is Real. I have very few disappointments, and my mind is less troubled. For me, peace of mind is the byproduct of this approach to my thinking. Today, I hope for the best, prepare for the worst, and accept whatever happens, and I discovered that often, the things that I used to worry about never happen. The most effective and productive approach for me has been the establishment of a list of principles that I live by, that are consistent with the AA program and, other respected philosophies of life, that I have explored, that give me the best possibility to be successful in my undertakings. That does not mean that I never have disappointments, but the successes far outweigh the failures.