

PBS Helpline Resources

Finding the good things in life

Retraining the brain to focus on the positives can be really helpful in managing challenging times. This is NOT to minimise the problems, but to help our brains find good ways of dealing with them.

Our brains are hardwired to look for the negatives – this is a survival mechanism. We need to spot risks so that we can get away from them. However, that can make it harder for us to notice the positives. For example, you might notice if, when you tell someone about your day, you tend to talk about things that went wrong.

Noticing the positives helps to boost our mood and supports our nervous system. Whether our brain is focusing on the positive or the negative can have a big impact on how we behave and manage. If we want to reach our potential and live a full productive life, focusing on positives helps our brain to do that.

A good place to start is by making a commitment to notice things that are going well. While that can feel really hard, however bad the situation is, there is usually something you can find (even if it's tiny), that's ok. Ask yourself "what's going on, right now in this moment, that's ok?". They can be small, simple things, such as you've just had a nice drink, or you can see a tree through your window. Ask yourself what was good in this minute/hour/day? Try setting aside regular time to do this. Recording it can be helpful too, as writing it down makes it a conscious action.

You could even do this exercise together with someone you're supporting – doing this together can be really positive for both parties as well as being a way to strengthen relationships.

Working in this way also helps us to spot when we go on a negative spiral, and maybe even to interrupt it.

So, start by finding something little that's ok, and we gradually retrain the brain to notice the positives. That might then help us find other things that can be ok, and we can build on what we find.