

# The Power of Positive Thinking

Written by—Tamara Mickelson, Retired Sergeant and Award Winning Author of  
*Through My Eyes, CSI Memoirs that Haunt the Soul.*

It seems every time I scroll through social media these days, I come across a post about the power of positive thinking. I'm no stranger to this idea. Even my website and social media pages (Thin Blue Line 4 Women) were created and designed around the message of positive thinking. But does thinking positively really work? And if so, how do we master it to live our best lives?

The power of positive thinking is backed by science. Many studies prove the power of positive thinking in many aspects. Not only are there psychological effects, but physical effects on our bodies as well. From these studies, people have reported lower stress levels, stronger immune systems, higher success rates at work, and generally happier lives.

During my career in the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department in California, I worked in the Crime Scene Investigations Unit for fifteen of my twenty years. I witnessed more evil in those fifteen years than the average human being will ever see in a lifetime. It's tough to stay positive about anything when surrounded by so much negativity.

Once I retired and moved out of state, I was under the false impression that I would no longer suffer from the trauma of working those crime scenes. I thought I was safe since I didn't live in the area anymore and wouldn't be driving down the same streets where I worked crime scenes. Boy was I wrong! While out running errands, I would often see people that resembled victims from homicide scenes and it would stop me cold in my tracks. It's hard to explain how it made me feel.

One Halloween, I was sitting in my car in the school pick-up line when a cheerleader walked out of a building right next to my car. She appeared to have been stabbed repeatedly—red paint was spattered all over her clothing and body for a gruesome effect. I had what I can only assume to be a panic attack (I'd never had one before) and immediately started shaking and crying. It took my breath away. I had no idea what was going on and it took a minute for my brain to understand that it wasn't real. I'll never forget that experience.

After that, I decided to put my college degree to work. I learned in my master's program (marriage, family, and child counseling) that if you suffer from any kind of trauma, you should write your experience down on paper. Writing vs talking uses a different part of the brain and is said to help with the healing process. I began journaling about the crime scenes that bothered me the most. Before I knew it, I had eleven chapters and decided to put them into book form.

In my memoir titled, *Through My Eyes—CSI Memoirs that Haunt the Soul*, I walk the reader through eleven of the worst crime scenes I worked on throughout my career. I detail the emotions I felt at each scene and how they affected me. I bring to light that even after retiring and moving across the country, I could not escape the memories of the horror I saw day in and day out. Those memories are with me; embedded deep in my psyche. But putting it all down on paper was cathartic and helped me move toward healing.

In addition to helping myself deal with the trauma, my hope for the book is to help people understand what officers see, hear, touch, and even smell during their average work day. If you come across an officer who isn't smiling like you think they should be, consider that they may have just come from the scene of a 5-year-old child who had been murdered... and cut the officer some slack.

So... does thinking positively actually work? It absolutely does! Since I wrote my book, I've been practicing the power of positive thinking regularly. Not only am I grateful for specific things daily but I also make it a point to partake in only activities (including television) that bring me joy. People don't understand how debilitating negativity truly is.

Negative things come to us every day. Negativity (in any form) can build up over time and make us physically ill. It can also alter our personality over time. Think of it as a slow fade. The more you engage in negative things, the more it will change you. You'll wake up one day and wonder how you got there.

So how do you master the power of positive thinking? Easy... start small and work up. Start journaling things you're grateful for every single day. Hang around people who lift you up instead of people who tear you down. Small changes add up to big results!

In closing, I challenge you to start living your best life by thinking positive thoughts every single day. It's not always easy—life is going to throw a wrench now and then but we can *always* find something good in *every* day.

“Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.” —Dumbledore