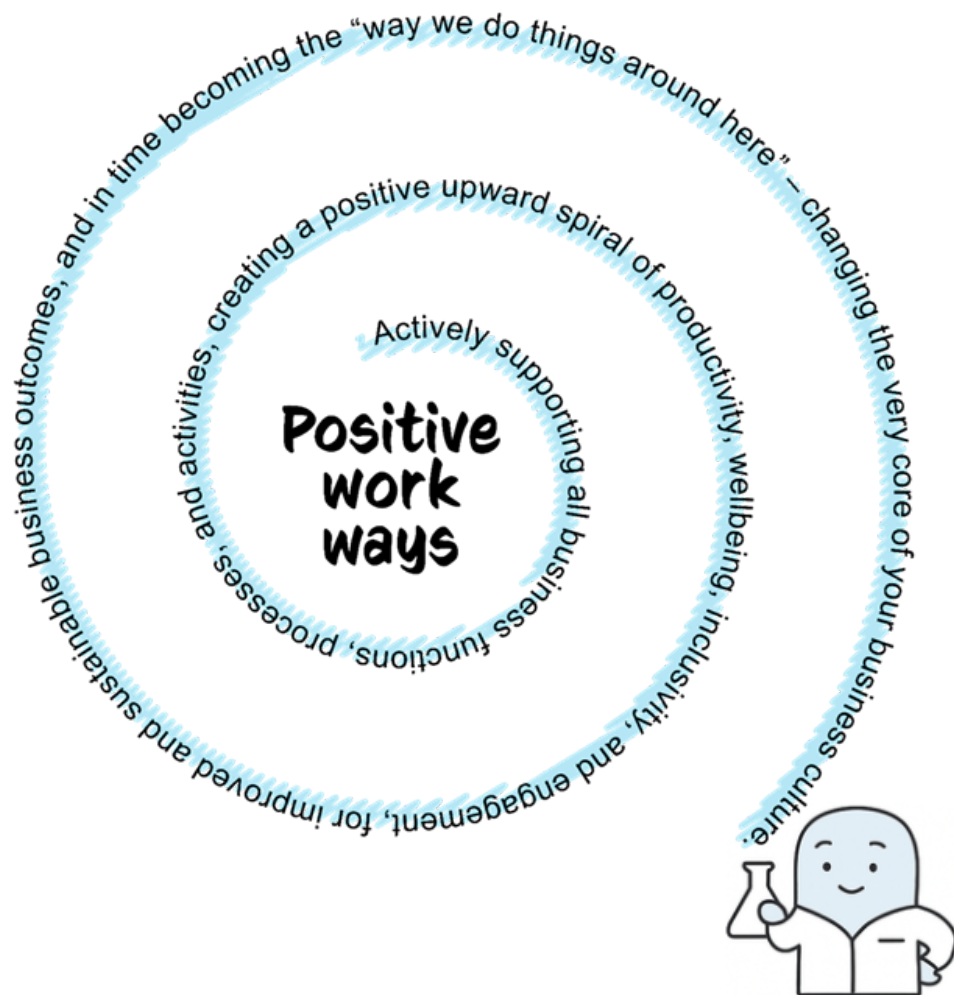
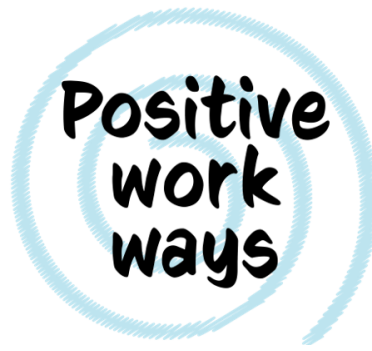


Quick-Start Guide: Understanding Positive Work Ways

How brain state shapes behaviour, leadership, and culture at work.



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Positive Work Ways Tool

A brain-based approach for individuals, teams, and leaders

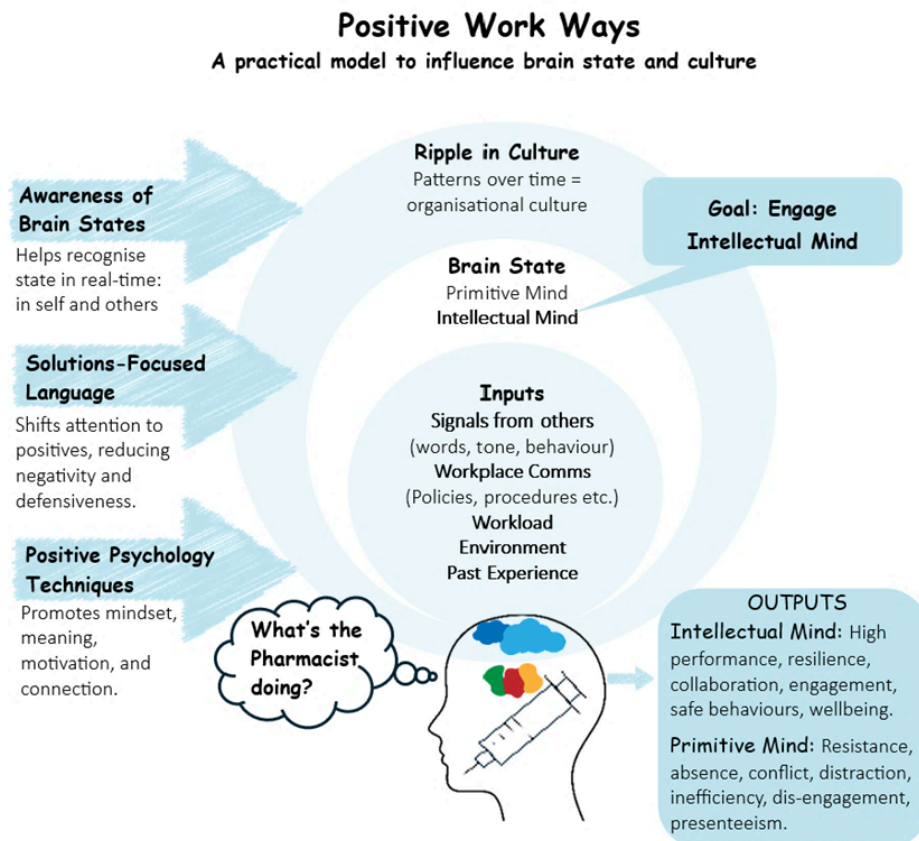
Introduction

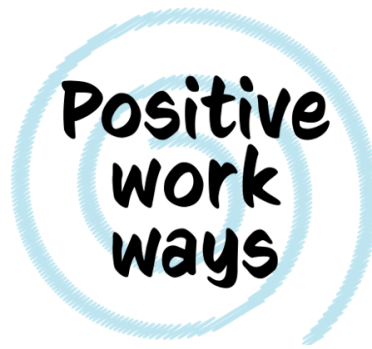
This booklet gives you a fast, practical introduction to the Positive Work Ways framework, a straightforward approach that combines brain-based insights with practical techniques to encourage positive workplace change.



You don't need a background in science, just a few clear concepts to help make sense of what's going on underneath, so you can work with it more effectively.

Because every interaction has an impact. And once you can see what's shaping it, you're in a better position to influence what happens next – in yourself, your team, and the culture around you.





What is Positive Work Ways?

Positive Work Ways offers a practical approach to improving culture, performance, and well-being. It uses simple, well-known brain metaphors as a relatable way to explain some complex brain processes and pairs them with practical ways to turn insight into action. It's built on three layers:

1. Awareness of brain states

Understanding the difference between two very different brain states that we refer to as the Primitive and Intellectual Mind, and recognising which one you (or those around you) are in at any given time.

2. A guiding question: 'What's my Pharmacist doing?'

This question prompts you to pause and check in. Are you calm or triggered? Thinking clearly or reacting? What is your internal state doing to your behaviour?

3. Tools to influence brain state

Once you've noticed the state, Positive Work Ways draws on proven techniques from positive psychology, solutions-focused thinking, and neuroscience to help you make a shift — for yourself and others.

It's not about perfection. It's about small, consistent changes that help people feel safer, think better, and perform more sustainably. Over time, the way people work and interact starts to change — and culture follows.

A Simple Analogy

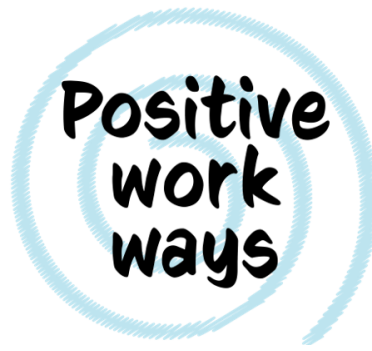
Your brain is working in the background all day long. It's not just thinking, it's constantly scanning, storing, retrieving, comparing, and reacting — often before you're even aware.

Positive Work Ways uses a simple analogy built around two core elements:

The brain team: comprised of 3 key internal players, continually working behind the scenes and influencing your reactions.

Two brain 'states': the overall mindset you're in at any given moment.

Together, they shape how you think, feel, behave — and how you interact with others.



The Team

The Radar (amygdala)

Your early warning system, continually scanning for anything that might signal a threat, such as sights, sounds, facial expressions or even a tone of voice.

Fundamental to our survival, it always assumes it's better to be safe than sorry – reacting super-fast and without conscious input. However, it's not always accurate.



The Filing Cabinet (hippocampus)

Your memory store. When the Radar spots something, it checks in with the Filing Cabinet: Have we seen this before? What happened last time?

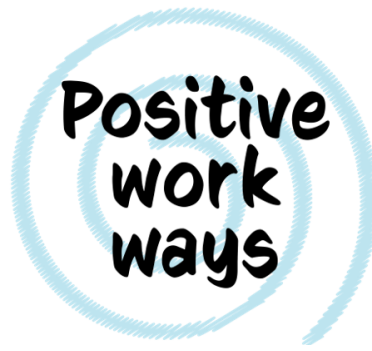
The brain forms an almost instantaneous interpretation of what's happening and whether action is needed.

The Pharmacist (hypothalamus)

Once the decision is made, the Pharmacist responds by releasing brain chemicals that, in turn, influence how you feel and act.

If the Radar senses danger, it might trigger cortisol or adrenaline, and if things feel safe and positive, it might release dopamine or serotonin.

These chemicals shift your internal state – and shape your outward behaviour – often without you even noticing. This internal team is working in the background – all day, every day – influencing your thoughts, actions, and how you respond to the people around you.



Two Brain States

Positive Work Ways draws on a common analogy: your brain operates in two distinct states, shifting between them depending on how safe, supported, or under pressure it feels.

The Primitive Mind

This is your survival state. It kicks in when the Radar senses danger, threat, or stress and prioritises speed over logic. You might feel defensive, anxious, withdrawn, angry, or stuck. You may want to act fast — or freeze altogether.

The Intellectual Mind

This is your 'thinking' state. It's where logic, empathy, creativity, and perspective-taking live. When you're in this state, you think clearly, solve problems, manage emotions, and connect with others.

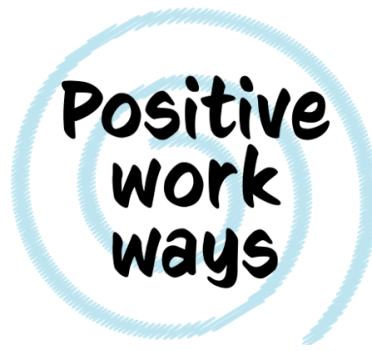
These states aren't permanent — we all move between them throughout the day. But which one you're in makes a big difference to what happens next.

Inputs and Outputs: Brain State Outcomes

Your brain doesn't shift states at random. It reacts to inputs — both external and internal.

- An unclear message.
- A loaded email.
- A supportive tone.
- A raised eyebrow.
- A memory that pops into your head.

The Radar picks up those signals. The Filing Cabinet adds context. The Pharmacist acts on the result. That combination determines your brain state, and your brain state drives your outputs.



When you're in the Primitive Mind, you're more likely to:

PRIMITIVE MIND

INPUTS



OUTPUTS

Unproductive

Presenteeism
Absence
Distraction
Dis-Engagement
Conflict
Unsafe behaviour
Inefficiency

- React emotionally or defensively.
- Avoid problems or get stuck in short-term thinking.
- Withdraw, snap, or shut down.
- Experience conflict and low morale.

When you're in the Intellectual Mind, you're more likely to

INTELLECTUAL MIND

INPUTS

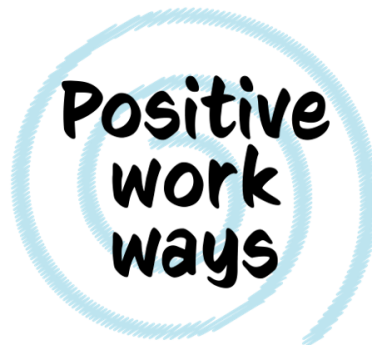


OUTPUTS

Productive

Wellbeing
High Performance
Engagement
Collaboration
Safe behaviour
Inclusivity

- Communicate calmly and clearly.
- Solve problems and make sound decisions.
- Show empathy, ownership, and resilience.
- Contribute to innovation, safety, inclusion, and well-being.



Awareness

You can't be in both states at once. And over time, staying stuck in the Primitive Mind takes a toll — on health, performance, and workplace culture.

But the goal isn't to eliminate stress completely. Sometimes, the Primitive Mind gives us what we need to act quickly or push through something tough. The key is knowing which state you're in, and learning how to shift if it's not the right one for the situation.

That's what Positive Work Ways helps you do – for yourself, and across your workplace.

Why This Matters

When you understand how the brain states work — and what triggers them — you can start to:

- Recognise your own state in the moment
- Notice the impact of your actions on others
- Shift your state when needed
- Support and facilitate a shift in others
- Change how you communicate and interact – for better outcomes

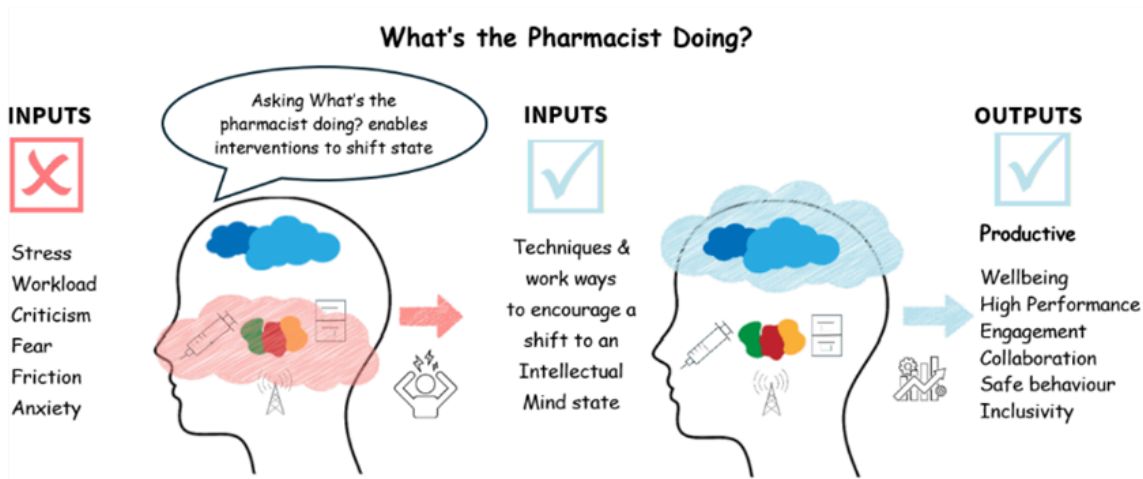
Key Questions

It helps you step back from blame and start asking more constructive questions, such as:

- 'What's really going on underneath that reaction?'
- 'What signals am I sending out?'
- **'What's my Pharmacist doing right now?'**
- **'How are my words and actions influencing someone else's Pharmacist?'**

Those last two questions are the heart of Positive Work Ways. Continually questioning what your Pharmacist is doing — or how your actions might influence someone else's Pharmacist — changes the way you communicate, lead, and collaborate.

Positive work ways



Culture as Collective Brain State

So far, we've looked at individual brains. But what happens when we scale that up? Imagine entire teams, departments, or organisations operating from either the Primitive or the Intellectual Mind.

Culture can feel vague or abstract, but it's just repeated patterns of behaviour, communication, and interaction. In other words, **culture can be viewed as brain state at scale.**

When the Intellectual Mind is dominant, culture feels

- Calm
- Curious
- Productive
- Inclusive
- Collaborative
- Safe





When the Primitive Mind dominates, culture feels:

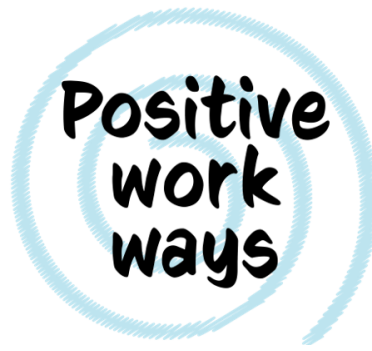


- Tense
- Defensive
- Disconnected
- Reactive
- Risk-averse
- Stuck

Leaders Influence

Leaders influence this significantly, often without realising it. Your tone, silence, timing, or tension? That's someone else's input. Your mindset and language ripple into someone else's Pharmacist.

This is why brain state matters far beyond the individual level. If we want to shift culture, we don't start with posters or campaigns. We start with awareness, behaviour, and communication that is shaped by brain-friendly principles and built into the way people work.



Starting Challenge: Spend a Day with Your Pharmacist

To start building your awareness, try this:

- Spend one whole working day asking yourself: 'What's my Pharmacist doing right now?'
- Check in a few times. What thoughts, tone of voice, or interactions are shifting your state?
- Is that email triggering a Primitive Mind reaction?
- Is your tone helping others feel safe, or adding pressure?
- Can you pause and shift?

It's not about fixing everything. It's about starting to notice. And once you notice, you can start to influence what happens next.

In Summary






Positive Work Ways is about more than personal awareness — it's about creating conditions that influence brain state across teams, organisations, and beyond.

- It helps you recognise the patterns shaping behaviour
- It helps you influence them: in yourself and others
- It starts with noticing — but it doesn't end there

By applying this thinking across everyday work, you don't just improve outcomes – you change the way your organisation feels to be part of.

Want to take it further?

This is just the beginning. If you'd like support embedding Positive Work Ways into your team, leadership practice or culture, there are a few easy ways to start:

-  Book a Lunch & Learn session
 -  Dive deeper with a workshop or consultancy session
 -  Read the Positive Work Ways book on Amazon
 -  Or simply reach out to start a conversation
 -  Visit www.positiveworkways.com or email support@positiveworkways.com
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