



The Power of **Positive Thinking**

Norman Vincent Peale

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Dedicated
to my brothers,
Robert Clifford Peale, MD, FICS
and
the Reverend Leonard Delaney Peale:
effective helpers of mankind

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PREFACE

At the time I wrote this book, it never occurred to me that more than two million copies would be sold in various hardcover editions and that it would one day attract a vast new readership through a paperback edition such as this. Frankly, however, my gratitude for this event is not from the viewpoint of books sold, but in terms of the many persons to whom I have been privileged to suggest a simple, workable philosophy of living.

The dynamic laws which the book teaches were learned the hard way, by trial and error, in my personal search for a way of life. But I found in them an answer to my own problems and, believe me, I am the most difficult person with whom I have ever worked. The book is my effort to share my spiritual experience; for if it helped me, I felt it might also be of help to others.

In formulating this simple philosophy of life I found my own answers in the teachings of Jesus Christ. I have merely tried to describe those truths in the language and thought forms understandable to present-day people. The way of life to which this book is a witness is very wonderful. It is not easy. Indeed, it often is hard, but it is full of joy and hope and victory.

I well recall the day I sat down to begin writing the book. I knew that the best work required more ability than I possessed, and therefore I needed help that only God could give. My wife and I have the policy of taking God into working partnership in all our problems and activities. So we had a very earnest session of prayer, asking for guidance, and we put the project into God's hands. When the manuscript was ready for the publisher, Mrs. Peale and I again prayed, dedicating the manuscript. We asked only that it might help people to live more effective lives. When the first book of these two million copies came from the press to us, it was again a spiritual moment. We thanked God for His help and dedicated the book once more.

The book was written for the plain people of this world, of whom certainly I am one. I was born and reared in humble mid-

western circumstances in a dedicated Christian home. The everyday people of this land are my own kind whom I know and love and believe in with great faith. When any one of them lets God have charge of his life, the power and glory are amazingly demonstrated.

The book is written with deep concern for the pain, difficulty, and struggle of human existence. It teaches the cultivation of peace of mind, not as an escape from life into protected quiescence, but as a power center out of which comes driving energy for constructive personal and social living. It teaches positive thinking, not as a means to fame, riches, or power, but as the practical application of faith to overcome defeat and accomplish worthwhile creative values in life. It teaches a hard, disciplinary way of life, but one which offers great joy to the person who achieves victory over himself and the difficult circumstances of the world.

To all who have written me about the joyous victory they have had through practicing the spiritual techniques of this book and to those who will yet have such experience, may I say how happy I am for all that is happening to them as they live by dynamic spiritual formulas.

I wish finally to express deep appreciation to my publishers for their never-failing support, cooperation, and friendship. I have never worked with finer people than my cherished friends at Prentice-Hall. I look forward with great pleasure to my association with Fawcett Publications. May God continue to use this book in human helpfulness.

—NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

INTRODUCTION

What This Book Can Do for You

THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN to suggest techniques and to give examples which demonstrate that you do not need to be defeated by anything, that you can have peace of mind, improved health, and a never-ceasing flow of energy. In short, that your life can be full of joy and satisfaction. Of this I have no doubt at all for I have watched countless persons learn and apply a system of simple procedures that has brought about the foregoing benefits in their lives. These assertions, which may appear extravagant, are based on bonafide demonstrations in actual human experience.

Altogether too many people are defeated by the everyday problems of life. They go struggling, perhaps even whining, through their days with a sense of dull resentment at what they consider the “bad breaks” life has given them. In a sense there may be such a thing as “the breaks” in this life, but there is also a spirit and method by which we can control and even determine those breaks. It is a pity that people should let themselves be defeated by the problems, cares, and difficulties of human existence, and it is also quite unnecessary.

In saying this I certainly do not ignore or minimize the hardships and tragedies of the world, but neither do I allow them to dominate. You can permit obstacles to control your mind to the point where they are uppermost and thus become the dominating factors in your thought pattern. By learning how to cast them from the mind, by refusing to become mentally subservient to them, and by channeling spiritual power through your thoughts, you can rise above obstacles which ordinarily might defeat you. By methods I shall outline, obstacles are simply not permitted to destroy your happiness and well-being. You need be defeated only if you are willing to be. This book teaches you how to “will” not to be.

The purpose of this book is a very direct and simple one. It makes no pretense to literary excellence nor does it seek to demonstrate any unusual scholarship on my part. This is simply a practical, direct-action, personal-improvement manual. It is written with the sole objective of helping the reader achieve a happy, satisfying, and worthwhile life. I thoroughly and enthusiastically believe in certain demonstrated and effective principles which, when practiced, produce a victorious life. My aim is to set them forth in this volume in a logical, simple, and understandable manner so that the reader feeling a sense of need, may learn a practical method by which he can build for himself, with God's help, the kind of life he deeply desires.

If you read this book thoughtfully, carefully absorbing its teachings, and if you will sincerely and persistently practice the principles and formulas set forth herein, you can experience an amazing improvement within yourself. By using the techniques outlined here you can modify or change the circumstances in which you now live, assuming control over them rather than continuing to be directed by them. Your relations with other people will improve. You will become a more popular, esteemed, and well-liked individual. By mastering these principles, you will enjoy a delightful new sense of well-being. You may attain a degree of health not hitherto known by you and experience a new and keen pleasure in living. You will become a person of greater usefulness and will wield an expanded influence.

How can I be so certain that the practice of these principles will produce such results? The answer is simply that for many years in the Marble Collegiate Church of New York City we have taught a system of creative living based on spiritual techniques, carefully noting its operation in the lives of hundreds of people. It is no speculative series of extravagant assertions that I make, for these principles have worked so efficiently over so long a period of time that they are now firmly established as documented and demonstrable truth. The system outlined is a perfected and amazing method of successful living.

In my writings, including several books, in my regular weekly newspaper column in nearly one hundred dailies, in my national radio program over seventeen years, in our magazine, *Guideposts*, and in lectures in scores of cities, I have taught these same scientific yet simple principles of achievement, health, and happiness.

Hundreds have read, listened, and practiced, and the results are invariably the same: new life, new power, increased efficiency, greater happiness.

Because so many have requested that these principles be put into book form, the better to be studied and practiced, I am publishing this new volume under the title, *The Power of Positive Thinking*. I need not point out that the powerful principles contained herein are not my invention but are given to us by the greatest Teacher who ever lived and who still lives. This book teaches applied Christianity; a simple yet scientific system of practical techniques of successful living that works.

—NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

The Power of **Positive Thinking**

Believe in Yourself

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy. But with sound self-confidence you can succeed. A sense of inferiority and inadequacy interferes with the attainment of your hopes, but self-confidence leads to self-realization and successful achievement. Because of the importance of this mental attitude, this book will help you believe in yourself and release your inner powers.

It is appalling to realize the number of pathetic people who are hampered and made miserable by the malady popularly called the inferiority complex. But you need not suffer from this trouble. When proper steps are taken, it can be overcome. You can develop creative faith in yourself—faith that is justified.

After speaking to a convention of businessmen in a city auditorium, I was on the stage greeting people when a man approached me and with a peculiar intensity of manner asked, “May I talk with you about a matter of desperate importance to me?”

I asked him to remain until the others had gone, then we went backstage and sat down.

“I’m in this town to handle the most important business deal of my life,” he explained. “If I succeed, it means everything to me. If I fail, I’m done for.”

I suggested that he relax a little, that nothing was quite that final. If he succeeded, that was fine. If he didn’t, well, tomorrow was another day.

“I have a terrible disbelief in myself,” he said dejectedly. “I have no confidence. I just don’t believe I can put it over. I am very discouraged and depressed. In fact,” he lamented, “I’m just about sunk. Here I am, forty years old. Why is it that all my life I have been tormented by inferiority feelings, by lack of confidence, by

self-doubt? I listened to your speech tonight in which you talked about the power of positive thinking, and I want to ask how I can get some faith in myself.”

“There are two steps to take,” I replied. “First, it is important to discover why you have these feelings of no power. That requires analysis and will take time. We must approach the maladies of our emotional life as a physician probes to find something wrong physically. This cannot be done immediately, certainly not in our brief interview tonight, and it may require treatment to reach a permanent solution. But to pull you through this immediate problem I shall give you a formula which will work if you use it.

“As you walk down the street tonight I suggest that you repeat certain words which I shall give you. Say them over several times after you get into bed. When you awaken tomorrow, repeat them three times before arising. On the way to your important appointment say them three additional times. Do this with an attitude of faith and you will receive sufficient strength and ability to deal with this problem. Later, if you wish, we can go into an analysis of your basic problem, but whatever we come up with following that study, the formula which I am now going to give you can be a large factor in the eventual cure.”

Following is the affirmation which I gave him: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). He was unfamiliar with these words so I wrote them on a card and had him read them over three times aloud.

“Now, follow that prescription, and I am sure things will come out all right.”

He pulled himself up, stood quietly for a moment, then said with considerable feeling, “OK, Doctor, OK.”

I watched him square his shoulders and walk out into the night. He seemed a pathetic figure, and yet the way he carried himself as he disappeared showed that faith was already at work in his mind.

Subsequently he reported that this simple formula “did wonders” for him and added, “It seems incredible that a few words from the Bible could do so much for a person.”

This man later had a study made of the reasons for his inferiority attitudes. They were cleared away by scientific counseling and by the application of religious faith. He was taught how to have faith; was given certain specific instructions to follow (these are given later in this chapter). Gradually he attained a strong, steady,

reasonable confidence. He never ceases to express amazement at the way in which things now flow toward rather than away from him. His personality has taken on a positive, not negative, character so that he no longer repels success, but, on the contrary, draws it to him. He now has an authentic confidence in his own powers.

There are various causes of inferiority feelings, and not a few stem from childhood.

An executive consulted me about a young man whom he wished to advance in his company. "But," he explained, "he cannot be trusted with important secret information and I'm sorry, for otherwise I would make him my administrative assistant. He has all the other necessary qualifications, but he talks too much, and without meaning to do so divulges matters of a private and important nature."

Upon analysis I found that he "talked too much" simply because of an inferiority feeling. To compensate for it he succumbed to the temptation of parading his knowledge.

He associated with men who were rather well-to-do, all of whom had attended college and belonged to a fraternity. But this boy was reared in poverty, had not been a college man or fraternity member. Thus he felt himself inferior to his associates in education and social background. To build himself up with his associates and to enhance his self-esteem, his subconscious mind, which always seeks to provide a compensatory mechanism, supplied him with a means for raising his ego.

He was on "the inside" in the industry, and accompanied his superior to conferences where he met outstanding men and listened to important private conversations. He reported just enough of his inside information to cause his associates to regard him with admiration and envy. This served to elevate his self-esteem and satisfy his desire for recognition.

When the employer became aware of the cause of this personality trait, being a kindly and understanding man, he pointed out to the young man the opportunities in business to which his abilities could lead him. He also described how his inferiority feelings caused his unreliability in confidential matters. This self-knowledge, together with a sincere practicing of the techniques of faith and prayer, made him a valuable asset to his company. His real powers were released.

I can perhaps illustrate the manner in which many youngsters

acquire an inferiority complex through the use of a personal reference. As a small boy I was painfully thin. I had lots of energy, was on a track team, was healthy and hard as nails, but thin. And that bothered me because I didn't want to be thin. I wanted to be fat. I was called skinny, but I didn't want to be called skinny. I wanted to be called fat. I longed to be hard-boiled and tough and fat. I did everything to get fat. I drank cod-liver oil, consumed vast numbers of milk shakes, ate thousands of chocolate sundaes with whipped cream and nuts, cakes and pies innumerable, but they did not affect me in the slightest. I stayed thin and lay awake nights thinking and agonizing about it. I kept on trying to get heavy until I was about thirty, when all of a sudden did I get heavy? I bulged at the seams. Then I became self-conscious because I was so fat, and finally had to take off forty pounds with equal agony to get myself down to respectable size.

In the second place (to conclude this personal analysis which I give only because it may help others by showing how this malady works), I was a minister's son and was constantly reminded of that fact. Everybody else could do everything, but if I did even the slightest little thing—"Ah, you are a preacher's son." So I didn't want to be a preacher's son, for preachers' sons are supposed to be nice and namby-pamby. I wanted to be known as a hard-boiled fellow. Perhaps that is why preachers' sons get their reputation for being a little difficult, because they rebel against having to carry the banner of the church all the time. I vowed there was one thing I would never do, and that was to become a preacher.

Also, I came of a family practically every member of which was a performer in public, a platform speaker, and that was the last thing I wanted to be. They used to make me get up in public to make speeches when it scared me to death, even filled me with terror. That was years ago, but the twinge of it comes to me every now and then when I walk onto a platform. I had to use every known device to develop confidence in what powers the good Lord gave me.

I found the solution of this problem in the simple techniques of faith taught in the Bible. These principles are scientific and sound and can heal any personality of the pain of inferiority feelings. Their use can enable the sufferer to find and release the powers which have been inhibited by a feeling of inadequacy.

Such are some of the sources of the inferiority complex which

erect power barriers in our personalities. It is some emotional violence done to us in childhood, or the consequences of certain circumstances, or something we did to ourselves. This malady arises out of the misty past in the dim recesses of our personalities.

Perhaps you had an older brother who was a brilliant student. He got As in school; you made only Cs, and you never heard the last of it. So you believed that you could never succeed in life as he could. He got As and you got Cs, so you reasoned that you were consigned to getting Cs all your life. Apparently you never realized that some of those who failed to get high grades in school have been the greatest successes outside of school. Just because somebody gets an A in college doesn't make him the greatest man in the United States, because maybe his As will stop when he gets his diploma, and the fellow who got Cs in school will go on later to get the real As in life.

The greatest secret for eliminating the inferiority complex, which is another term for deep and profound self-doubt, is to fill your mind to overflowing with faith. Develop a tremendous faith in God and that will give you a humble yet soundly realistic faith in yourself.

The acquiring of dynamic faith is accomplished by prayer, lots of prayer, by reading and mentally absorbing the Bible and by practicing its faith techniques. In another chapter I deal with specific formulas of prayer, but I want to point out here that the type of prayer that produces the quality of faith required to eliminate inferiority is of a particular nature. Surface skimming, formalistic and perfunctory prayer is not sufficiently powerful.

A wonderful colored woman, a cook in the home of friends of mine in Texas, was asked how she so completely mastered her troubles. She answered that ordinary problems could be met by ordinary prayers, but that "when a big trouble comes along, you have to pray deep prayers."

One of my most inspiring friends was Harlowe B. Andrews of Syracuse, New York, one of the best businessmen and competent spiritual experts I ever knew. He said the trouble with most prayers is that they aren't big enough. "To get anywhere with faith," said he, "learn to pray big prayers. God will rate you according to the size of your prayers." Doubtless he was right, for the Scriptures say, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). So the bigger your problem, the bigger your prayer should be.

Roland Hayes, the singer, quoted his grandfather to me, a man whose education was not equal to that of his grandson, but whose native wisdom was obviously sound. He said, "The trouble with lots of prayers is they ain't got no suction." Drive your prayers deep into your doubts, fears, inferiorities. Pray deep, big prayers that have plenty of suction and you will come up with powerful and vital faith.

Go to a competent spiritual adviser and let him teach you how to have faith. The ability to possess and utilize faith and gain the release of powers it provides are skills and, like any skills, must be studied and practiced to gain perfection.

At the conclusion of this chapter are listed ten suggestions for overcoming your inferiority pattern and for developing faith. Practice these rules diligently and they will aid you in developing confidence in yourself by dissipating your feelings of inferiority, however deeply imbedded.

At this point, however, I wish to indicate that to build up feelings of self-confidence the practice of suggesting confidence concepts to your mind is very effective. If your mind is obsessed by thoughts of insecurity and inadequacy it is, of course, due to the fact that such ideas have dominated your thinking over a long period of time. Another and more positive pattern of ideas must be given the mind, and that is accomplished by repetitive suggestion or confidence ideas. In the busy activities of daily existence thought disciplining is required if you are to re-educate the mind and make of it a power-producing plant. It is possible, even in the midst of your daily work, to drive confident thoughts into consciousness. Let me tell you about one man who did so by the use of a unique method.

One icy winter morning he called for me at a hotel in a mid-western city to take me about thirty-five miles to another town to fill a lecture engagement. We got into his car and started off at a rather high rate of speed on the slippery road. He was going a little faster than I thought reasonable, and I reminded him that we had plenty of time and suggested that we take it easy.

"Don't let my driving worry you," he replied. "I used to be filled with all kinds of insecurities myself, but I got over them. I was afraid of everything. I feared an automobile trip or an airplane flight; and if any of my family went away I worried until they returned. I always went around with a feeling that something was

going to happen, and it made my life miserable. I was saturated with inferiority and lacked confidence. This state of mind reflected itself in my business and I wasn't doing very well. But I hit upon a wonderful plan which knocked all these insecurity feelings out of my mind, and now I live with a feeling of confidence, not only in myself but in life generally."

This was the "wonderful plan." He pointed to two clips fastened on the instrument panel of the car just below the windshield and, reaching into the glove compartment, took out a pack of small cards. He selected one and slipped it beneath the clip. It read, "If ye have faith . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20). He removed that one, shuffled expertly through the cards with one hand as he drove, selected another, and placed it under the clip. This one read "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

"I'm a traveling salesman," he explained, "and I drive around all day calling on my customers. I have discovered that while a man drives he thinks all kinds of thoughts. If his pattern of thought is negative, he will think many negative thoughts during the day and that, of course, is bad for him; but that is the way I used to be. I used to drive around all day between calls thinking fear and defeat thoughts, and incidentally that is one reason my sales were down. But since I have been using these cards as I drive and committing the words to memory, I have learned to think differently. The old insecurities that used to haunt me are just about all gone, and instead of thinking fear thoughts of defeat and ineffectiveness, I think thoughts of faith and courage. It is really wonderful the way this method has changed me. It has helped in my business, too, for how can one expect to make a sale if he drives up to a customer's place of business thinking he is not going to make a sale?"

This plan used by my friend is a very wise one. By filling his mind with affirmations of the presence, support, and help of God, he had actually changed his thought processes. He put an end to the domination of his long-held sense of insecurity. His potential powers were set free.

We build up the feeling of insecurity or security by how we think. If in our thoughts we constantly fix attention upon sinister expectations of dire events that might happen, the result will be constantly to feel insecure. And what is even more serious is the tendency to create, by the power of thought, the very condition

we fear. This salesman actually created positive results by vital thoughts of courage and confidence through the process of placing the cards before him in his car. His powers, curiously inhibited by a defeat psychology, now flowed out of a personality in which creative attitudes had been stimulated.

Lack of self-confidence apparently is one of the great problems besetting people today. In a university a survey was made of six hundred students in psychology courses. The students were asked to state their most difficult personal problem. Seventy-five percent listed lack of confidence. It can safely be assumed that the same large proportion is true of the population generally. Everywhere you encounter people who are inwardly afraid, who shrink from life, who suffer from a deep sense of inadequacy and insecurity, who doubt their own powers. Deep within themselves they mistrust their ability to meet responsibilities or to grasp opportunities. Always they are beset by the vague and sinister fear that something is not going to be quite right. They do not believe that they have it in them to be what they want to be, and so they try to make themselves content with something less than that of which they are capable. Thousands upon thousands go crawling through life on their hands and knees, defeated and afraid. And in most cases such frustration of power is unnecessary.

The blows of life, the accumulation of difficulties, the multiplication of problems tend to sap energy and leave you spent and discouraged. In such a condition the true status of your power is often obscured, and a person yields to a discouragement that is not justified by the facts. It is vitally essential to reappraise your personality assets. When done in an attitude of reasonableness, this evaluation will convince you that you are less defeated than you think you are.

For example, a man fifty-two years of age consulted me. He was in great despondency. He revealed utter despair. He said he "was all through." He informed me that everything he had built up over his lifetime had been swept away.

"Everything?" I asked.

"Everything," he repeated. He was through, he reiterated. "I have nothing left at all. Everything is gone. There is no hope, and I am too old to start all over again. I have lost all faith."

Naturally I felt sympathetic toward him, but it was evident that his chief trouble was the fact that dark shadows of hopelessness