POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY – THE PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS

1. INTRODUCTION
Positive psychology is the study of how to be successful, happy and healthy.

The principles described here are based on scientific research carried out in the area of positive psychology.

Five principles of success are described along with explanations about how they can be used to improve our lives.

2. POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY
The discipline of positive psychology can be thought of as a scientific version of self help.

Academic psychologists have studied the behaviour of the most successful, happiest and healthy people to see what we can learn about how to be happy, healthy and successful ourselves.

3. SUCCESS
Before we go any further, let’s be clear what we mean by success.

Success will mean different things to different people depending on their values.

This is recognised in the definition of success used by positive psychologists:

“… a life of meaningful achievement, having a positive experience of life and making a positive difference to others.”
4. PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS
There are five principles reflecting the attitudes and behaviours needed to have meaningful achievement in life.

They are:

- Take responsibility for how our life turns out
- Set clear goals
- Have a positive attitude
- Persevere determinedly and intelligently
- Connect with others who can help

We will look at each of these in more depth

5. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
Successful people understand that how well our lives turn out is largely up to us.

Life isn’t simply a matter of fate or luck – our destiny is in our own hands and our attitudes and behaviours make a difference to ourselves and to those around us.

We must take responsibility for our lives and not expect others to do it for us.
5.1 Think, Speak, Behave Empowered
A key to taking responsibility is to think in the right way – a way that empowers us and makes it clear that our life is in our own hands.

In general, thoughts and statements with ‘how’ in them can be empowering.

For example the thought, “I will never find a decent job” is disempowering, whereas the thought “how can I find a decent job?” is empowering.

5.2 Focus on What You Can Control
We can’t control every aspect of our lives, but we should focus on what we can control in every situation.

For example, we have no control over whether our train runs on time, but we do have control over what to do if it is late.

We could use the time productively, for example working or reading, or we could waste time and energy fretting.

6. SET GOALS
The most successful people tend to know what they want to achieve.

They set clear goals which they always bear in mind and which they use to guide the decisions and actions that they take.
6.1 Think Long Term
When setting goals it can be useful to think many years ahead.

If we were in our last years looking back on our lives, what is it that we would have most wanted to achieve?

This is a good basis for setting our life goals and making sure we give time to the things that are really important to us.

6.2 Decide Priorities
Sometimes our goals may clash.

For example the goal of being a multi-millionaire and the goal of being a school teacher may not be easily compatible.

When potential goals clash we have to decide what our priorities are and select the most important goals based on our values.

7. BE POSITIVE
The research shows that having a positive attitude is the single most important factor in being successful.

This doesn’t mean living in a fantasy world and thinking that everything in our life is brilliant.

But it does mean trying to make the best of situations and opportunities.
7.1 *Be Optimistic*
Having an optimistic outlook is an essential part of being positive.

If we are optimistic and believe we can achieve our goals we are much more likely to devote the time and energy needed to achieve them.

If we are pessimistic and don’t believe we can achieve them we will be much less likely to make the effort.

7.2 *Be Grateful*
When good things happen, it is important that we take the time to enjoy and savour them.

The most successful people incentivise themselves by celebrating their successes.

Not just the achievement of the big goals but also the completion of steps along the way.

8. **PERSEVERE INTELLIGENTLY**
Successful people are determined and they persevere towards their goals.

But that does not mean that they are stubborn.

If a course of action isn’t working they are prepared to try a different approach.
8.1 Be Flexible
It is important to have clear goals but to be flexible as to how we achieve them.

When we choose a course of action to achieve a goal we must pursue it determinedly and try our absolute best.

However if it still doesn’t work we should think about alternative approaches.

8.2 Find and Use Your Strengths
Our strengths are our skills and our passions.

It is important that we know what our strengths are and that we use them to achieve our goals.

The more time we spend doing things we love and are good at the more likely we are to succeed.

9. CONNECT WITH OTHERS
Successful people understand that no-one can succeed on their own.

Whatever our goals we will need others to help us achieve them.

It is important to recognise this and to connect with the people who can help us.
9.1 Recognise Others
It is very important to people that their contribution is recognised.

We should notice and acknowledge the contribution of others and give credit where credit is due.

This is essential to creating loyalty and strong, supportive professional and personal relationships.

9.2 The Golden Rule
We should treat others as we would like to be treated.

This is the golden rule underpinning all religions and moral philosophies.

The psychology research shows that it is also basis on which the strongest professional and personal relationships are based.

10. SUMMARY
The five principles of success are:

- Take responsibility
- Set goals
- Be positive
- Persevere intelligently
- Connect with others

The more consistently and diligently we apply these principles, the greater our chances of achieving success and leading lives full of achievement happiness and fulfilment.