

The Power of the Positive

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I believe that one of the most powerful things in the universe is the mind. Through our minds we can change the world. Skyscrapers, rocket ships, submarines--everything that exists has been conceived in the minds of men and women. If you think about this, you will quickly realize the power of thought and how profound it is to your life. If you can conceive of something, it is quite possible that you can achieve it.

I would like to tell you a couple of stories about the power of the mind. Much of this is personal and related to human interaction, but when it comes right down to it, I believe that it can apply directly to you and your [job search](#). I also believe it may be some of the best career advice you ever receive.

Throughout my life I have been an observer in many respects more than a participant. I enjoy observing people and how they interact. I enjoy learning what types of people seem consistently happy and what distinguishes these people from those who are not happy. I have friends I have kept in contact with for twenty-five years or more, and some of these people are extraordinarily happy, while others are not. For our purposes today, I would like to focus on the happy ones.

The happy people are those who have been consistently healthy, have been consistently employed, and have had lives that most of us would envy. I remember first speaking with one of my oldest and dearest friends more than twenty years ago. I noticed the strangest thing every time I would speak with him. If I brought up a piece of negative news, or criticized something while talking to him, he would immediately end the conversation. If we were on the telephone, he would say he had to go. If we were speaking in person, he would walk away. This was how he acted; however, he was very polite about it. He did the same thing in large social situations. If we were talking in a group of people and negative news came up, he would excuse himself and do something else.

Throughout the years I have seen many people like this. These are people who simply do not want any part in any negativity. They do not want to hear negative news about other people, and they are not at all interested in negative news of any kind. It does nothing for them, and they have no desire to participate.

There is something special about these sorts of people. I have known some of them to be smart and others to be not so smart. I have seen people like this who are driven and not driven. But one thing I know is this: These people are always well liked, wherever they go. They rarely lose jobs and they are almost always successful. The thing about these sorts of people is that they do not allow negative thoughts to enter their mind. They are, almost universally, only concerned with positive thoughts and spreading goodwill. As a consequence, people really like being around these people. Employers are no exception.

For part of high school I lived in Bangkok, Thailand, and attended an international school where the students were from pretty much every country--Sweden, Israel, Japan, Taiwan, you name it. At the end of ninth grade, students had to decide whether they would enroll in something called the International Baccalaureate Program (IB), or stay in the school's regular course of study. The IB program was much more difficult, and fewer than 10 percent of students enrolled in it.

One day I was speaking with one of the smartest girls in my history class, and I asked her if she was going to enroll in the program. She was from Sweden. "No, of course I am not," she said. "That program is only for people who are going to get into good schools when they [graduate](#)." I kept asking different people this question and, one after another, very intelligent people (people I believed were much more intelligent than I was) all told me that they simply were not intellectually equipped for those higher level classes. The significance of this was profound. In many European countries the students not enrolled in the IB program were basically setting themselves up for attending trade schools (rather than universities) and working in mediocre professions. Choosing this "regular" course of study did not have this serious of an impact in the United States, but it certainly did over there.

Many were staying away from the IB program, despite their intelligence, because somewhere along the line they had come to believe they were not intelligent enough to handle that course of study. They were, in effect, allowing their own negativity to make their decision for them.

It should also be noted that the converse was also true. Many students were selecting themselves for the IB course of study, who did not seem qualified. These students were allowing their positivity to influence them. These were the sorts of students who always believed they would find a way. And these were the same sorts of students who were not interested in negative conversations.

A couple of years later I was attending a private high school in Michigan and I had a [teacher](#) whom I also picked as my advisor. This teacher was really exceptional, and most of the students he advised ended up going to very good colleges. I noticed that he too was always extremely positive. He spoke to the students closest to him in terms that only allowed success. For example, he would tell a student that he was confident he or she would get As in every course for the next semester, as if he already knew this would occur. The student might be only a B student and would therefore look at the teacher incredulously. Nevertheless, the student would end up getting As the next semester.

Nothing has more power than telling someone "I see you doing this," or "You are this kind of person, and you can do this." There is a special kind of energy involved when this happens. You can literally change the course of people's lives based on the sorts of expectations you set for them--whether those expectations are positive or negative. Do you ever have people around you who are setting low expectations for you? How do you perform when this occurs?

Our capacity to achieve starts within our minds, our conception of self. We have to think positively of ourselves in order to do well. We also cannot let negative thoughts enter our minds. This may be easier said than done, but I have known numerous people who were able to do this consistently. It works, and it is an incredibly powerful thing when it is done correctly.

All this brings me back to you and your [job search](#). Regardless of whether the market is thriving or in a meltdown, you are employable. You are the type of person who always manages to find an opportunity. You are very good at your job and people can see this. You are perfect for every job you are applying for.

You need to keep thoughts like this going through your head at all times. These are the only thoughts you can afford when you are searching for a job. No other thought matters. If people around you are saying negative things about the market, do not listen to them. Walk away, or hang up, and avoid them. Negative information does you absolutely no good. Negative energy depresses. You need to be up.

The happiest people and the most successful people think positive thoughts. You need to believe religiously in your abilities, your strengths, and the strength of the market. Like attracts like. Positive attracts positive. I want you to succeed and be all you are capable of being. Do not listen to negative news about the market. Do not surround yourself with negative people at the office. You need to be in a positive space. This is where the jobs, money, and happiness are.

You deserve it all.

THE LESSON

If you can believe something, it is quite possible that you can achieve it. All of your expectations begin in your mind, so you must think highly of yourself in order to do well. Believe religiously in your strengths, your abilities, and the strength of the market. Do not listen to negative influences or surround yourself with negative people, as you will find the happiness and success you seek in a positive place.

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