Staying Positive With COPD

by ERIC PATTERSON

Removing Negativity From Your Life

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD) sounds scary. In fact, it is scary. By now, you have read the pamphlets and delved into online research to conclude that COPD will be a major force in your life. From the physical to the mental and emotional, COPD can zap the positivity out of your life.

Positivity is so needed and so important to your life. It is something that cannot be sacrificed. Without your positivity, a range of unwanted effects become sparked by negativity. They include:

Reduced Physical Health

COPD is enough of a physical burden; you don't want to add any others to the list. Unfortunately, an odd thing happens when people begin to see themselves as unhealthy. In these situations, they begin to pay less attention to their overall physical health while no longer taking necessary steps to maintain their current levels.

They say, “I’m already sick. Why bother taking care of myself?” They eat worse foods, reduce their exercise, slack on their sleep, and even pick up new, unhealthy habits like smoking or drinking alcohol more heavily. This is especially dangerous, as COPD and drinking alcohol may not mix well.

Obviously, this mindset is misguided and shortsighted. In reality, paying less attention to your physical health will only compound COPD symptoms and add other ailments to list. Negativity will diminish your physical health quickly.

Reduced Mental health

Just as counterintuitive things can happen with physical health from negativity, the same is true with mental health. Someone with COPD might say, “I’m sick. I’m going to die. What’s the point of going on?” Clearly, this reaction could trigger a great deal of depression.

Alternatively, someone might say, “Oh my God! COPD is terrible. When will things get worse? How bad will they get? What will I do?” This reaction would trigger an overly anxious response. In either case, mental health will worsen and issues begin to spread. Instead of being reserved to only COPD, the depression and anxiety will widen to other aspects of your mental health. Perhaps, you will become more angry or irritable. Either way, negativity wins.

Poorer Relationships

If you combine the effects of worsening physical health paired with worsening mental health, relationships begin to suffer. One factor is the idea that your physical health will cause relationships to shift drastically because COPD will limit your abilities to engage in certain social activities. Gone are the days of strenuous hikes and softball games. You might say, “What’s the point of spending time with friends? It won’t be the same.”

Another factor is that increased depression and anxiety will make relationships less appealing. Depression and anxiety are interested in having you be more depressed and more anxious. Strong relationships actually reduce these feelings, so they will convince you that relationships are unnecessary mistakes. They might encourage you to say, “If I spend time with friends, someone bad will happen. They probably don’t like me anymore.”

Whichever factor feeds into your poorer relationships, you will be less interested in relationships and your relationships might be less interested in you due to changed interests and disposition.

Next page: improving your self-talk to be more positive.

Stay Hopeful with Self-Talk

When negativity is your enemy, positivity must be your ally. To build positive up, you must look at the ways negativity creeps into your life. If you can identify it, you can defeat it.

COPD definitely sparks negativity, but you may know people that are quite content and happy despite their COPD symptoms. COPD is the trigger, but you have to look beyond COPD to find the answer.

The previous examples of reduced physical health, reduced mental health, and poorer relationships share something in common; it is the changes in self-talk that come with COPD.

Self-talk is made up of all the things that you say to yourself each day. Positive self-talk will boost your mood, reduce your anxiety, and inspire you to conquer the day. Negative self-talk will drag you down mentally and physically.

The self-talk you have begins to shape your beliefs. Your beliefs serve as a filter that takes in and processes all of the information throughout the day. A positive filter can take a bad situation and make it good, while a negative filter can take something good and make it bad. For example, a positive filter will make finding a quarter on the sidewalk a great win. A negative filter will focus on how much better things would be if it was a dollar instead of a quarter.

How to Make Your Self-Talk More Positive

If you are interested in improving your positivity, you have to change your self-talk and beliefs. Consider this three-step process for changing your negatives into positives:

- **You must pay attention to your beliefs.** What do your beliefs tell you about your COPD? What do your beliefs tell you about your mental health and the people around you? Without knowing these answers you cannot assess your situation accurately. Your self-talk occurs constantly. There is no shortage of information to gather.

- **Put the information collected from above under a microscope.** Now that you know how you feel about COPD, work to determine if this viewpoint is a help or a hindrance to your quest for positivity. Previously, you may have been concerned with issues of truth and lies or right and wrong. Now, think only in terms of helping you or hurting you. It is true that COPD changes things, but if you overly focus on the change, you may forget about what is the same. Accept the idea that depression and anxiety will impact your examination process. Remember, they do not want you to be positive, so they will create reasons to maintain your negativity. Expecting this can help you grade yourself on a accurately.
- **You have a lot of flexibility with your beliefs**. Beliefs are easily changeable depending on your wants, needs and the situations you find yourself in. If the prior steps uncovered beliefs that you are not interested in keeping, find another way of thinking. Establishing a new belief may feel uncomfortable at first, but this is only part of the process. Push through to find positivity. Saying, “COPD is hard, but I know that I’ll be okay,” is much better than saying “COPD is wrecking my life.” Determine the best beliefs for

you.

Conclusion

COPD is the enemy, and it already has enough power. Do not add to its power through your negative beliefs. Know the impact of COPD, and then begin working against it. When you pay attention, examine, and determine, you can reach your positivity potential.