

# Looking forward to things.

Relevant to: Depression:  Anxiety:  Irritability/Anger:  General emotional control:

**Looking forward to things is good. The evidence shows us that those of us who look forward to things enjoy a happier life than those who don't. So the plan must be to get better at looking forward to things.**

## "But I haven't got anything to look forward to."

The good news is that you don't need to have *big* things to look forward to. Look at it this way: anybody can look forward to a two-week holiday in Barbados; it takes real talent to look forward to watching Big Brother on the TV.

There has been an unhealthy pressure *not* to look forward to small things. "How sad," some people will say when you tell them of your glee that Big Brother is on TV tonight. Well, they're wrong; the research shows that it's the people who do look forward to things - big and small – who are happiest.

## Why don't we do it then?

Some people – the happiest people – do look forward to things. Others don't for two main reasons. First they have (unhelpfully) believed those people who say that it's sad to look forward to small things. And second, and maybe more importantly, they don't want to 'get their hopes up' too much. They don't want to be disappointed if things don't turn out as well as they hoped. And that's why it's important to be in the *habit* of looking forward to things, so we don't 'put all our eggs in one basket'.

## Small is beautiful.

It's usually best to look forward to small things rather than big things. Why? Because if you set too much store in one good thing that's going to happen in six months time, you put yourself under too much pressure. It's difficult to relax and enjoy it then. And even if you do, the anticlimax afterwards will hit you – unless you're in the habit of giving yourself a constant stream of small things to look forward to.

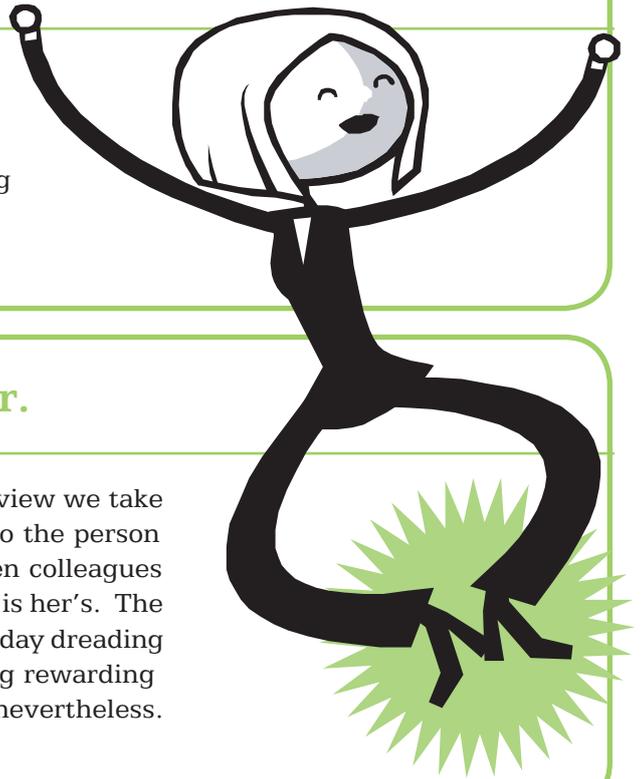


## "I've got too much to worry about to look forward to small things."

If you're involved in big things – big projects or big worries – then it's probably *particularly* important that you invest in your mental capital, and part of that is looking forward to things. So set aside a 'worry period' – 5pm to 5.15pm for example – do all your worrying in that time, and then free yourself up to relax and work hard, enjoy yourself and look forward to things during the rest of the time.

## Make it a habit.

We sink or swim by the habits we have. If we are in the habit of waking up and dreading things then life loses its lustre. If we get into the habit of waking up and looking forward to things, then life takes on a better hue. Looking forward to things is not just "a good idea", it's something we need to make a habit out of - to do every day.



## Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

"It is not things themselves that are good or bad, it is the view we take of them," said Epictetus, an ancient Greek philosopher. So the person who wakes up knowing she has to give a speech to a dozen colleagues at work can either look forward to it or dread it – the choice is her's. The person who has no work to go into can either wake up each day dreading the hours to fill, or look forward to the challenge of finding rewarding things to put into it. Hard to believe sometimes, but true nevertheless.

## In-session discussion.

Bearing in mind all that you have just read, what sort of things can you look forward to? Discuss.

TIP: Write down your conclusions, and act on them.

## Project.

Before you go to sleep, anytime in the evening, decide what to look forward to when you wake in the morning. (Remember, it doesn't have to be a big thing, in fact it's probably best if it's not.) Then, when you wake up, remember to look forward to it – and keep looking forward to it. As in "Good, it's Coronation Street tonight." Make it a habit. Note down how you get on, so you can tell us next time.

## Mythbuster:

"It's sad to look forward to small things." **Not true.**

In fact exactly the reverse: anyone can look forward to big things; it's the well adjusted people who learn to look forward to everyday things.

## Final tip:

Balance looking forward with looking back and 'living in the moment'. Balancing past, present and future is another key to success.