

Get the Mental Edge in Your Career



Give Yourself the Edge.

Dr. Larina Kase

*Whether you think you can or
think you can't, you're right.*

-Henry Ford

*Divide each difficulty into as many
parts as necessary to resolve it.*

- Rene Descartes

Dear Reader,

Congratulations! If you're taking the time to read this, you are serious about taking steps to improve your mindset, happiness, and career. It also means that you are a member of our mailing list and will receive ongoing tips towards meeting your goals.

You are probably very busy with little time to devote to extra activities. Taking time to read books, such as this one, reinforces your commitment to creating a successful and rewarding career. So you're taking an important step!

I'm happy to present you with some of the basics of achieving a mental edge at work. I hope that you consider some of the material you are about to read and begin to implement changes, however small they may seem, towards success. I like to say:

“To become successful is to recognize every tiny step towards success—and then take more of them.”

If you make a shift in mindset from reading this book, I consider it a success and a great investment of your time for having read it. If you learn one or two roadblocks to the mental edge that you can work to overcome, that is great. Read the book with an open mind and try to put some of what you read into practice beginning today.

I welcome feedback, suggestions, and comments, so please be in touch. You can reach me directly at larina@pascoaching.com.

For more free resources, including a **\$67 e-course 7 Steps to Career Success**, visit <http://www.pascoaching.com>

Best Success,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larina Kase". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Larina Kase

*Men acquire a particular quality by
constantly acting in a particular
way.*

- Anonymous

*The thing that you believe is the
very thing that you will become.*

- me

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What's a Mental Edge?

Steven stepped out of a critical board meeting feeling proud. The tension in the room was thick and palpable. But it didn't penetrate him. In fact it not only rolled off him, but it energized him since he knew he could handle it and impress his colleagues and bosses.

Head high, he smiled to himself as he walked to his car. He breathed a sigh of relief, having not only survived the meeting, but having performed impeccably. He presented his materials with ease, handled questions with poise, and was 100% on his game. Steven gave off an air of confidence, not conceit, and was charismatic and likable.

Steven wasn't always this way. He used to doubt himself, fumble through important conversations, and second guess his ideas. Back then, he found success and wealth to be elusive qualities. But this all changed when he learned to change his mind. His new mindset of success at work translated into his personal life and he found his relationships to be more enjoyable and mutually rewarding. Steven had attained a mental edge.

You're probably thinking, "a mental edge sounds good, but what does that really mean?" As you suspect, a mental edge has to do with shaping your mind to help make you as effective and successful in your career as possible.

You will learn to:

- Think the types of thoughts that reliably predict a positive outcome.
- Do away with the types of thoughts that prohibit you from soaring to the top.
- Take the necessary action to turn your career dreams into reality.

In this book, when I talk about getting an "edge" I do not necessarily mean an edge up on others (although that certainly may result), instead I mean giving yourself your best edge.

I believe that there is nothing as frustrating and disappointing as feeling that you are not accomplishing all that you are capable of accomplishing. That is why the tagline for my company is *Unleash Your Peak Career Potential*.

You may be currently performing at a level below your peak potential. While this level may still be excellent, *what if you could do even better* when you shaped your mind for success?

A common reason for performing under your peak is that you don't have the mental edge. You might have a sense that something is wrong or missing. Or you question whether you could do more and perform better. You might want to relax and enjoy your career to a greater degree.

You may find your work stressful and feel nervous at work. You may doubt yourself and your abilities to excel in your career or build a profitable business. Without having that mental focus and clarity, you may have tense or uncomfortable relationships with colleagues and supervisors. You may have difficulty finding the optimal balance between your career and personal life... These are just some of the things that can result if you haven't truly created the mindset of success.

Wouldn't you like to have a sense of confidence and clarity in your career?

Wouldn't it be great to feel relaxed and happy with your work performance?

Wouldn't it be wonderful to look forward to your work week, knowing that exciting possibilities, opportunities, and results will occur?

Can you even imagine how that would look?

What if you had more time and could begin (and stick with!) an exercise program or have time to meet up with some friends for dinner?

What if you could find the profitable, wealth, and enjoyment that you really want?

These are just some of the things that can result when you learn the secrets to the psychology of career success.

Steven made these changes and you can too—If you really want to and dedicate yourself to making it happen. When you sharpen your mind and thought processes, many important changes typically follow. Read on to learn more!

Why I'm Writing This

Fortunately for both of us, I know a bit about this topic. I've read hundreds of books related to the ideas I'll reveal to you in this ebook and I've used these skills myself and with dozens of clients and **they work!** As a cognitive-behavioral psychologist trained at The University of Pennsylvania and an executive/career coach, this topic combines my areas of interest, expertise, and passion. This is one of the reasons that I want to write this introduction to achieving the mental edge and give it as a gift to you.

After seeing so many people struggle because they did not have the right mindset for success, I've become determined to share what I know. This is the other reason that is important to me to write this—because I know these ideas can help.

I've observed the transformation of many people... many of whom weren't struggling (they just had a sense that things could be even better) and didn't even realize what was holding them back until they changed. Then they saw the difference between their thinking, mood, and the results they got in business.

I have recently begun to truly achieve the mental edge myself after extensive reading, coaching, and behavioral changes. I know first hand that it is not easy to achieve. But we'll help you get on your way!

Don't feel disappointed if you do not see or feel things change right away. One of the difficult and critical aspects of changing your thought patterns in the direction of success is **consistency**.

As you know, creating a new habit takes time and practice. It is like training for a race—you build up your strength and stamina gradually. If you try to forcefully rush the training, you could get hurt and may not be able to participate in the race.

“If anything is worth trying at all, it’s worth trying at least 10 times.” - Art Linkletter

Several of these things will be new for you, so it will take some time to practice them. Over time they will begin to feel natural.

Some will sound like things that you have heard before. You may quickly say, “yeah, yeah, I know.” Or you may dismiss the ideas without trying them. Or you may say that you’ve tried them before and they didn’t work. Be honest with yourself—did you really try them? Did you do it over and over? Or did you try a bit and then revert back to your old ways?

Be patient and be open to trying something different and allowing new types of thoughts to enter your mind. Set your vision on creating a mental edge for your career and follow that vision up with action.

Let’s begin by exploring what the mental edge really looks like...

Who Has the Mental Edge?

Have you ever seen anyone who had a mental edge? How could you tell?

These are the people who appear continuously poised, put together, confident, on top of everything, bright, ambitious, motivated, energetic, friendly, and content. They seem to get all their work done on time and never appear stressed or frazzled. They do a great job in their work and get along well with their coworkers.

These people are impressive!

They are inspiring to be around.

Don't you just hate these people? Just kidding. But seriously, you may not hate them, but it is normal to feel envious of their ability to always be (or at least appear to be) 100% on top of everything. They are the people who seem "lucky." But is it just luck? What do you think? Probably not.

The people with the mental edge are *not* the people who are flustered, rude, rushed, procrastinating, nervous, complaining, or stressed out.

It is uncommon to be 100% on all the time. Most people fall somewhere in the middle. Having the mental edge does not mean that you need to be perfect all the time. Who could be perfect all the time? I know I couldn't!

It means that you need to be mentally in the game to the best of your abilities so you have the highest likelihood of being very successful.

Chance favors the prepared mind.

- Louis Pasteur

Where you fall depends on your own unique attributes and the demands of your career. You could be “on” just 50% of the time and still have a great mindset for success. How? If you’re “on” at the right times.

We have moments when we feel great and other moments when we feel overwhelmed, worried, frustrated, and irritated. The mental edge helps increase the times when you feel great and are extremely satisfied with how you are performing in your career. It will help to shave away those less pleasant times of doubt and annoyance.

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There is also variability in how much you have a mental edge in different aspects of your life. You may find that you have greater mental strength and stamina in certain areas of your career or life. For example, you may be strong in mentally retaining and organizing information but less strong in communicating that information to others in writing or verbally. You may be completely on the ball when it comes to your family but frequently drop the ball at your job. Any of this sound like you?

Finally, your mental edge can be affected by outside events. While it may sound like an internal thing, the workings of your mind can be very much influenced by what is going on around you. I'm sure you know this.

You've probably had the experience of trying to think about something important while in a crowded or noisy area. It feels impossible to concentrate on your thoughts. This does not mean that your mind is not capable of thinking clearly. Instead, you're influenced by outside stimuli.

Any type of event can influence your ability to be at your mental best. For example:

- The stress of working with particular people in your job negatively affects you.
- Feeling distracted or upset by current world events can impact your psychological stamina.
- Financial pressures can cloud your thinking and reasoning abilities.
- The stress of being in your own business can keep you from stellar mental performance.

The mental edge is a quality that changes with time, person, and place. It can be a chameleon to your environmental conditions. However, with work, you can train it to be present most of the time.

Think of this state of mind as a muscle in your leg. You train it and develop it to be strong and powerful by running, strength training in the gym, and biking. This muscle may at times feel weaker if it is overused (Have you ever gotten a headache when you've had to think too much?), if you're tired, or if you've injured it. Luckily you worked hard at making it strong to begin with so it can be resilient against these difficult times that can occur.

Remember that most of the people who have achieved this psychological supremacy have **worked at it**. It rarely comes completely naturally.

On the other hand, some people may be more naturally calm or rational than others. There is a personality trait called neuroticism which is actually quite heritable. This means that it is seen running in families and it appears to have a genetic basis (it is not simply due to shared environments). Neuroticism is the tendency to naturally worry and get worked up about things. It can stand in the way of feeling mentally calm and in control. You feel less clear and others see you as lacking poise and confidence.

Regardless of how much people are predisposed to having a mental edge, the surefire way to get it is to work at it. This means learning from everything you can get your hands on *and* putting what you learn into practice.

Don't expect to read this and have everything instantly transform. The process of change involves:

1. Understanding of the issues (through reading, self reflection).
2. Identification of the target areas to strengthen.

3. Practice putting the changes into motion.
4. Ongoing re-assessment and application of the principles that are helping you perform at your best.

What Quickly Blunts Your Edge

If we use the analogy of running a race-- you can imagine all of the obstacles that could get in the way of your running: rain, heat, someone tripping in front of you, self doubt, an untied shoelace...tons of things can stand in your way.

Similarly, there are many things that can stand in the way of the psychology of success. One of these is your own thoughts.

You have likely heard a lot about “negative self talk” and how harmful it can be. Have you ever noticed a time when your thoughts have been self-defeating?

Certainly negative self talk does not strengthen your mind towards success. Perhaps even more importantly, negative self talk is often **not accurate**.
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Thinking can often be distorted for several reasons. You may want to prepare yourself for the worst so you won't be caught off guard if your fear does come true. You may feel nervous and the strong emotions can distort thought processes. You may be superstitious and feel that if you think too much about the positive things that can happen, you will jinx yourself. Ever think these things? These are just a few examples- the list of reasons that your thinking can become distorted is a very long one.

“But when I have negative thoughts, they are actually are very accurate,” you may be saying to yourself. This could be true, but it can be because your mental edge has been blunted over time. If you feel like this is true, the question to ask yourself is: *Are those thoughts really accurate or did they become accurate after you started having them?*

Have you heard of a self-fulfilling prophecy? A self fulfilling prophecy could be at work here. When you continue to think particular thoughts, they often turn into reality.

A master cognitive therapist who is often referred to as the “father of cognitive therapy” named Dr. Aaron Beck identified many types of thoughts that lead to negative emotions, such as anxiety or depression.

Specific types of thinking (which may not be entirely rational) often lead to self-sabotaging fears and beliefs. Beck and his colleagues describe a number of “cognitive distortions,” including:

Magnification: Magnification is when you see a situation (or aspects of it) as much more horrible than it really is.

Magnification entails blowing things out of proportion. You may believe that one embarrassing statement after a couple too many cocktails at a company happy hour means that you will be looked down on forever.

Or you may fear that one minor mistake in your career means you will never get promoted. Regardless of the specific situation, when you have thoughts that have magnification, you are likely to be more nervous and less confident.

Minimization: Minimization involves glossing over or underestimating your ability to cope well with a difficult situation.

Minimization is the counterpart to magnification. If you simply magnified a thought but then thought that you'd have no problem dealing with that disastrous consequence, it wouldn't really feel that bad. If, however, you underestimate your coping abilities, then you are really stuck. Minimization is closely linked with being insecure and self critical.

All or None Thinking: All or none thinking frequently prohibits people from having the mental edge. All or none thinking involves believing that you are either a totally competent Superman-type or that you are a completely incompetent mess. You look at things as black and white and ignore all the shades of grey in between.

You tell yourself that if something is not going to be an incredible success, it isn't even worth trying. You can imagine how much you could sabotage yourself in your career with this type of thinking. It also leads to being very judgmental of yourself.

Selective Attention: This is when you focus mostly on threatening or frightening aspects of a situation while ignore the relevant context around the situation. It can also entail remembering only the situations that have been difficult to cope with, and forgetting those times in which you could cope well.

The problem with selective attention is that it undermines your confidence and your willingness to take risks and try out different situations. One of the keys to having the mental edge is to know **when and where the time is right to take a risk** and challenge yourself.

Fortune Telling: This is when you assume that you know the future and it will be negative in a major way, even if your fear has not happened or is unlikely to happen.

This type of thinking can be particularly problematic because it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. When we predict a specific outcome, we then make that outcome happen.

The process of self fulfilling prophecy can be conscious or unconscious. Sometimes we are not aware how our behaviors will lead to the exact outcome we fear. At other times, you may be aware that you are doing things to set you up for failure but may be unable or unwilling to change those things.

Overgeneralization: You may see an upsetting incident as proof of a negative pattern which you assume will stretch on indefinitely into the future. You take one or a couple incidents and generalize them to your entire career. This one often goes hand in hand with fortune telling.

As you can imagine, if you predict a horrible negative sequence of events, you are more likely to:

- Avoid doing something that may actually have been very profitable for your career.
- Create a self fulfilling prophecy.
- Overlook important strengths and career achievements.
- Be less likely to effectively promote yourself to get ahead.

All of these types of thinking are ways in which mental clarity can become clouded. To make sure that they aren't interfering with your ability to create an amazing career, be on the lookout.

Next time you find yourself thinking, "It's impossible for me to finish the report on time!" recognize that "fortune telling" and/or "mind reading" may be at work.

When you think, "Oh my gosh, my lunch meeting was a complete disaster!" realize that this may be an "all or none" type of thinking. Maybe it wasn't perfect, but a total disaster? Probably not.

If you are trying to create marketing materials for your business and think, "I have no abilities to succeed with my marketing!" question whether you may be minimizing your abilities or underestimating your capacity to get help with your marketing to make it fantastic.

Once you've identified the thinking issue, you can combat it. While "positive thinking" or affirmations can be helpful in re-training your brain to think in new ways, these negative patterns can be stubborn. It would be nice if it were as simple as substituting positive thinking. But sometimes positive thinking just doesn't work. It isn't enough.

Do you want to know the secret about why positive thinking is not enough?

It's because it is too opposite from your negative prediction. It is like pendulum swinging from one side to the other. If you want it to stop somewhere in the middle, you can't let it swing from side to side. It may get up to the other side, but it won't stay there

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because it is too extreme of a difference. Instead you need to slow it down so it begins moving differently.

If anxiety and self doubt get in the way of your mental edge, read my book *Anxious 9 to 5: How to Beat Worry, Stop Second Guessing Yourself, and Work with Confidence*. You can get a free chapter including a self-quiz to see if anxiety holds you back from business success at: <http://www.anxious9to5.com>

So what exactly do you do to change your thinking? Keep reading...

Sharpen Your Skills

When it comes to getting the mental edge, there are two things that you can change to get the most bang for your buck:

1. Your behaviors or actions
2. Your thought patterns

It is often a good idea to work on changing behaviors instead of first working on changing thinking patterns. “If you’re talking about getting a *mental* edge, why focus on behaviors and not just on thoughts?” you may be wondering. Good point. Here’s why.

Sometimes you can change your thoughts by changing your actions. Ever have this experience? Let’s say you have the thought, “I could never run a 7 minute mile.” So you go out and train for a few weeks (or months) and you are able to run a 7 minute mile. Wow! What happens to the original thought? It is wrong so it is replaced with a new thought, “I *can* run a 7 minute mile.” The action changed the thinking.

The behaviors to change may be:

1. Getting rid of behaviors that aren't helping you
2. Adding new, more helpful behaviors.

The best result is usually a combination of the two. It is frequently impossible to get rid of old behaviors without adding something else in their place. Likewise, it can be impossible to add new behaviors when you have the old patterns in the way.

So the first step in sharpening your skills is to find out what skills are dull or are blocking you from advancing to a more successful place in your career. You can find this out by keeping track of the **results that your actions get**. If something is not working over and over, then you are not getting results and that behavior needs to change.

Then, one by one, get rid of these things. Shave them out of your life and watch the changes happen!

Then, look for new things to add. Sometimes dropping the deadwood is enough. Your natural skills and abilities will then come out. Other times you'll need to replace the old with something new.

You may request additional trainings at work or enroll in a workshop to improve your skills.

You may get a mentor, coach, colleague, or supervisor to give you feedback on how you can change to become more effective.

It may be beneficial to consider how you can partner or joint venture with someone who has strengths in the areas you want to develop.

Keep in mind that you want your skills to be in line with your career values and vision, which brings us to the next point...

Inspired Action

Have you ever found that you are extremely busy but nothing is happening?

You wonder why you are always working but not getting results.

It seems that the more you try, the less that the changes you want to see actually happen.

Does it feel like everything should be moving much faster than it is given how hard you work?

Curious why?

What do you think? Take a guess.

It is often because your actions are not coming from somewhere. They are not coming from a vision. Whether you are working on getting to the top in your career or building a profitable business, you need a vision to guide you.

*Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a
nightmare.*

- Japanese Proverb

I love this quote! I'd been writing about this idea for years when I found this quote that succinctly said everything I was writing in just 12 words!

Your actions need a vision, a context. They need to be inspired by your mission, goals, and objectives.

Otherwise all your actions may be spinning you around in a circle or taking you down the wrong path or digging you into a hole. If you're just looking in front of you without an eye on the bigger picture, you could keep digging in the hole, getting deeper and deeper and not getting where you want to be (out of the hole!).

What's your vision?

Do you have one? If not, then it's time to work on it.

Ask yourself what you *really* want from your career or business. Where do you want to be in the end of the year? In five years? Ten years? Why are these things important to you?

The last question is important because it is where the inspiration comes from. If you think that you want to get to the top in your field or build a big business to accumulate wealth that thought is not quite enough.

Why is wealth important to you?

Do you want freedom to travel?

A beautiful home and car?

The ability to donate to charities?

To be able to effortlessly pay for college for three kids?

Is the wealth just a measure of your success- a way to keep score of how you're doing?

Wealth means different things to everyone- think of what's important to you.

The best vision is one that is inspired.

This means that it is fueled by what is truly meaningful to you. An inspired vision comes from your values and beliefs. It should make you feel inspired, excited, and energized.

Once you have an inspired vision you can come up with the **action steps that bring it to life**. You aren't just acting anymore. You aren't going through the motions. You aren't spinning your wheels. Instead every step you take is a step towards your vision. You are now living out your vision and taking inspired action.

To help you take action, find dozens of free resources at:

http://www.pascoaching.com/free_resources.htm

Strengthen Your Mind

So, we've talked about identifying the types of thoughts that are not so helpful. These thoughts are often negative, self-doubting, self-defeating, and de-energizing. While they are completely natural and normal, they can bring you down. They can put a block between you and your career success.

I mentioned that the best way to change these thoughts is *not* always to think more positively. Daily affirmations can be helpful because your mind gets used to hearing a new message. It's worth trying them out to see how they work for you.

Your affirmative thought should be present focused. For example, if you have the negative thought, "I'm never going to be a great leader," you could think, "I am a wonderful, motivating leader."

If this doesn't work after some practice, then you may need a more powerful strategy. This strategy is to train your mind to **look at the data**. These types of powerful negative thoughts are usually fueled by and distorted by emotions. The way to strengthen your mind is to work on looking at the facts. You will get a more accurate picture of what

is truly going on and you will be able to convince your thoughts to change by presenting a compelling argument.

Sure, it may *feel* like your team doesn't respect you or appear interested in what you have to say. How true is it *really*? Have there been incidents where people really did listened? Any times were team members showed respect? Learn to recognize these times because these incidents are proof against your original maladaptive thought. This process helps you to focus your mind on success (and therefore bring more success) rather than failure.

Learn to also pay attention to times that seem to confirm your original thought (that they don't respect you). What makes you think this? How often is it true and how often is it not true? Look at the situation objectively, as someone from the outside would look at it. Then ask yourself how compelling the data from that situation is to confirm your thought. When you see that the negative thought is false more often than it is true, it will be less believable the next time it occurs.

Also ask yourself how you can learn from these situations and what you can do to change. If you notice that team members are disregarding your comments, take a look at how you said the comment. Is there a way to present your ideas better? If you're going to look at the difficulties, makes sure that you do so in an effective, productive way rather

than leaving with the conclusion that you can't do something. Instead, realize that you can do it with a little work and training.

To summarize what we've discussed so far: the **first step in strengthening your mind is: Overcome the self defeating thoughts.** Learn to pay attention to the data. Then weigh the data to uncover a more objective reality. Use the data to see whether there is any room for improvement.

Now, for the next step...**The second step in strengthening your mind is to learn how to focus.** As you probably have experienced, it can sometimes be very difficult to filter out distractions and stay focused on your task at hand.

You sit down to get some work done and think, "I'll just check my email first." That leads to checking the weather, your stocks, the news...45 minutes later it's really time to get some work done. But then a colleague calls and you get distracted helping her out with a project. Before you know it, you're wondering where your morning has gone!

Here are some of the top tips to staying focused:

- 1. Schedule your time.** This sounds obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people don't go to work in the morning with a schedule in place. Of

course the counter part to this point is actually sticking with the schedule that you've created.

2. **Schedule your distractions.** It's impossible to stay focused all day. No one can do that. Rather than attending to the distractions as they pop up, plan for them. Put it into your schedule to check email. Use it as a reward after you've gotten some work done.
3. **Be firm and assertive with others.** If people frequently interrupt you while you work, let them know when you can and cannot be interrupted.
4. **Write your thought done.** As you're at your desk, you suddenly remember an item that you've been meaning to pick up at the grocery store! Don't dismiss an important thought altogether. Instead keep a pad handy and write down the distractions and let them go until it is time to address them.
5. **Control your environment.** If you frequently get distracted by the little "you've got mail!" bubble, have your computer stop giving you that message. If a noisy environment is distracting to you, go elsewhere with your laptop for tasks that require quiet.

6. **Worry on purpose.** For those who are prone to worrying, worries can pop up any time, any where. Rather than let these worries distract you, deal with them proactively. Just like you schedule your distractions, schedule your worrying. It sounds crazy, but when you allow yourself to worry at designated times, your mind gets used to the worry, making you less likely to worry at other times.

7. **Practice having a quiet mind.** Try a range of activities to see what puts your mind at ease and at peace. For some, it's yoga. For others, it's reading a great book. For others, it's a rigorous jog. Make sure that you are doing something to quiet your mind every day, even if it's only for a few minutes.

8. **Keep track of where your time goes.** If you've had the experience of feeling like your day is suddenly gone and you don't know where the time went, find out. Keep track of where your time gets allotted each day over the course of a week. Then see how you can use some of the above strategies to tackle the difficulties.

Once you've mastered the second step, you can achieve a powerful focus. You can then use this focus to take inspired action steps.

The third step to strengthening your mind is to **educate** it. Knowledge is power. And a powerful mind is what we're after here.

You may know of the importance of ongoing education and challenging yourself. But are you doing this? It's easy to forget about this one, so you may need to find a way to remind yourself.

"Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

— George Bernard Shaw

No one can take your knowledge away from you, you carry it everywhere you go and it penetrates everything you do. Sharpen your mind by feeding it every day.

Ask questions.

Read.

Listen to those who know.

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Be curious.

Question the customary.

Keep an open mind.

Become a sponge.

Try something new.

Do what you're afraid of.

Make a conscious effort to do these things daily if not hourly. Recognize learning opportunities in mundane activities. Something can be learned from almost anything. A quest for knowledge is a cure for boredom.

Learn from others. Even annoying bosses and coworkers have something to teach you (maybe it's how *not* to act!). Partner or joint venture with those who have something to teach you.

There is no excuse to avoid educating yourself. It is harder to not increase your brainpower than to do so. With all of the incredible personal and professional development books out there, you can build your mind on your own time at an extremely low cost (for recommendations for helpful books go to http://www.pascoaching.com/products.htm#Recommended_Books).

If you're in sales, for example, read all the books on sales. Talk with excellent salespeople. Ask your manager what you're doing right. Ask your manager what you're doing wrong. Most important, be open to everything you hear. Learn to be non-defensive, open, curious, and use your new knowledge to create inspired action steps toward your ultimate career goals.

The great thing about a thirst for knowledge is that once you get the ball rolling, it keeps going. After I decided to read every book on professional development out there, I found that I wanted to keep reading. I wanted to learn it all. I wanted to keep reading because I saw the changes that happen after I finish each great book.

So begin with a small step and read a magazine, article, or book that can help you with this third step: **strengthen your mind through education.**

Become an Optimist

There's a good body of research which shows that optimists achieve better career outcomes than pessimists or "realists." Some of the research, for example, was conducted with salespeople and showed that those with optimistic attitudes sold significantly more than people without optimistic outlooks.

The reason for this is that your expectations shape your reality. When you expect a positive result, you don't entertain the idea that it may not happen. You don't get mired in spending time dwelling on all the problems and things that could go wrong. Instead you adopt a confident attitude that even if a problem would occur, it would just be a small bump in the road, incapable of holding you back from achieving your goals.

Here are the steps to becoming more optimistic:

1. Recognize your natural responses to situations. If you tend to respond optimistically, then work on responding optimistically even in stressful or difficult situations.

2. If your natural response is not optimistic, then begin training your mind to adopt more positive expectancies. Rather than asking yourself about the worst that could happen, ask yourself about the best that could happen.
3. Get an optimism mentor. Think of someone you know who has the outlook you want and then model your responses after them.
4. Write down a daily gratitude reminder or positive event that occurred to help draw your attention to things that go well and things that are right.
5. Observe the changes that occur when you have an optimistic attitude.

Putting it all Together

Hopefully this overview of creating a powerful mental edge for yourself has given you some new ideas. Or maybe it has reinforced something important you already know or made you ready to take that step you have been putting off. Or perhaps it has inspired you to confront something you're afraid of, or learn something new.

Remember to use the process outlined here:

- 1. Realize what holds you back.**
- 2. Get rid of the behaviors that aren't helping and replace them with new actions.**
- 3. Use your mission to guide you towards taking inspired action.**
- 4. Overcome negative thoughts.**
- 5. Strengthen your mind through education.**
- 6. Adopt an optimistic attitude and focus on success.**

Don't stop here. Go out and use these ideas. When your mind is sharp, your actions are effective and great things happen.

Try it and find out!

About the Author



Larina Kase, PsyD, MBA, is the Founder and President of Performance & Success Coaching, LLC. She helps her executive and small business owner clients to unleash their peak potentials and achieve ultimate career success. Dr. Kase specializes in helping clients create inspiring action plans with specific steps towards the careers they've always wanted. Using the psychology of powerful marketing, clients build their businesses or learn how to promote themselves in their careers.

Her work has been featured in media such as The New York Times, Entrepreneur Magazine, Inc. Magazine, and The Chicago Tribune. She has been a featured expert on websites such as Yahoo.com, Microsoft.com, and MSN.com. For free assessments, articles, and tips or to request a free initial consultation, visit <http://www.PAScoaching.com>

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