

THE POWER OF A POSITIVE EDUCATOR

By Jon Gordon

When I think about the teachers who made a difference in my life, I realize they were all positive. Mrs. Liota smiled every day and made me feel loved. Coach Caiazza believed in me, while Mr. Ehmann encouraged me to be my best. Years later, as I think about the impact these teachers had on my life, it's clear that being a positive educator not only makes you better—it makes everyone around you better. Positive educators have the power to transform lives and inspire young minds to believe they can and will change the world. In this spirit, here are seven ways we can all choose to be positive educators.

1. **Be positively contagious:** Research shows that emotions are contagious. Sincere smiles, kind words, encouragement, and positive energy infect people in a positive way. On the flip side, your students are just as likely to catch your bad mood as the swine flu. So you have a choice each day you come to your program. You can be a germ, or a big dose of Vitamin C. When you choose to be positively contagious, your positive energy has a positive impact on your students, your colleagues, and ultimately your program's culture. Your students will remember very little of what you say, but they will remember 100% of how you made them feel. I remember Mrs. Liota and her smile and love, and it made all the difference.
2. **Take a daily thank you walk:** It's simple, it's powerful, and it's a great way to feed yourself with positivity. How does it work? You simply take a walk... outside, in a mall, at your program, on a treadmill, or anywhere else you can think of, and think about all the things, big and small, that you are grateful for. Research shows you can't be stressed and thankful at the same time, so when you combine gratitude with physical exercise, you give yourself a double boost of positive energy. You flood your brain and body with positive emotions and natural antidepressants that uplift you, rather than the stress hormones that drain your energy and slowly kill you. By the time you get to your program, you are ready for a great day.
3. **Celebrate success:** One of the simplest, most powerful things you can do for yourself and your students is to celebrate your daily successes. Instead of thinking of all the things that went wrong at your program each day, focus on the one thing that went right. Try this: Each night before you go to bed, think about the one great thing about your day. If you do this, you'll look forward to creating more success tomorrow. Also have your students do this as well. Each night, they will go to bed feeling like a success and they will wake up with more confidence to take on the day.
4. **Expect to make a difference:** When positive educators walk into their classroom they expect to make a difference in their students' lives. In fact, making a difference is the very reason why they became a teacher in the first place, and this purpose continues to fuel them and their teaching. They come to your program each day thinking of ways they can make a difference and expecting that their actions and lessons will lead to positive outcomes for their students. They win in their mind first, and then they win in the hearts and minds of their students.
5. **Believe in your students more than they believe in themselves:** I tried to quit lacrosse during my freshman year in high school, but Coach Caiazza wouldn't let me. He told me I was going to play in college one day. He had a vision for me that I couldn't even fathom. He believed in me more than I believed in myself. I ended up going to Cornell University and the experience of playing lacrosse there changed my life forever. The difference between success and failure is belief, and so often this belief is instilled in us by someone else. Coach Caiazza was that person for me, and it changed my life. You can be that person for one of your students if you believe in them and see their potential rather than their limitations.
6. **Develop Positive Relationships:** Author Andy Stanley once said, "Rules without relationship lead to rebellion." Far too many administrators share rules with their teachers, but they don't have a relationship with them. And far too many teachers don't have positive relationships with their students. So what happens? Teachers and students disengage from the mission of the program. I've had many educators approach me and tell me that my books helped them realize they needed to focus less on rules and invest more in their relationships. The result was a dramatic increase in teacher and student performance, morale, and engagement. To develop positive relationships, you need to enhance communication, build trust, listen to them, make time for them, recognize them, show them you care through your actions, and mentor them. Take the time to give them your best and they will give you their best.
7. **Show you care:** It's a simple fact. The best educators stand out by showing their students and colleagues that they care about them. Standardized test scores rise when teachers make time to really know their students. Teacher performance improves when administrators create engaged relationships with their teachers. Teamwork is enhanced when educators know and care about one another. Parents are more supportive when educators communicate with their students' parents. The most powerful form of positive energy is love, and this love transforms students, people, and programs when it is put into action. Create your own unique way to show your students and colleagues you care about them, and you will not only feel more positive yourself but you will develop positive kids who create a more positive world.

If you commit to being a positive educator, I encourage you to read and commit to **The Positive Educator Pledge:**

- I pledge to be a positive educator and positive influence on my fellow educators, students, and program.
- I promise to be positively contagious and share more smiles, laughter, encouragement, and joy with those around me.
- I vow to stay positive in the face of negativity.
- When I am surrounded by pessimism, I will choose optimism.
- When I feel fear, I will choose faith.
- When I want to hate, I will choose love.
- When I want to be bitter, I will choose to get better.
- When I experience a challenge, I will look for opportunities to learn and grow and help others grow.
- When faced with adversity, I will find strength.
- When I experience a setback, I will be resilient.
- When I meet failure, I will fail forward and create a future success.
- With vision, hope, and faith, I will never give up and will always find ways to make a difference.
- I believe my best days are ahead of me, not behind me.
- I believe I'm here for a reason, and my purpose is greater than my challenges.
- I believe that being positive not only makes me better, it makes my students better.
- So today and every day, I will be positive and strive to make a positive impact on my students, my program, and the world!

