Welcome to Week 5! Would you like 5 extra entries into the drawing for the week? If so, email me with 3 things that help keep you motivated to exercise and eat your fruits and veggies.

There are still a few slots available for the lessons on April 8th and April 22nd. Let me know ASAP if you would like to sign up for a lesson. The times are 4pm and 5pm (45-minute sessions). The lessons are identical, so you will only be signing up for one day and one time.

Also, make sure you mark your calendars for April 14th from 11am-noon – Brittan is going to give a presentation on Fad Diets. It promises to be very interesting and entertaining!

**Weekly Fitness Tips**

- Get your family in on the act – Try taking a family walk after dinner.
- Since many of us will soon be (or already are) taking our exercise outdoors, make sure you put on sunblock with an SPF of 30 or higher. Make sure you re-apply frequently, especially if you’re working up a sweat!

**Fit Fun Fridays!**

Have you ever wanted to play the Wii but haven’t had the chance? Or, like me, do you go through Withdrawals while you’re at work? Starting April 9th and going through the end of April, we are going to have some fun on Fridays! Join us throughout the day in the East 2 conference room (on the Peds Critical Care side) and come experience the awesomeness that is the Wii. Stop by on a quick break or on your lunch hour!

Wii Sports Resort? Check!
Dance Dance Revolution? Check!
Wii Fit Plus? Check!
Gold’s Gym Cardio Boxing? Check!
Just Dance? Check
Wii Cheer and Wii Cheer 2? Check and Check!!

**Drawing Winners and Leading Team**

Congrats to our drawing winners – Hai Le and Deon Bettilyon!

The team still in the lead is… PEas & CARrots Now! (PECARN)
A Primer for Pessimists
By Alice Park

Obesity and smoking may be the most conspicuous causes of illness in this country, but physical factors don't account for everything. Your psychology — namely, your personality and outlook on life — can be just as important to your well-being as exercising and eating right. And especially these days, with the world's economy tumbling toward a depression, it's a good time to prevent yourself from slipping into one too.

An entire science has grown up around the perils of negative thinking (as well as the power of positive psychology), and the latest findings confirm that a pessimistic outlook not only kindles anxiety, which can put people at risk for chronic mental illnesses like depression, but may also cause early death and set people up for a number of physical ailments, ranging from the common cold to heart disease and immune disorders. (Read more on TIME's Wellness blog.)

Optimism, meanwhile, is associated with a happier and longer life. Over the course of a recent eight-year study, University of Pittsburgh researchers found that optimistic women outlived dour ones. Which may be good news for the motivational gurus out there, but what about the rest of us who aren't always so chipper? Are we destined for sickness and failure? Or is it possible to master the principles of positivity the same way we might learn a new hobby or follow a recipe?

The answer from the experts seems to be yes. But it does take effort. Seeing the sunny side doesn't come easily.

Be an "Optimalist"
Most people would define optimism as being eternally hopeful, endlessly happy, with a glass that's perpetually half full. But that's exactly the kind of deluded cheerfulness that positive psychologists wouldn't recommend. "Healthy optimism means being in touch with reality," says Tal Ben-Shahar, a Harvard professor who taught the university's most popular course, Positive Psychology, from 2002 to 2008. "It certainly doesn't mean being Pollyannaish and thinking everything is great and wonderful."

In his own life, Ben-Shahar uses three optimalist exercises, which he calls PRP. When he feels down — say, after giving a bad lecture — he grants himself permission (P) to be human. He reminds himself that not every lecture can be a Nobel winner; some will be less effective than others. Next is reconstruction (R). He parses the weak lecture, learning lessons for the future about what works and what doesn’t. Finally, there’s perspective (P), which involves acknowledging that in the grand scheme of life, one lecture really doesn’t matter.

Studies suggest that people who are able to focus on the positive fallout from a negative event — basically, cope with failure — can protect themselves from the physical toll of stress and anxiety. In a recent study at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), scientists asked a group of women to give a speech in front of a stone-faced audience of strangers. On the first day, all the participants said they felt threatened, and they showed spikes in cortisol and fear hormones. On subsequent days, however, those women who had reported rebounding from a major life crisis in the past no longer felt the same subjective threat over speaking in public — and did not show a jump in cortisol. They had learned that this negative event, too, would pass and they would survive. "It’s a back door to the same positive state because people are able to tolerate and accept the negative," says Elissa Epel, one of the psychologists involved in the study.

Accept Pain and Sadness

Being optimistic doesn’t mean shutting out sad or painful emotions. As a clinical psychologist, Martin Seligman, who runs the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, says he used to feel proud whenever he helped depressed patients rid themselves of sadness, anxiety or anger. "I thought I would get a happy person," he says. "But I never did. What I got was an empty person." That’s what prompted him to launch the field of positive psychology, with a groundbreaking address to the American Psychological Association in 1998. Instead of focusing only on righting wrongs and lifting misery, he argued, psychologists need to help patients foster good mental health through constructive skills, like Ben-Shahar's PRP. The idea is to teach patients to strengthen their strengths rather than simply improve their weaknesses. "It's not enough to clear away the weeds and underbrush," Seligman says. "If you want roses, you have to plant a rose."

When a loved one dies or you lose your job, for example, it's normal and healthy to mourn. You're supposed to feel sad and even depressed. But you can't cocoon yourself in sadness for too long. A study by UCSF researchers of HIV-positive men whose partners had died found that the men who allowed themselves to grieve while also seeking to accept the death were better able to bounce back from the
tragedy. Men who focused only on the loss as opposed to, say, viewing the death as a relief of their
partner’s suffering, tended to grieve longer, presumably because they couldn’t find a way out of their
sadness.

**Smile in Your Profile Picture**

If all else fails, try "catching" happiness from your friends. We are social beings, of course, and our
outlook is influenced to no small degree by that of our friends and family. Dr. Nicholas Christakis, a
professor at Harvard Medical School, documented in a 2008 study just how extensive and powerful
this network effect is. Compared with glum people, those who were happy were more likely to be
surrounded by other happy people — even the friends of happy people’s friends’ friends (who might be
complete strangers) tended to be happy.

Christakis and his colleague James Fowler at the University of California, San Diego, are now studying
happiness contagion in perhaps the largest social network of all, Facebook. They noticed that people
who smiled in their Facebook profile pictures tended to have other friends who smiled. This might
simply be peer pressure at work, with members feeling obliged to flash a smile to fit in with the rest of
the group, but Christakis and Fowler are investigating whether there isn’t a more infectious
phenomenon at work.

If you still aren’t convinced that your doomsaying ways can ever be changed, consider this: only about
25% of a person’s optimism may be hardwired in his genes, according to some studies. That’s in
contrast to the 40% to 60% heritability of most other personality traits, like agreeableness and
conscientiousness. Science suggests that the greater part of an optimistic outlook can be acquired with
the right instruction — a theory borne out in a study of college freshmen by Seligman. Pessimistic
students who took a 12-week optimism-training course devised by Seligman — which included
exercises like writing a letter of gratitude then reading it aloud to someone — were less likely to visit the
student health center for illnesses during the next four years than their similarly pessimistic peers who
weren’t tutored in positive thinking. And a larger study of more than 3,000 middle-school students
who are being taught resilience techniques is under way in England. "It's the largest-scale validation
that optimism can be taught," says Seligman, who developed the techniques used in the study.

The thing about being optimistic, though, is that it takes hard work — and that’s a drag. It’s an active
process, say psychologists, through which you force yourself to see your life a certain way. Indeed, the
leading optimism and happiness experts consider themselves born pessimists. But if they have learned
over time and with lots of practice to become more hopeful, take heart. So can you.

http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1887872,00.html