



Optimism

Are you half-full or half empty? Living or just existing? Do you keep positive whatever life throws at you and see it as opportunity to learn and grow, or do you feel like a victim, at the mercy of life's events, thrown around like a rag doll in a hurricane? In reality most people are either optimistic or negative to a degree and this changes depending on the situation.

'Most folks are about as happy as they make their minds up to be.' Abraham Lincoln.

You are thinking negatively when you fear the future, put yourself down, doubt your abilities, or expect failure. Do you do any of those things?

You may not be able to control 100% of what happens in life, but you can choose your response to what happens and your attitude.

Our world can seem like a depressing place to live in, but since the human race have created it, they can also create something better and change it.

Why be optimistic?

'The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.' Winston Churchill

So why be optimistic apart from the obvious one that when you are, you feel better and more positive?

- Optimism makes life more enjoyable – it tends to create positive emotions which make us feel good
- Optimism is catching – it's like laughter, if you are positive, so are the people around you and it spreads
- Studies show that optimists are winners in good times and better survivors in hard times, e.g. concentration camps
- Optimism really pays off when you are faced with a life problem, setback or challenge as we all are at one point or another in our lives. *"If you think you can, you can. if you think you can't, you won't"*
- What's going to happen is going to happen anyway, so you might as well make the best of it, otherwise what's the point?

'If you will call your troubles experiences, and remember that every experience develops some latent force within you, you will grow vigorous and happy, however adverse your circumstances may seem to be.' James Russell Miller



- Optimism is good for your health. A healthy dose of positive thinking boosts your immune system so you stay healthy and keep illnesses at bay. This is proven by scientific research
- It's a key factor for success in life. Did you know that some of the most successful innovations e.g. the light bulb and book, e.g. Lord of the Rings, suffered many problems and rejections in their inception, and if it wasn't for the boundless optimism of their creators, they wouldn't be here?

'Optimism is the one quality more associated with success and happiness than any other'
Brian Tracy

In research, 20 out of 27 of the successful winning presidents in the USA were shown to be more optimistic than their competitor

- People perceive us based on how we perceive ourselves, which comes from our personal values and beliefs, so we are responsible for what happens because we have created it.

What stops optimism?

Negative thinking damages confidence, harms performance, and paralyses your mental skills and potential. Often we are so used to negative thoughts flitting in and out of our minds that we stop noticing them and the damage they are doing.

- We have amazing minds and imaginations that invent all sorts of scenarios. We can spend the majority of time imagining what might or might not happen, whether an event or a conversation, so that we spend little time being present
- Regrets, 'if onlys', what ifs about the past – things that you can't do anything about because they have already happened, but you mentally beat yourself up anyway

'Make it a rule of life never to regret and never to look back. Regret is an appalling waste of energy; you can't build on it, it's only for wallowing in' Katherine Mansfield

- Living in the future, rather than the now
- Worrying about what might or might not happen, e.g. with possible redundancies and finding uncertainty scary as you can't control it
- Negative thoughts – 'Gremlins' that live in our heads and go on and on ranting negative garbage at us, negative, critical, judgments which you listen to, don't take action and then feel bad that you've done nothing. One big vicious circle and downward spiral.
- SAD syndrome with lack of daylight in the winter months affects some people
- Perceived or actual threats/danger. Terrorism isn't fun or nice but if you think about what might happen, i.e. live in the future, you won't be enjoying life very much and isn't it worth making the most of it while you are here?



- Limiting beliefs about yourself which often come from other people and therefore aren't even yours! *I'm not intelligent enough for the promotion, I'm not creative so couldn't do it anyway*
- Repetitive illness and stress
- Tendency to depression
- Blaming others rather than taking responsibility for our lives and our happiness and taking steps to change. Attitude is everything and everyone can choose their attitude, if they choose and they know how.

'It's not what happens to you that determines how far you will go in life; it is how you handle what happens to you'. Zig Ziglar

12 simple tips to help you be more optimistic

Here are 10 simple tips that will increase the feel-good factor in your life

1. Thought police – monitor your thoughts and notice what you worry about. See the Energise web site's tips and tools for details of keeping a stress diary which will shed some light on what you worry about and what to do about it www.energisingconnector.co.uk, tips and tools section.
2. Spend your time with positive and upbeat people.
3. Avoid things that drain your positivity – depressing stories, and negative people. Think of this as food and what effect it would have if you were eating toxic or poisonous foods
4. Buy *Chicken soup for the soul* books– inspiring real life stories of people overcoming adversity.
5. Get to know your Gremlins – negative self talk or mental chatter that can create negative thinking.
6. Look after yourself – eat good food, drink water, get enough sleep and exercise because these things help you to feel optimistic. If you want a personal trainer, we recommend Vicky Barnes of LifeForce Consulting – she is very energising and always positive! M 07718 588454.
7. Don't spend all your time regretting the past or living in the future, the only time you really live and know that you can is RIGHT NOW, so put your attention in the present moment and enjoy it.
8. Pamper yourself and take time to recharge. Shiatsu is great for this, especially if you are going through a transition as many of our clients are, and especially if you suffer from SAD syndrome or are prone to depression. Contact Katharine Hall www.shiatsuplus.co.uk M 07931 286272.
9. Have clear goals and know where you are heading and how to get there but be present to whatever occurs along the way. Eckart Tolle's book *Practising the power of now* is excellent.



10. Buy some self-help books or get yourself a personal coach – there is a wealth of useful resources around to help you stay optimistic. *Embracing uncertainty* by Susan Jeffers is especially good if you feel worried about the future.
11. Get to know what causes your stress and makes you feel negative and learn how to manage it.
12. Set aside a specific 30 min time slot each day to focus on your worries and stresses and the rest of the day, choose to be present and as optimistic as you can. Acknowledging them so that you can let them go is important.

Rachel Brushfield is a director at Energise, The Talent Liberation Company, tel 0845 22 55 010; rachel@liberateyourtalent.com Energise provide bespoke programs to unlock people potential and help people to change career and work better. Rachel specialises in career reinvention. www.liberateyourtalent.com