



Benefits of Optimism

— Healthline

Optimism is a mental attitude characterized by **hope and confidence** in success and a positive future. Optimistic attitudes are linked to a number of benefits, including better coping skills, lower stress levels, better physical health, and higher persistence when pursuing goals.

[Optimists](#) tend to view hardships as learning experiences or temporary setbacks. Even the most miserable day holds the promise for them that **“tomorrow will probably be better.”**

If you always see the brighter side of things, you may feel that you experience more positive events in your life than others, find yourself less stressed, and even enjoy greater health benefits.





How to Practice Optimism

Understandably, if you're an optimist, this bodes well for your future. Negative events are more likely to roll off of your back while positive events affirm your belief in yourself, your ability to make good things happen now and in the future, and in the goodness of life.

While you might tend to have either an optimistic or pessimistic explanatory style, there are things that you can do to help cultivate a more optimistic attitude. These include:

Become more mindful: [Mindfulness](#) is a focus on being engaged, attentive, and present in the here and now. It can be a useful technique to help you focus on what matters in the present and avoid worrying about future events and things that are outside of your control. If you are living fully in the moment, you are much less likely to ruminate over negative past experiences or worry about upcoming events. This allows you to feel more appreciative of what you have now and less consumed with regrets and anxieties.

Practice gratitude: Gratitude can be defined as an appreciation for what is important in life. One study found that participants who were assigned to write in a [gratitude journal](#) showed increased optimism and [resilience](#). If you are trying to develop a more optimistic attitude, set aside a few minutes each day to jot down some of the things for which you are grateful.

Write down your positive emotions: Research has shown that something as simple as writing down positive thoughts can help improve your optimism. One study found that expressive writing focused on positive emotions was linked to decreased mental distress and improved mental well-being.

It is also possible to develop [learned optimism](#). Pessimists can essentially learn to be optimists by thinking about their reactions to adversity in a new way and consciously challenge negative self-talk.



Cognitive Restructuring

Using a practice called [cognitive restructuring](#), you can help yourself and others become more optimistic by consciously challenging negative, self-limiting thinking and replacing it with more optimistic thought patterns.

The process of cognitive restructuring involves a few different steps:

1

Identify the situations that are triggering negative thoughts or moods.

2

Assess how you are feeling in the moment

3

Identify the negative thoughts that you are having in response to the situation.

4

Look at the evidence to either support or refute your negative thoughts.

5

Focus on the objective facts, and replace automatic negative thoughts with more positive, realistic ones.

Impact of Optimism

There has been a great deal of research on optimists and pessimists. Research has shown that an optimistic worldview carries certain advantages.

Better Health

Studies regularly show that optimists are more likely to maintain better physical health than pessimists, including a 50% lower risk of cardiovascular disease and greater survival rates when fighting cancer. Some studies have also linked a pessimistic explanatory style with higher rates of infectious disease, poor health, and earlier mortality.

Greater Achievement

Psychologist Martin Seligman, the founding father of [positive psychology](#), analyzed sports teams and found that the more optimistic teams created more positive synergy and performed better than the [pessimistic ones](#). Another study showed that pessimistic swimmers who were led to believe they'd done worse than they had were prone to future poor performance. Optimistic swimmers didn't have this vulnerability.

Persistence

Optimists don't give up as easily as pessimists, and they are more likely to achieve success because of it. People with optimistic attitudes are more likely to continue working toward their goals, even in the face of obstacles, challenges, and setbacks. Such persistence ultimately means that they are more likely to accomplish their goals.



A circular inset image showing a young woman with dark hair, smiling and blowing bubbles. Her hands are raised, and many colorful bubbles are floating around her.

Emotional Health

Research suggests that [cognitive therapy](#) (which involves reframing a person's thought processes) can be as effective or more effective than antidepressant medications in the treatment of [clinical depression](#). Such improvements also tend to be long-lasting, suggesting that they are more than a temporary fix. People who have this training in optimism appear to become better able to effectively handle future setbacks.

Increased Longevity


In a retrospective study of 34 healthy Hall of Fame baseball players who played between 1900 and 1950, optimists lived significantly longer. Other studies have shown that optimistic breast cancer patients had a better quality of life than pessimistic and hopeless patients.

A circular inset image showing a close-up of a spiral-bound notebook with a pen resting on it. The notebook has the words "make yourself a priority" written in blue cursive script.

Less Stress

Optimists also tend to experience [less stress](#) than pessimists or realists. Because they believe in themselves and their abilities, they expect good things to happen. They see negative events as minor setbacks to be easily overcome and view positive events as evidence of further good things to come.

Believing in themselves, they also take more risks and create more positive events in their lives.

A circular inset image showing two men, one younger and one older, smiling and looking at each other. The younger man is holding a bouquet of yellow and pink flowers.

Research shows that optimists are more proactive with [stress management](#). They tend to favor approaches that reduce or eliminate stressors and their emotional consequences. Because optimists work harder at stress management, they are less stressed.