



TESS Newsletter

Accordance to Article 7  
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Episode 115

“ Turning Possibilities into Realities ”

## Building a Global Movement for Change [UNSG]: The Promise (part 47)



**"Working Hard at Working Smart" (part LVIII)**

# 2014: Raising The Bar: The Benefits of Optimism



**“Human spirit is the ability to face the uncertainty of the future with curiosity and optimism. It is the belief that problems can be solved, differences resolved. It is a type of confidence. And it is fragile. It can be blackened by fear, and superstition. By the year 2050, when the conflict began, the world had fallen upon fearful, superstitious times.”**

Bernard Beckett - New Zealand writer

## The future we want: The Promise: The Force Beyond

### The Benefits of Optimism

By Elizabeth Scott, M.S. - Stress Management Expert

#### Staying positive can improve stress management, productivity, and your health

**Do you know someone who seems to always have a smile and a positive thought? Or are you yourself one of those people who is full of optimism? Hardships are seen as 'learning experiences' by optimists, and even the most miserable day always 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.

This is not your imagination.

Researchers like Martin Seligman have been studying optimists and pessimists for years, and they have found that **an optimistic world view carries certain advantages.**

#### Superior Health

In a study of 99 Harvard University students, those who were optimists at age 25 were significantly healthier at ages 45 and 60 than those who were pessimists. Other studies have linked a pessimistic explanatory style with higher rates of infectious disease, poor health, and earlier mortality.

#### Greater Achievement

Seligman analyzed the explanatory styles of 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.

Research like this has led some companies to go out of their way to hire optimists -- a practice that seems to be paying off.

#### Persistence

Optimists don't give up as easily as pessimists, and they are more likely to achieve success because of it. Some optimistic businessmen, like Donald Trump, have been bankrupt (even multiple times), but have been able to persist and turn their failures into millions.

#### Emotional Health

In a study of clinically depressed patients, it was discovered that 12 weeks of cognitive therapy (which involves reframing a person's thought

processes) worked better than drugs, as changes were more long-lasting than a temporary fix. Patients who had this training in optimism had the ability to more 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 better health outcomes than pessimistic and hopeless patients.

#### 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.

Additionally, research shows that optimists are more proactive with stress management, favouring approaches that reduce or eliminate stressors and their emotional consequences. Optimists work harder at stress management, so they're less stressed.

## The Differences Between Optimists and Pessimists

### What's the Explanatory Style of an Optimist?

'Explanatory style' or 'attributional style' refers to how people explain the events of their lives. There are three facets of how people can explain a situation. This can influence whether they lean toward being optimists or pessimists:

**Stable vs. Unstable:** Can time change things, or do things stay the same regardless of time?

**Global vs. Local:** Is a situation a reflection of just one part of your life, or your life as a whole?

**Internal vs. External:** Do you feel events are caused by you or by an outside force?

Realists see things relatively clearly, but most of us aren't realists. Most of us, to a degree, attribute the events in our lives optimistically or pessimistically. The pattern looks like this:

### Optimists

Optimists explain positive events as having happened because of them (internal). They also see them as evidence that more positive things will happen in the future (stable), and in other areas of their lives (global). Conversely, they see negative events as not being their fault (external). They also see them as being flukes (isolated) that have nothing to do with other areas of their lives or future events (local).

For example, if an optimist gets a promotion, she will likely believe it's because she's good at her job and will receive more benefits and promotion in the future. If she's passed over for the promotion, it's likely because she was having an off-month because of extenuating circumstances, but will do better in the future.

### Pessimists

Pessimists think in the opposite way. They believe that negative events are caused by them (internal). They believe that one mistake means more will come (stable), and mistakes in other areas of life are inevitable (global), because they are the cause. They see positive events as flukes (local) that are caused by things outside their control (external) and probably won't happen again (unstable).

A pessimist would see a promotion as a lucky event that probably won't happen again, and may even worry that she'll now be under more scrutiny. Being passed over for promotion would probably be explained as not being skilled enough. She'd therefore expect to be passed over again.

## Making a Difference

### Make it a Priority

#### What This Means

Understandably, if you're an optimist, this bodes well for your future. Negative events are more likely to roll off of your back, but 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.

Fortunately for pessimists and realists, these patterns of thinking can be learned to a degree (though we tend to be mostly predisposed to our patterns of thinking.) 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.

And the time to have a more optimistic view of our world is now.

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