

# Become an Optimist to Experience Less Stress

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It's a scientifically proven fact that those who see the world in a "glass half full" kind of way live longer and experience less stress. Doctors claim that a big majority of all of their office calls are for chronic stress-related health woes, so it makes sense that if you see the world with a better mindset, you'd have fewer physical and mental problems.

When researchers at Concordia University conducted a study about pessimists and optimists, they discovered a direct link between the person's outlook on life and their stress hormone levels. An optimist's levels are steady, while a pessimist's soars out of control and become unmanageable.

## **Optimist Versus Pessimist**

First, let's take a look at what it means to be an optimist. An optimist is someone who basically believes everything's going to be okay. They don't have a doom and gloom outlook on life, even when something goes wrong.

That doesn't mean they ignore times of distress, either. But instead of throwing their hands up in the air and giving up (and giving in) to an awful situation, they roll up their sleeves and get to work making things better.

A pessimist, on the other hand, can't see a positive outcome resulting from a stressful situation at all. They usually worst-case scenario every event – and if they don't, it's still a situation where nothing good can come of it.

Pessimists usually can't understand it, but their outlook is what brings all of that negativity to fruition for them. For example, they go to work *knowing* that they'll never get a promotion at work.

Their lackluster attitude affects the workplace. The boss doesn't see a go getter – he sees a miserable employee, so he does choose someone else for the promotion because he wants a leader – someone who can inspire others.

If an optimist gets passed over for the job, they adopt a mindset that has them analyzing what went wrong so that they can repair it and get ahead in the near future.

### **Pessimists Can't Control Their Cortisol**

It's not that they don't want to, but a pessimist can't manage his cortisol (the stress hormone) levels once they're disrupted. Not only does the hormone present at a much higher level, but once it's released, the pessimist can't claw their way out of it.

What happens to the pessimist when his or her stress levels get out of control on a consistent basis?

- Their Hearts Suffer

A pessimist suffers from heart disease more than an optimist does. In the *Psychological Bulletin*, they published a scientific review about a study where researchers discovered that optimism actually *protects* you from heart disease to some degree.

- Their Cholesterol Is Out of Control

The Harvard School of Public Health found in their scientific study that optimists have a better HDL score – that's the good cholesterol your body needs for optimal health. So pessimists have to work harder to get their levels up.

- They Can't See a Silver Lining During Stressful Situations

The so-called silver lining can help you manage your stress levels. Pessimists see no such lining – but an optimist does, and they learn from bad events and prevent them in the future.

- They Get Sick a Lot

A pessimist has his or her immune system knocked out of whack. An optimist has a strong, formidable immune system. Researchers have discovered that an optimist's immune cells cluster and fight off infection better than a pessimist's does.

- They Are More Emotionally Unstable

Pessimists can't handle the stress they experience, so they're continually upset and depressed about their circumstances. It's especially prevalent after traumatic events – they just can't recover. But even small stressful situations don't leave them as quickly as larger ones.

- They Die Sooner

Poor pessimists. Not only is their whole life filled with one disappointment after another, but in the end, they don't survive as long as their positive-minded peers. That's probably because the horrible effects that stress has on your health are not having an impact on optimistic individuals.

### **Is It Possible to Convert Yourself to an Optimistic Outlook?**

Some people mistakenly believe that optimists are born that way. But this isn't true. You choose how you look at life's ups and downs, and sometimes you have to learn new ways of handling difficult situations if you're not equipped to do that yet.

This isn't going to happen overnight. If you've labeled yourself as a pessimist – or if others are constantly telling you that you're negative, then you can complete an attitude readjustment and turn over a new leaf.

What happens whenever you go through a horrible situation? We're not talking about rush hour traffic, but something life-changing, like a round of pink slips in the workplace?

Instead of slumping down into a stressed out, anxious state of mind, work to fortify your position at the company. Be realistic that it might not last forever and have a back-up plan by furthering your skills and learning new things that make you attractive to employers.

It's time for you to understand that you don't "have bad luck" like many pessimists believe. You have control of your life and the outcome. Some things you can't control – like being late to work because of a traffic jam. But you *can* control the fact that you can plan to leave a bit early each day to give yourself a cushion of time to work with.

If you're currently a pessimist, try surrounding yourself with positive people. Don't bring them down with you – let their mindsets have an influence on you to lift you up to a better place.

It's not just about people you allow to have an effect on you – it's everything. From television news, movies and shows to music that you listen to – even books that you read – try to keep it upbeat, or at least keep the negative stuff to a minimum.

If you realize that certain things put you in a better mood, do more of it! It might be a certain scent filling the air in a room, or a specific CD that sets the tone for a better you.

Change your mindset whenever you catch yourself getting down in the dumps. You might have to keep a record of it at first, recording your moods throughout the day and seeing what triggers you to have a pessimistic response.

But over time, you'll also see a pattern of positive triggers. For example, maybe watching the news after work sets you off, but playing a game with your kids lifts your mood. You can spend more time playing and less time informing yourself of what's wrong in the world.

Some pessimists make fun of the optimists by saying they're not being realistic. Well neither are you, if you want the honest truth. Instead of being in your head imagining what all is wrong and how bad it is, seek out conversations with real people who have a better outlook on life.

Train yourself to be a glass half full type of person. Whenever you encounter a negative situation that stresses you out, stop, take a deep breath, and consider how it can turn into a positive – or at least how it's not as bad as you're initially thinking it is.

If you start to see a real change in your attitude, pat yourself on the back for your efforts. It's not easy making the switch – and most people (pessimists especially), never make the effort.

The fact that you even attempted it means you're not nearly as pessimistic as you might think you are – because you believe in the possibility that you can change – and you will.

In one interesting study, researchers told participants to complete a sentence. One group had to complete a sentence that said, "I wish I were a ..." and the other had to complete a sentence that said, "I'm glad I'm not a ..."

In the first one, the participant has to basically adopt a negative outlook by not being happy with what they currently are. In the second one, they're thankful for what they are and acknowledging that things could be worse.

### **Waging War on Pessimism**

Right now, as a pessimist, you're putting yourself in a precarious situation. You're risking your health and happiness and possibly having a negative impact on those around you.

You don't want that! It's time to take matters into your own hands and start managing your stress better. You can do this by working on your positive outlook each day.

Use positive affirmations as a good starting point. These are positive phrases and sentences that get ingrained in your head. Here is a list of positive affirmations that you can post where you'll see them:

- I believe in myself.
- I am capable of handling difficult situations.
- Life is full of endless opportunities.
- I am at peace with how my life is going.
- I am thankful for what I have in life.

They may sound very simplistic, but they're no more simple than a negative sentence such as, "Everything goes wrong all the time," which is how a pessimist thinks on a regular basis.

Introduce laughter into your life. Different things make different people laugh. Whatever works for you, do more of it! It might be going to comedy clubs or watching comedies on TV. Maybe you like to have friends over and play games – laughter is an incredible stress reliever and makes you feel more positive about life.

Practice smiling. Many people think that smiles are a result of good things happening to you, right? Well the reverse is true too. You can promote positivity in your life by turning that frown upside down!

This is such an incredible finding that researchers at the University of Cardiff in Wales discovered that when a person's ability to frown is impeded (using Botox in this case), the participant in the study felt happier!

You might not want to go the Botox route, but you can actively practice smiling more throughout the day. Not only will your smiles make you happier, but they'll make others happier, too.

It's okay to be a realistic person when it comes to living life. If you fake it to the point that you refuse to acknowledge negative things happening,

then you're a Pollyanna and you can actually cause harm to yourself because you refuse to take responsibility for things – you just expect everything to end up perfect!

Take small steps each day to set yourself on a course that has you increasing your happiness each day. Soon, your pessimism will be a thing of the past and you won't ever feel like returning to that way of thinking again.

Use a variety of tools if one doesn't work for you. If comedy and positive affirmation flops, then try counseling, books, the Law of Attraction, and other methods to help you break free of the negative mindset forever.



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