



How to be optimistic

A quick assessment and some tips for creating an optimistic outlook.

Optimism is our ability to maintain a positive outlook on people, process, and life events. When we are optimistic, we experience the same disappointments and setbacks as everyone else; we just recover differently, and faster by finding the lesson or good in the situation.

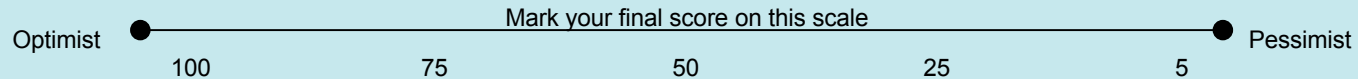
1

Circle your level of agreement with each statement. Add up the score for each column, and then add each column together to get a total score

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When things go wrong I keep going	4	3	2	1
I believe there are new opportunities ahead	4	3	2	1
My future is full of opportunities	4	3	2	1
I look forward to the future	4	3	2	1
Things usually work out for the best	4	3	2	1
Score				
Total Score				

2

Using the table on the right read across from your total score to determine your final score. Then mark your final score on the Optimist / Pessimist scale below.



3

How did you do? Anything over 65 and you can consider yourself pretty optimistic. Those of you scoring under 50 might like to have a think about introducing some of the following ideas into daily life:



Research shows that facial expressions and the moods that accompany them are contagious, probably because they evolved as a means of nonverbal communication between people. You can use the infectious effects of a grin to jump-start an optimistic outlook in yourself by sending others what you want them to lob back at you. A kind word to the man behind the deli counter can get your day bouncing in the right direction.



When you feel down, your brain tells your face you're sad and your facial muscles respond by putting on a depressed expression and convey back to the brain that, yes, you're feeling blue. Consciously changing the facial muscles so they don't correspond to what you're feeling is a way of sending a different message: "Hey, it's not so bad down here after all." The brain will respond by beginning to change your mood accordingly.



When success occurs optimists say, "Of course dinner turned out; I'm a good cook," while pessimists say, "Boy, was I lucky today," literally snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. If you start to speak to yourself in a more positive way when you succeed and fail, you'll gradually become more optimistic.



If you look through a camera lens, you'll find that when one part of the picture is in focus, the other areas blur a bit. (This is a distortion, sure, but sometimes we need to sustain the idea of being in a protective bubble to feel optimistic.) This active self-direction of your own moment-to-moment perspective allows you to create a new life story, one in which you take charge of your emotions and actions. Since research shows that those who feel they have a better sense of control tend to be the most optimistic, why not take charge of where your psychological lens is focused?

Total Score	Final Score
20	100
19	94
18	88
17	81
16	75
15	68
14	61
13	54
12	47
11	41
10	34
9	27
8	20
7	14
6	7
5	0