

# 10 Steps to Optimism



Would you say you are a glass half full kind of person or glass half empty? Or maybe in between? It's easy to think of optimism as being a character trait or something you feel when you feel good but harder to find when things are perhaps not going so well.

**What if I were to tell you that optimism is a skill that you can learn, nurture and develop?**

It doesn't mean putting on a happy face, no matter what the circumstances or banishing negative thoughts. Real optimism invites you to acknowledge how you may be feeling, face problems, accurately assess the situation and seek solutions. We can achieve far more than what we believe may be possible by a combination of hard work, self-belief and healthy optimism. Our current economic and world situation invites us all to examine our potential, perhaps more so than we ever would have done otherwise. We're living in an era of opportunity and change but also one of great uncertainty and substantial shift. Developing optimism helps us to respond well with resourcefulness, creativity and energy.

**Ok – but how?**

Optimism can be learned, and we all need to start learning to develop healthy optimism. The key to optimism is asking ourselves more questions before automatically defaulting into a negative response. There are opportunities all around you to do this each and every day.

## 1. Embrace Negativity

Yes, really! Life will always have ups and downs and we need to embrace and learn from both. That means accepting that there will be times when things are not going as we might like, to acknowledge disappointment, allow space to process change and then move forward into taking action.

## 2. Rethink Happiness

Take some time to define what happiness means to you – rewarding work, a loving relationship, good health; many of these things are inside your control, even in the midst of change and uncertainty. Let go of the things that aren't making you happy.

## 3. Act as if

This really does work. As long as you have given yourself time to acknowledge negative emotion and process change, you can trick your brain into feeling happier. Simply by smiling or “pretending” you are happy, you can shift yourself out of a funk faster than you think!

## 4. Work out your “explanatory style”

Positive psychology (or real optimism) says that optimism is largely about how we explain events to ourselves. What is your default response if something does not go to plan? Take some time to understand yourself. Then you can decide to do things differently next time.

## 5. It's as easy as ABC – DE...

It's not the external event that makes you feel a certain way, it's your own interpretation of it! Hard to accept sometimes but it's true. The ABCDE approach invites you to reflect on an adverse event (A), your beliefs about it (B), the consequence of acting on those beliefs (C) and then getting to a stage where you are able to dispute those beliefs (D) and as a result have much more positive energy (E).

## 6. Ditch the self-help books

It can be super challenging to put the guidance and advice from a self-help book into practical actions and steps for your life. That's because most books advocate a “read this and transform your life approach”. They will not make you happy or more optimistic. Only you can do that!

## 7. Stop trying to think positively

Optimism is not about positive thinking or trying to put a positive spin on everything. The way to healthy positivity is through getting to know yourself, taking responsibility and understanding how you respond to things.

## 8. Be a radiator, not a drain

There are people who radiate warmth and positivity and those that drain others through projecting a negative attitude. If you can radiate positive energy around you, everyone will pick up on it. Choose to not be a drain.

## 9. Look for opportunities

They are everywhere – even in situations where it may be hard to see any. Become a seeker of solutions. There are always opportunities. Try finding them in any situation you have coming up or that you might be experiencing right now.

## 10. Say "Thank you"

Adopt an attitude of gratitude. This is one of the most well-researched boosters of happiness and you can achieve it quickly by starting a gratitude journal. Write down every day at least three things you are grateful for and then gradually start to add more.