

The Power of Optimism – Positive Psychology in Everyday Life

Upper-intermediate (B2–C1)



WARM-UP DISCUSSION

Part 1. Read the quote below and then discuss the questions.

“Keep your face always toward the sunshine — and shadows will fall behind you.”

— Walt Whitman

1. Do you agree with this quote? Why or why not?
2. Would you describe yourself as more optimistic or pessimistic?
3. How can optimism influence health and wellbeing?
4. Do you think optimism can be learned, or is it a natural personality trait?

Part 2. Read the situations below. For each one, discuss the questions.

- **You studied hard for an exam but received a disappointing grade.**
- **You missed the last bus home and it's raining heavily.**
- **You applied for a job but didn't get invited to the interview.**

1. How might an optimist react?
2. How might a pessimist react?
3. Which response do you think is more helpful? Why?



READING TEXT

Part 1. Read the following text.

The Psychology of Optimism

Optimism is more than positive thinking — it's a mindset that can improve health, relationships, and resilience. Research in positive psychology shows that optimistic people are more likely to cope with stress, recover from setbacks, and even live longer. This doesn't mean ignoring problems; instead, optimism involves facing challenges with the belief that solutions are possible.

Psychologists explain that optimism influences behaviour. Optimistic students, for example, may persevere through difficulties, while optimistic patients often stick to treatments with greater commitment. This hopeful outlook creates a cycle: positive expectations lead to constructive actions, which increase the chance of positive results.

Importantly, optimism can be cultivated. Simple practices like gratitude, mindfulness, and reframing negative thoughts help train the brain to focus on opportunities rather than obstacles. While no one can avoid difficulties, optimism offers a practical tool for navigating life with confidence and energy.

Part 2. Discuss the questions below based on the text.

1. According to the text, how does optimism improve resilience?
2. What everyday examples show how optimism affects behaviour?
3. How does optimism create a positive cycle?
4. Which practices can help people develop optimism?
5. Do you think too much optimism can ever be harmful? Why or why not?



VOCABULARY & SPEAKING

Part 1. Match the words/phrases to their meanings.

Positive psychology

Cope with stress

Recover from setbacks

Hopeful outlook

Constructive actions

Gratitude practice

Reframe negative thoughts

Perseverance

1. _____ An approach in psychology that studies happiness and strengths
2. _____ To bounce back after difficulties or failures
3. _____ Continuing to work hard even when facing challenges
4. _____ Daily habits that focus on appreciation and thankfulness
5. _____ Changing how you interpret problems to see them more positively
6. _____ A way of seeing the future with confidence and positivity
7. _____ Practical steps that help improve situations
8. _____ To manage pressure or difficulties effectively

Part 2. Complete the sentences with the correct words/phrases.

1. Optimistic people are better able to _____ and keep moving forward.
2. Developing a _____ can make stressful situations feel less overwhelming.
3. Writing down three things you're thankful for is an example of a _____.
4. Optimistic people often take _____ that lead to real improvement.
5. Athletes show _____ when they keep training despite repeated failures.
6. Learning to _____ helps people turn obstacles into opportunities.
7. Positive thinking is central to the field of _____.
8. Deep breathing can help you _____ during tense situations.



Part 3. Act out the role-play below with your teacher/partner, making sure to use today's vocabulary. Once finished, swap roles and repeat the activity.

Positive psychology

Cope with stress

Recover from setbacks

Hopeful outlook

Constructive actions

Gratitude practice

Reframe negative thoughts

Perseverance

Student A: You're feeling discouraged about a personal goal.

Student B: Give advice on how optimism and positive psychology can help.

Part 4. Discuss the scenarios below. Aim to recall and use today's vocabulary in your answers.

1. A company wants to train staff in positive psychology. What strategies might they use?
2. A friend is pessimistic about learning English. How could optimism help them improve?
3. Is optimism equally important in work, health, and relationships? Why or why not?

Part 5. Discuss the question below. Aim to recall and use today's vocabulary in your answer.

Share a time when optimism helped you achieve something. How did it affect your actions?

Part 6. Complete the sentences with the missing word. Then, say whether you agree, disagree, or partially agree with the statement.

1. Every cloud has a silver _____. → Even bad situations can bring something positive.
2. I always see the glass half _____. → I focus on the positive side of things.
3. A smile can really brighten someone's _____. → A smile can make others feel happier.
4. I always try to look on the bright side of _____. → I always try to find the good in a difficult situation.
5. You shouldn't let one mistake rain on your _____. → You shouldn't let one problem ruin all your happiness.



REFLECTION

Discuss the following questions.

1. Which vocabulary phrase from today's lesson do you think will be most useful?
2. Do you believe optimism is a choice? Why or why not?

WRAP-UP TASK (OPTIONAL HOMEWORK)

Write 8–10 sentences about how you could cultivate more optimism in your life. Use at least 5 of today's target vocabulary items.

