



THE

# PEAK OF SUCCESS

NEWSLETTER

*Soar to Your Peak with Us!*

Many clients and acquaintances ask us, “How can I prevent surrendering to other people’s negativity and bad attitudes?” So many people we work with are living or working in environments where other people are angry, pessimistic, or just plain “crabby.” There are a couple of different levels that need to be addressed in order to first be shielded from other people’s negative attitudes or moods while being optimistic ourselves, and also while helping others to become more optimistic. We could argue into eternity about whether it is our responsibility to help others to become more optimistic. I believe that within reason helping others to be better creates a better world and a better environment for us all. So, just do it!

The first step to becoming an optimist is mindfulness. It is essential to listen to everything you say, even those utterances under your breath. Are your remarks and comments negative, critical, or cynical, or are they positive, encouraging, and hopeful? Do you complain in tough situations, or do you look for the lesson and the “silver lining?” Skip the muttering about the broken shopping cart, just chuckle and go get another one. Are you quick to jump in and find fault when something goes wrong, or do you cut other people some slack and allow them to make the same mistakes you are allowed to make? Don’t curse the other driver who cut you off, just thank God nobody got hurt and acknowledge that we

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all drive badly sometimes. Do you forgive or do you hold grudges? Say “I forgive you and have faith that it will not happen again,” instead of throwing the “old stuff” up again and again. Do you expect bad things to happen to you and around you or are your expectations good, even when the situation looks grim? When two or three people are sick with winter illnesses, bolster your immune defenses and keep the faith about your health, rather than just waiting for the other shoe to drop. Do you point out your own flaws and those of your loved ones publicly, or do you live by the adage, “We work on our issues, but we never say anything negative about ourselves or our family?” Your family will appreciate it greatly if you save all criticism for private times, while encouraging them greatly most of the time. If you consider yourself both the product *and* the salesperson, then what you say about yourself is very important.

## **PEAK TIP**

Optimism is the antithesis and the antidote to depression. So are healthy eating, exercise and getting sound, adequate sleep. When these good health habits are combined with optimism as taught in this article, the chances of falling into depression or into various forms of anxiety disorder are minimized.

Are you in a rush with everything you do and just push through the “smelling the roses” parts of life? Research shows that being in a hurry actually changes people’s personalities and makes kind, considerate people forget kindnesses and considerations. Could that be the reason for increased road rage? Imagine what all the rushing and pushing looks like from a child’s point of view. The other day I heard a child say to his mother, “Every time I say that I need to go

to the bathroom, you say to hurry up.” Uh oh! She needed to listen to herself, and then hear it as her child heard it.

Once you know the answer to all of the above questions and you have a very good sample of your own remarks, then you will know whether you are an optimist or a pessimist. An optimist believes that the causes of bad events are temporary, are limited to the situation at hand, and are not to be taken personally. While an optimist can admit a mistake, he or she would not disparage his or her whole self, with large, negative self-statements like, “I’m just a careless person.” The optimist would make amends where possible, learn from the mistake and move on. The optimist would know that guilt and wallowing only serve to relieve responsibility and create more negative circumstances. When facing adversity, the optimist assumes that the storm will have limited damage and will not last long. Optimists can be realistic about the actual damage, but they focus on solutions and what is still good. They do not let one bad event affect other aspects of their lives. For example, if an optimist loses a job, they still maintain their interpersonal relationships and healthy lifestyle habits, rather than bemoaning the loss of the job and allowing it to cause them to lose focus on the rest of life.

If you believe you are primarily an optimist, but you are surrounded by pessimists, then here are some possible steps to take. First, maintain your optimism at all times. Make a point to yourself of turning the pessimistic remarks of others around, even if only in your own mind. For example, if a co-worker always complains about the job, make a list in your mind of what is good about the job. Recite this list to yourself as the co-worker is complaining. Then at some point you may consider sprinkling positive remarks about the job throughout the day, both aloud to others and to yourself. If you encounter grouchy, angry people at work, make a point of being especially positive and upbeat. Smiling and being lighthearted will keep you much calmer and most of the time it will have a positive effect on those around you. The old adage of “smile and the world smiles with you” has some validity. Research shows that one person’s positive attitude and nonverbal behaviors can affect a family or other environment. Service people especially should heed this rule. Even a grouchy customer can appreciate a smile and a happy tone from a service person. Not to mention that the service person’s day can get very tedious and long

with a sour expression and an unhappy frame of mind.

Martin Seligman and others who have intensively researched optimism have shown that how people explain events is the key to being optimistic or pessimistic. Here is an example of optimistic and pessimistic “explanatory styles.”

**Event:** Your child drops out of college.

**Pessimist:** I never did think we were very good parents. Besides, our son really isn’t very bright and he’s always been lazy. Nothing to do about those things!

**Optimist:** I know we’ve taught our kids right values, and that they’re able to look into the future to see how their decisions will affect things. So I’m going to assume that this decision to drop out is due to some specific thing that’s happening right now. Maybe there was a disagreement with his advisor, or a relationship problem. I’m going to talk to him and get to the bottom of it.

Comment: The pessimist assigns the cause of the dropout to huge, negative characteristics, including bad parenting and the offspring’s stupidity and laziness. He also declares hopelessness at the end. The optimist on the other hand promotes the quality of parenting and the offspring’s positive attributes resulting from that parenting. He is willing to assume that the cause of the dropout is something temporary and specific. Most important, the optimist holds to the belief the cause is fixable, and refuses to be hopeless.

While we cannot force others to accept our optimistic outlooks on life, we can truly affect others by maintaining our own optimism and by sharing it openly. So, even if others are frowning around you and catastrophizing events keep smiling and seeing the good in life and in others. You are also more likely to attract optimists than pessimists by not succumbing to negativity that is around you.

### PEAK TIP

Every day, and every opportunity you get, store away beautiful, meaningful and pleasant images and recollections. They will later be places in the mind to go for restoration, relaxation and simply enjoyment.

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