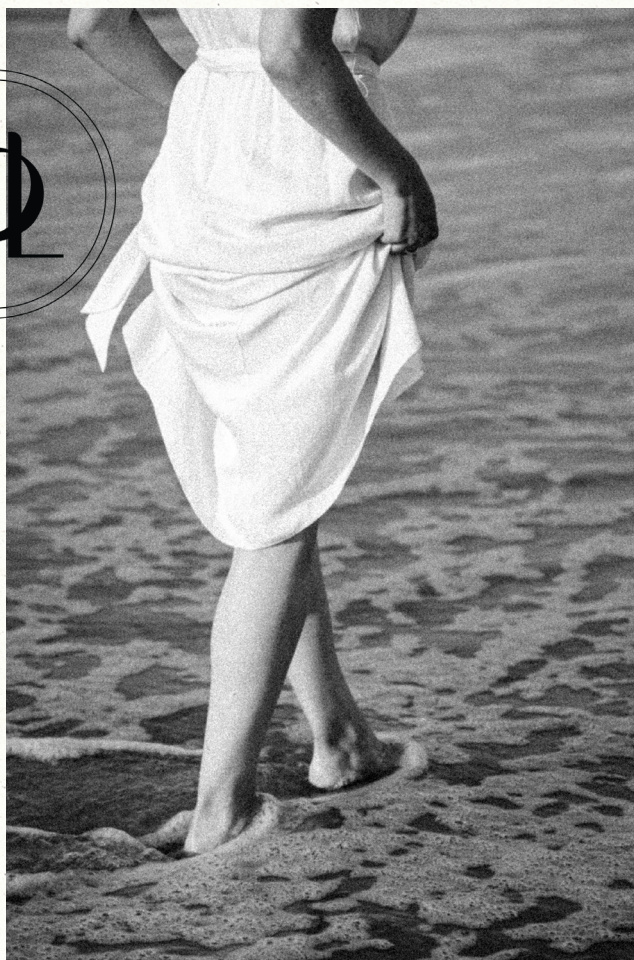


philosophy *of* leisure



HOW TO BE MORE

Optimistic



Why do we have such a love/hate relationship with optimism? Is it the fact that it's sometimes associated with being naive and idealistic, and not having a firm grasp on all that's wrong in the world? Or is it the concern that optimism can be part of the toxic positivity culture, when not rooted in logic and compassion?

Whatever the reason, optimism has gotten a bit of a bad rap, as it's a crucial skill to cultivate - and, along with hope, it also forms the foundation for resilience. Without optimism we'd struggle to find the motivation to tackle our most important goals, or to find the courage to rebuild after the inevitable storms roll past. The following quote from Noam Chomsky, noted cognitive scientist and philosopher, sums it up perfectly:

“

Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to step up and take responsibility for making it so.

In that simple quote, Mr Chomsky takes optimism out of the realm of being unrealistic, and places it firmly into the scope of necessary and needed skills for a thriving life - because, although we're all born on a wide spectrum of optimism/pessimism, optimism is a skill which can be learned and strengthened.

*Warmly,
Dee Anne*

& THE POL TEAM

HERE ARE OUR SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT HEALTHY,
RATIONAL OPTIMISM, AND HOW IT CAN HELP US LEAD LIVES OF
GREATER HAPPINESS, SUCCESS, LEISURE, AND PURPOSE:

01. Read about "[*The Difference Between Hope and Optimism*](#)" in The Atlantic.
02. Recognize that fear and anxiety are often the greatest deterrents to optimism, and read up on [*how to rewire the anxious brain*](#).
03. See how stubborn optimism is a responsible choice in facing our global challenges at "[*Global Optimism*](#)."
04. Learn about the [*correlation between education in the arts, positive youth development, and why, as adolescents, students of the arts are significantly more optimistic about their chances to attend college than non-arts students*](#).
05. Look back over the difficulties you've faced. Journal on where you were you able to rebuild, and maybe even come out stronger. This allows us to understand that, while not all of our goals will be reached, we have the tools necessary to bounce back and begin dreaming again, when necessary.
06. [*Read how adult play can help us be more optimistic*](#).
07. [*Curb perfectionism*](#) to grow optimism.
08. Allow yourself to believe that you deserve good things. Hire a coach or therapist if it's too much of a struggle to do on your own.
09. Recruit an optimism partner.
10. Subscribe to "[*The Optimist Daily*](#)."
11. Avoid the doubters. Self-doubt is hard enough, without having others pile on. Have an inner circle of a trusted coach, friends, or a therapist to run your most ambitious ideas past, but don't publicly share until you're solid and confident in yourself.
12. Read "[*Resilience: Powerful Practices for Bouncing Back from Disappointment, Difficulty, and Even Disaster*](#)" by Linda Graham, MFT because knowing we can bounce back no matter what we face makes optimism much easier.
13. Have a long term plan, but act daily. This will help you to build confidence and optimism, as [*action defeats fear*](#), but it will also help you to be agile, if things begin to go off track and you need to correct course.
14. Learn how optimism can be used for the good of others in "[*Waging Optimism: Ushering In a New Era of Justice*](#)" by Dr. Paul Zeitz
15. Consider why you should [*quit the news to become more optimistic*](#).
16. Take a course in [*self belief*](#), because there is no amount of external approval that will silence the inner critic.
17. Start small, and build optimism like any other muscle or skill. Be optimistic about something you are certain will happen, and grow from there.
18. Understand that even in chaos there's pattern, and that being resilient is also about gaining from disorder in "[*Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*](#)" by Nassim Nicholas Taleb.
19. Watch how "[*The Happy Planet Index*](#)" shows that hope, optimism, and measuring happiness and wellbeing is better for the planet, too.

20. Learn ["What Nature Can Teach Us About Resiliency"](#)
21. Replace the term "failure" with "lesson." As Thomas Edison said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Gaining experience in what works and what doesn't breeds confidence in the process, so that optimism can follow.
22. Find others who have achieved what you fear attempting, and ask for their advice and best practices.
23. Accept that you'll set unreachable targets at times, and that's okay. Challenging oneself is the way we grow to our personal best - but even personal growth has its limits.
24. Expect to make your dreams a reality. [Visualization is not a flight of fancy](#). The brain begins to work out how to make things happen, as soon as you imagine them and expect them to come to fruition. Use caution though, this works in the negative, as well.
25. Assume the good intentions of others. It's difficult to be optimistic about the world, or relationships, if we assign negative intent to actions, without proof. Most people's intentions are good, and those that aren't will show themselves soon enough.
26. Build up your physical health. Not only is [exercise shown to improve optimism](#), due to the dopamine response, but optimism about one's health is a huge stress reliever, as well.
27. Learn why optimists are more likely to use [approach coping](#) when faced with a problem, which is considered healthier than denying or avoiding problems that arise.
28. Understand that being optimistic and resilient doesn't mean feeling good all of the time - it sometimes means that you're also okay sitting with the hard and the difficult.
29. For balance, pair your optimism with defensive pessimism, which allows you to plan for the best, but also anticipate negative outcomes and build strategies to prevent them, according to an article on [healthypsych.com](#)
30. Read ["The Rational Optimist"](#) by Matt Ridley
31. Be open to new experiences, even something as small as taking a different route to work, as this helps build tolerance to anxiety which reduces fear - a prime enemy of optimism.
32. Read ["The Little Prince"](#) by Antoine de Saint-Exupery
33. Read ["Learned Optimism"](#) by Martin Seligman
34. Choose a favourite [optimism mantra](#) to recite during times of doubt, as supportive self-talk is even more powerful than having someone else cheering you on.
35. Begin a mediation practice with [Ten Percent Happier](#) to help with equanimity and resilience, both crucial to staying out of the monkey mind so that optimism has room to work.
36. As a leader, learn ["How to demonstrate calm and optimism in a crisis"](#) from McKinsey & Company
37. Remind yourself that some of our most wonderful inventions and innovations have come from our most trying times.
38. [Watch how others express hope and optimism for the future, through words and actions.](#)
39. Have one hour a day when you allow yourself to only see the positive, and what's working in your life.
40. Learn your optimism score by taking the [Big 5 test on Truity](#)
41. Watch ["La La Land"](#)
42. Watch ["Best Exotic Marigold Hotel"](#)
43. Watch ["Winnie the Pooh"](#)
44. Watch ["Shawshank Redemption"](#)
45. Watch ["Pursuit of Happyness"](#)
46. Watch ["Precious"](#)
47. Read John Clare's poem ["The Instinct of Hope"](#)

48. Read Emily Dickinson's "*Hope is the Thing with Feathers*"
49. Read Maya Angelou's "*Still I Rise*"
50. Let go of the past, and forgive yourself. Nothing kills optimism, hope, and resilience more than beating oneself up for past errors in judgment.
51. Recruit an optimism mentor.
52. Read "*Chatter: The Voice in Our Head, Why it Matters, and How to Harness it*" by Ethan Kross to learn how to make our inner voice an ally.
53. Be grateful for the good, and let your gratitude journal be one of your anchors in times during serious bouts of pessimism.
54. Be grateful for the challenges, as we probably don't know what positives will come from not always getting what we want.
55. Remember that you aren't being singled out - everyone has ups and downs, and wins and losses, as it's the human condition.
56. Uncomplicate your life where possible. Being overwhelmed and under stress kills hope, will, motivation, and optimism.
57. Get eight hours of sleep, because *everything seems more manageable and doable when you're well rested.*
58. If you're a natural pessimist, be open to the possibility that learned optimism can take away some of the hurt of expecting only bad, and also allow you to gain your first few foundational wins.
59. Accept responsibility for becoming more *optimistic.*
60. Celebrate that you have *agency* over your own thoughts and actions - a key ally in growing hope, self-confidence, and optimism.
61. Let go of what you don't control, as trying to manage what we can't will find us using valuable optimism and energy on battles we can't win.
62. Take control of what you have control over.
63. Give yourself credit for doing your best. This is *proven to promote self-confidence, self-worth, optimism, and resilience in both adults and children.*
64. Stay on top of your finances and taxes. *Nothing kills optimism like financial stress.*
65. *Believe in something bigger than yourself.* as faith, hope, and optimism are closely linked.
66. *Be honest with yourself about your shortcomings.* as foundational optimism is rooted in logical, rational assessments so that it has the best chance to deliver wanted results.
67. *Focus on your strengths.* You'll be happier and more successful than continually trying to improve skills which just aren't in your wheelhouse.
68. Take steps to shore up the areas where you aren't as skilled, but in novel ways - choose partners, spouses, and colleagues who have strengths where you do not.
69. Use the *optimist's writing exercise* weekly to boost your outlook for the future.
70. *Meditate specifically to be more optimistic.* as research using brain scanning show meditation alters the structure of the brain, fostering a brighter more optimistic outlook and increased empathy. Over time, meditation thickens the bilateral, prefrontal right-insular region of the brain, the area responsible for optimism and a sense of possibility.
71. Strengthen your *emotional intelligence.* as the more likable and compassionate you are the likelier you will be successful in love, in business, and in life, which then reinforces optimism, and faith in it happening again and again.
72. Learn to be self-competitive, rather than comparing yourself to others. Being a continually better version of yourself is much easier than being better at something than everyone else.

73. Also study *optimism bias*, and our evolutionary need to be optimistic, as a way to be certain optimism remains in the healthy range.
74. *Cultivate happiness habits by partnering optimism, gratitude, and being present.*
75. *Learn what healthy optimism is, and how it can improve your life in unexpected ways.*
76. *Stem overthinking, as its linked to becoming overly pessimistic and also to depression.*
77. *Perform regular optimism recalibrations*
78. Learn about “*The Art of Optimism*” from Ava DuVernay, and how art can help us build more hope, in Time magazine’s special issue on optimism.
79. Read why “*The Most Radical and Rebellious Choice You Can Make Is to Be Optimistic.*” from director and actor Guillermo Del Toro.
80. Begin using a walking app daily, to build physical and cardiovascular strength, because we’re more confident and optimistic when we reach physical health goals, and when we feel good about ourselves physically.
81. *Learn How to Instill Hope in Children*
82. Start a book club that focuses on fiction and nonfiction books featuring optimism and resilience.
83. Surround yourself with optimistic people.
84. Surround yourself with hopeful people.
85. Surround yourself with resilient people.
86. Discover the research behind “*Optimism and Its Impact on Mental and Physical Well-Being*” from NIH.
87. Make a list of the good things that have happened in your life. Not for gratitude’s sake, in this case, but to recognize that you have had some wins, and you have every reason to expect there will be more in the future.
88. Make a T-Chart of the pros and cons of the worst/best case scenarios, so you can logically decide if it’s worth the risk involved, before diving in with full force optimism.
89. Turn off news notifications on your phone, and learn the value of brain rest for growing optimism.
90. Make a list of the *good things that have come from the goals you didn’t reach.*
91. Give yourself a *designated overthinking hour each day*, and stick to it, or use “*The Artist’s Way*” to dump the thoughts that are holding you back from optimism and creating the future you wish for yourself.
92. Read why optimism is so necessary to fighting climate issues, in “*The Search For Environmental Hope*”
93. Identify yourself as an *intelligent optimist*, if you’re not sold on leaving the realist camp yet.
94. Looking for good news, like *this on the state of climate change*, can help us sustain our optimism for the challenges ahead.
95. *Actively look for reasons to be optimistic, as science suggests it will help you live longer.*
96. Go on holiday to an *agriturismo*, and be inspired by the faith, hope, and optimism of a farmer/grower.
97. *Take cooking lessons*, and notice your natural hope and optimism take over, in expecting a recipe you’ve never seen before bringing the desired end.
98. *Take stand up comedy lessons*, and notice that even if you’re terrible at comedy it still can be fun.
99. Marvel at the hope and optimism involved in space travel.
100. Remember that life is not about perfection and there is no rush. You have an endless number of tomorrows and do-overs to build your view of the future, whilst optimism keeps you company today.