

**Cultivating Optimism - Activity Two:** Looking on the bright side, noticing what's right rather than what's wrong, giving yourself the benefit of the doubt, feeling good about your future and the future of the world, or simply trusting you can get through the day are all optimism strategies. Cultivating optimism has a lot in common with gratitude as both involve the habit of striving to see the positive in your situation. Optimism is about celebrating the present and the past (as is gratitude) but also about anticipating a bright future. It does not mean you live in the pristine world without fault. Consider 3 types of optimism. Big Optimism (e.g. "we are on the threshold of a glorious age", little optimism (e.g. "my flight will arrive on time") and very small optimism (e.g. "I can get through the day"). All three are adaptive, but in different ways. Little optimism predisposes people to behave in constructive, healthy ways in specific situations, whereas big optimism produces an overall feeling of vigor; it makes you feel resilient, strong and energetic. Very small optimism creates feeling that you will make it through, although things may go up and down a little. Some researchers define optimism as a global expectation about a positive future – that is a belief one's own goals can be accomplished. Adversity and how we cope with it is a characteristic of a lack of optimism (pessimism). For example pessimistic thinkers see adversity as often being personal (my fault), permanent (it will last forever and pervasive (affects other domains of life). On the other hand optimistic thinking sees adversity in terms of it having an external cause, lasting only a short time and it does not pervade other areas of life. Optimists live longer (19%), enjoy more success at work, sport and play, have better social networks, and have less depression and anxiety and significantly higher levels of happiness.

Optimistic thinking improves happiness. If you believe in your positive future and goals you will invest time and energy in them, strangely they often come true. It also engages us in lifelong habits of coping with adversity and finally it produces positive moods.

**Activity 1 – Best Possible Future Selves Diary:** This exercise involves considering your most important, deeply held goals and picturing that they will be achieved. Research shows writing about this for 20 minutes occasionally will increase positive moods and well being.

**Activity 2 – Goals and Sub goals:** To further develop hopeful thinking try breaking your big goals into sub goals and the action plans required to achieve these goals.

**Activity 3 – Identify Barrier Thoughts:** Try identifying automatic pessimistic thoughts, and then try replacing them with optimistic thoughts.

**Activity 4 – Dealing with Adversity:** When faced with adversity try using logic to overcome your negative thinking by following the ABCDE.

- A. Adversity- Define the adversity (e.g. that indoor climb looks very high,).
- B. Belief - I might fall.
- C. Consequences- I might really hurt myself.
- D. Disputation (use logic) - "well indoors nobody in this gym has fallen and have seriously hurt themselves, in fact I am safer up there than in the car driving here".
- E. Energy: "I am really safe climbing in the gym and am going to really enjoy this climb".