

COACH *Notes*



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Newsletter

Optimism: the Key to Living Longer & Happier

“Success is measured by your ability to maintain enthusiasm between failures.”

- Sir Winston Churchill

Mahatma Gandhi, Thomas Edison, Helen Keller, and Christopher Reeves are just a few names that come to mind in a discussion about optimism and success.

People who are successful in life measure high on assessments of optimistic attitudes. It would be easy to presume they are optimistic because they are successful, but there is enough research to show that the optimism comes first.

Traditional wisdom puts forth the idea that to be successful, you must have two things:

1. **Talent**, aptitude or skill
2. **Motivation**

More recent research shows that a third element contributes strongly to success:

3. **Optimism**, particularly in the face of adversity

High scores for optimism are predictive of excellence in everything from sports to health, elections and sales. When Metropolitan Life used an assessment of optimistic attitude to select and hire salespeople, those scoring highest on the optimism scale outsold others in their first year by 27 percent.

Optimists are more resistant to infectious illness and are better at fending off chronic diseases of middle age. In a 1980 study of 96 men who had their first heart attack, 15 of the 16 most pessimistic men died of a second heart attack within eight years, but only five of the 16 most optimistic men died.

Dr. Martin Seligman, author of *Learned Optimism*, has shown that optimists not only do better educationally and in their careers, they also enjoy superior health and longevity.

UNLIMITED POTENTIAL



**HERDLINGER
ASSOCIATES**

“Turning potential into performance”

David Herdlinger, Herdlinger Associates

Dreamers Welcome

At Herdlinger Associates, I encourage people to dream. And the positive results have been astounding!

When individuals pursue their dreams, their lives percolate with purpose, passion, success, and fulfillment.

As a coach, I don't try to make my clients' dreams come true. That's their privilege...and responsibility.

My role – and my joy – is to stand by their side to encourage, guide, challenge, and cheer them on.

Are your dreams big enough? Let me help you unleash your potential and accomplish more than you ever dreamed possible.

...David Herdlinger

HERDLINGER ASSOCIATES has helped thousands of professionals at all levels in all types of organizations achieve extraordinary success and satisfaction.

We serve clients in North America, Europe, and Asia, ranging in size from individuals and very small businesses to corporations with annual sales in excess of \$40 billion.

Learn more about HerdlingerAssociates at our website:
www.TheCoach.biz

P.O. Box 20389
St. Simons Island, GA 31522
912.634.9300
877.626.2960 (toll-free)
David@TheCoach.biz

A Dynamic vs a Passive Optimist

“Don’t ever become a pessimist; a pessimist is correct oftener than an optimist, but an optimist has more fun - and neither can stop the march of events.” - Robert A. Heinlein

On the surface, optimism may appear to be a simple case of “don’t worry, be happy.” However, an effective assessment will show that there are degrees of optimism. Not all kinds will move us forward in life.

Max More, Ph.D., has proposed two distinct kinds of optimists: those who are “dynamic” and those who are “passive.” Dynamic optimists have an active, empowering attitude which creates conditions for success by focusing and acting on possibilities and opportunities. Passive optimists simply tell themselves that all will work out just fine. They expect other people and organizations will solve the problems.

Dr. More proposes that effective optimism requires study, understanding and practice. A passive optimist, while more effective than a pessimist, sees no need to take action. They think positively but don’t know how to turn thoughts into actions. Those who are really dynamic in their optimism turn their thoughts into behaviors. They apply optimism in diverse ways to attain goals in career, finances, spirituality, health and leadership.

Optimism Can Be Learned

Pessimists, passive optimists and dynamic optimists all selectively focus their attention. Dynamic optimists interpret their experiences differently than other people. They also influence outcomes differently by translating effective thoughts into specific kinds of actions.

The differing ways in which optimists and pessimists focus their attention lead to noticing different things, experiencing different motivations, and taking different actions. The pessimist focuses on problems, pains, and pitfalls.

The passive optimist sees only what is encouraging and enjoyable, but blinds him- or herself to potential obstacles. This leads to missed opportunities or limited success.

The dynamic optimist dwells on the constructive and enjoyable while de-emphasizing pain, difficulty and frustration. Such a person can look at a frustrating event, fully accept its reality, and then choose to interpret the event in a way that leads to action,

growth and mastery. They recognize dangers but have a wider vision open to solutions, possibilities and assisting forces.

When You Hit that Wall...

“For myself I am an optimist - It does not seem to be much use being anything else.” - *Anonymous*

Think about the times during the day at work that you are blocked and feel discouraged. What do you do when you hit that wall?

The optimistic individual perseveres. In the face of routine setbacks he or she persists. He or she keeps on going, particularly at the crucial juncture when the competition is also hitting the wall and starting to wilt. In the face of major failure, the optimist *persists*.

Optimism helps every time your work gets hard. It can make the difference between getting the job done well or poorly- or not at all. Even in non-competitive tasks, such as paper work or writing, an optimistic attitude can make the difference.

Procrastination is the result of not having an optimistic mindset to start and finish a task. But at the root of putting things off is the internal dialog when facing an unpleasant, routine or boring task. A pessimist thinks all sorts of negative thoughts when facing such tasks. The optimist thinks positive thoughts that actually encourage and energize.

Failure often does not stem from laziness, or from lack of talent or lack of imagination. It’s often simply ignorance of some very important tools not commonly taught in schools or in workshops.

Coaching for Optimism

When working with a coach, you can use the opportunity to work on developing the skills of optimism.

Here are three important tools for learning to cultivate an optimistic attitude:

1. **Become aware:** look at how you selectively focus on events.
2. **Examine your internal dialogue,** then change what you tell yourself.
3. **See negative events as opportunities** rather than problems.

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” - Sir Winston Churchill

Your coach can help you look at yourself in a way that can’t be done on your own.
