



# OPTIMISM IN ACTION.

## WHAT IS OPTIMISM?

Optimism is a hopeful, positive outlook on the future that helps you get through tough times.

By definition, optimism helps you see, feel, and think positively, and benefits your health as well. You can choose a positive viewpoint to make the most of what life brings your way.

## CAN YOU MAKE OPTIMISM WORK FOR YOU?

With realistic optimism, you don't just expect the best and hope that things will go well. Nor do you let yourself see only the worst. Instead, you look at the "big picture," the good and the bad. You then:

- Decide what is realistic to expect and how you can make things go as well as possible.
- Choose to focus on the positives, and on your strengths, as you go forward.

For example, let's say you are about to have knee surgery. You can choose to be optimistic about your recovery. Imagine how you want to feel a year after surgery—strong and active. Picture what you want to be doing, how you want to be moving around. Keep these positive, hopeful pictures in your mind.

A positive attitude can also help you keep up a positive mood, which can facilitate healing. But optimism alone is only part of a successful recovery. It's also important to know what to do, such as physical therapy exercises, and what to be careful about. If you need support, you can plan ahead with the right people before the surgery.

When practicing optimism, remember to keep a flexible frame of mind. Expect change, and be ready to adjust to it.

## HOW CAN YOU PRACTICE OPTIMISM?

If you're thinking negative thoughts, expecting the worst, or feeling powerless, try these exercises for a few days.

- Focus on what's going well. Write down three things, large or small, that have gone well in the past few days. Describe the cause of each event, and credit yourself for the part you played in it, such as "I made that phone call I've been putting off."
- Practice gratitude. Write down three things in your life that you are grateful for. This focus on what enriches your life can keep your thoughts and feelings more positive.
- Look for the benefits. Think of a past negative event. Write it down. Now think of something positive that has or could come of it. Write that down. For the positive thought, use larger handwriting or a favorite color.
- Look ahead. Picture yourself doing something that feels good. Expect good things to happen.
- Build yourself up. Say to yourself often, "I am strong."

Article: Tapping the Power of Optimism

(adapted from url <http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/tapping-the-power-of-optimism-topic-overview> )