



Building Optimism and Resilience While Maintaining One's Cool

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Two Stress Triggers at Work

- **FAILURE**
 - Building Optimism and Resilience
- **FRUSTRATION**
 - Maintaining One's Cool
- Stressful by themselves, our reactions to these triggers can exacerbate their negative effects.



The Benefits of Optimism

- Optimists are more psychologically and physically healthy than pessimists.
- Optimists persist more and achieve more especially under pressure than pessimists.
- Optimists are more resilient and bounce back from failure quicker than pessimists.
- Optimists have higher job and life satisfaction than pessimists.



A Realistic Optimism

- A realistic optimism is not Pollyannaish.
 - It's not naïve and it's not in denial.
- A realistic optimism acknowledges the difficulties associated with a situation and the negative emotions it creates.
 - By acknowledging and understanding the dynamics of those emotions encountered during adversity, the realistic optimist recognizes that these emotions lose their power to create inaction.



Optimism Versus Pessimism

- Failure and adversity are encountered by every human being.
- One thing that differentiates people who bounce back from the failure/adversity from people who give up in response to it is their explanatory style for the failure/adversity.
- Optimists and pessimists have radically different explanatory styles for failure.



Seligman's Explanatory Style

- Explanatory style is your habit of thought, learned in childhood and adolescence.
- There are two dimensions of explanatory style that are relevant: 1) permanence and 2) pervasiveness
- In other words, the two Ps of pessimism.



The Permanence Dimension of Explanatory Style

- People who give up easily and are pessimistic believe the causes of bad events that happen to them are permanent.
- People who resist helplessness and are optimistic believe that the causes of bad events are temporary.



The Pervasiveness Dimension of Explanatory Style

- Pessimists make universal explanations for failure and give up on everything when failure strikes in one area.
 - They experience helplessness across situations.
 - They are catastrophizers.
- Optimists make specific explanations for failure and may become helpless in that one part of their lives but march on in other parts.



Permanence and Pervasiveness Combined Impact Hope

- Hope depends on the two dimensions of explanatory style: 1) permanence and 2) pervasiveness.
- Finding temporary and specific causes for bad events is the stuff of hope.
- Finding permanent and universal causes for misfortune is the stuff of despair.



Dimensions of Explanatory Style and Their Effects on Emotions and Behaviors

- Both permanence and pervasiveness dimensions control how you feel and what you do.
 - They both promote feelings of demoralization and behavioral inaction.
- Out of the 2 dimensions, permanence has the greatest negative impact on your emotions and behavior.



Changing from Pessimism to Optimism

- One can change from pessimism to optimism through a process of deliberately disputing the negative beliefs that make up the pessimistic explanatory style.
- This is not the power of “positive” thinking, where one uses positive affirmations to elevate one’s mood.
- Rather this is the power of “non-negative” or “keeping it real” thinking.



Changing from Pessimism to Optimism

- The ABCDE Approach.
 - A change in B (belief) causes a change in C (emotions/behaviors).
 - You can change from an anxious, sad, or angry response to adversity to an upbeat, invigorated response.
 - This depends on D which stands for disputing one's beliefs or distracting one's self from the negative beliefs.
 - Disputation if done effectively can lead one to becoming energized (E)-the feeling is one of hope!
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Changing from Pessimism to Optimism

- 4 disputation techniques:
 1. Factual Evidence
 2. Alternative Explanations
 3. Real Implications
 4. Practical Usefulness



Maintaining One's Cool

- According to Emotional Intelligence (EQ) research, anger is the emotion expressed most often at work.
- While it is the most often expressed, its expression can at times be destructive and create a lot of unnecessary stress at work.
 - “Speak when angry and you’ll make the greatest speech you’ll ever regret.” Lawrence J. Peter



Maintaining One's Cool

- Aristotle said it best about anger:
 - “Being angry is easy but to be angry with the right person at the right time for the right reason, in the right way and to the right degree is not easy.”



Maintaining One's Cool

- Knowing when and when not to engage one's anger can actually improve productivity and lower stress levels at work.
- The Hostility Road Map provides sound advice on how to effectively utilize and manage one's anger at work.
 - See Handout