

## Learning Optimism: Optimistic People = Happy Workers?

A seminar for the  
Health Promotion Board's  
Workplace Health Promotion Conference  
by Grace Lee, Ph.D.  
19 November 2008

1

## Dispositional optimism

An expectation for lots of  
good things to happen in  
the future, and not many  
bad things.

2

## Learned optimism (a.k.a. Optimistic Explanatory Style)

A cognitive skill set that  
focuses on how we explain  
why events happen.

3

How do I habitually explain  
the causes of events, especially  
bad events?

Optimistic explanatory style  
vs.  
Pessimistic explanatory style

4

	<b>Optimistic View</b>	<b>Pessimistic View</b>
<b>Success</b>	Permanent/ pervasive	Temporary/ specific
<b>Failure</b>	Temporary/ specific	Permanent/ pervasive

5

## Points to ponder

1. Did you score as you expected?
2. Were there any trends in your scores?
3. How might this reflect how you perceive your work-life and personal life?

6

## Learning Optimism

Adversity  
Beliefs  
Consequences  
Disputation  
Energization

7

High-defeat vs. low-defeat jobs

8

## Optimists in the workplace

- Better problem-solvers
- Less likely to give up
- More likely to formulate a plan of action for difficult situations
- More positive outlook on stressful situations
- Higher psychological wellbeing
- More positive emotions, including happiness
- More job satisfaction and organizational commitment
- Better performance

9

What do I say to myself when facing obstacles?

10

## Brainstorm

Which jobs in your company would be enhanced by optimism?

How do your company's employees in high-defeat jobs currently deal with stress and frustration?

11

Optimism has long-term consequence for wellbeing

12

Optimists may have better immune systems than pessimists

13

Optimistic people are healthier people

14

Catastrophizing:  
attributing bad events to pervasive causes

15

Your interpretation of events will impact what you feel and what you do.

16

"The optimist sees the rose and not its thorns; the pessimist stares at the thorns, oblivious to the rose."

*~KAHLIL GIBRAN*

17

Unrealistic optimism

"John Henryism"

18

## Points to ponder

1. What do you understand now about optimism that you didn't before?
2. How might some of your company's employees apply some of these principles to their work and daily lives?

19

Please check out our website:

[www.gleethinkworks.com](http://www.gleethinkworks.com)

THANK YOU!

20