

Mindful Monday, September 28, 2020

"What we want is not blind optimism but flexible optimism – optimism with its eyes open. We must be able to use pessimism's keen sense of reality when we need it, but without having to dwell in its dark shadows."

- Martin Seligman

Optimism is not always easy. Sometimes finding or creating a positive frame of mind is like engaging in a street fight with our emotions. When we have not learned the skills of optimism, our emotions can take us down easily. However, as we learn to be optimistic, we can not only win the fight, but we can walk away before the situation escalates.

Martin Seligman is an American psychologist known best as one of the founders of Positive Psychology and as an expert in well-being. His research has demonstrated that we can learn to be optimistic by engaging positively in *"The 3 P's of Optimism: Permanence, Pervasiveness and Personalization."* Those who learn to respond to challenging situations with optimism can show up for the challenges in life in an empowered way that protects their well-being, while those with a pessimistic approach may be crushed by the situation (i.e., the street fight). The 3P's and the related optimistic and pessimistic responses are outlined below:

3P's	Optimist	Pessimist
Permanence: When something <u>bad</u> happens	Thinks, <i>"I will crush this, and it will pass."</i>	Thinks, <i>"Another challenge – this is going to suck"</i>
Permanence: When something <u>good</u> happens	Thinks, <i>"Sweet, this is here to stay"</i>	Thinks, <i>"This is fleeting"</i>
Pervasiveness: Typically, only associated with negative events, if something is pervasive it is an unwelcome influence that spreads widely through a group or within your mind	The bad event is isolated to one area of their life, i.e., an unproductive conversation with a co-worker does not mean their entire life is terrible	A bad event negatively impacts all elements of their life.
Personalization: When something <u>bad</u> happens	Can see the environmental circumstances that may have led to the negative event	Takes the negative event personally
Personalization: When something <u>good</u> happens	Thinks, <i>"I nailed that and congratulates self"</i>	Thinks, <i>"I got lucky"</i>

Summary adapted from optimize.me, + 1 #281

Last week we learned that we need to have faith (i.e., be optimistic) in our ability to prevail in any situation while being honest about the reality that we face. This week we learn how to develop the optimistic skills that can support us when our reality feels like a street fight. Please check out the resources below for additional information on Martin Seligman's work and articles that outline ways to develop the skills of an optimist.

[Becoming an Optimist](#) (Psychology Today)

[How to Think Like an Optimist](#) (INC.com)

[Learned Optimism](#) (Martin Seligman's book)

[Ted Talk: The New Era of Positive Psychology](#) (23 minutes, Martin Seligman). Note: The talk is from 2008, but the concepts are still relevant.