



Train Your Brain, Boost Your Health

“There is mounting evidence that optimism may serve as a powerful tool for preventing disease and promoting healthy aging”.¹

An optimist is someone who believes that the outcome of events or experiences will generally be positive, viewing negative events or failures as temporary rather than permanent.² The concept of learned optimism is founded on the belief that people have influence over the way they think and that they can choose to think more positively.³

Would you consider yourself an optimist? If not, have you ever thought about whether optimism can be learned?

The phrase “learned optimism” can help us to see optimism as less of an innate character trait and instead something that can be developed and practiced with intentionality.⁴ It is the belief that you can change your life for the better.³

Studies have linked optimism with lowering cardiovascular risks, managing stress, reducing minor illnesses like the common cold, and supporting longer lifespans.^{1,5}

The research behind optimism is one important example of how the mind and body are intertwined. We must care for both our mental and physical health, especially as we work towards sustaining overall wellbeing.

To learn and practice optimism:³

- » Take time to look for and reflect on small, joyful moments each day
- » Find what you can control to take small purposeful actions
- » Reach out for support and look for others with positive outlooks
- » Practice awareness when using negative language
- » Give yourself compassion, just like you would a friend

“Optimism, like a muscle, can be strengthened through positivity and gratitude”.¹

Optimism is not a cure-all, and it is not meant to invalidate real, negative feelings. Practicing optimism is not a way to be happy or positive all the time. However, striving for an optimistic outlook, focusing on mindfulness and gratitude practices, or engaging in purposeful action can make a positive difference.³

This material is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended to be exhaustive, nor should any of the materials be construed as professional or medical advice.

1. De Vivo, I. (2024, March 15). The new science of optimism and longevity. The MIT Press Reader. <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/the-new-science-of-optimism-and-longevity/>

2. Psychology Today. (n.d.). Optimism. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/optimism>

3. Sostre, S. R. (2024, August 12). Learned optimism: How to become more positive. Women's Health. <https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/health/mental-health/a61852928/what-is-learned-optimism/>

4. Moore, C. (2019, December 30). Learned optimism. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/learned-optimism/#learned-optimism-martin-seligmans-book-summary>

5. American Heart Association. (2021, January 25). Mental health is important to overall health, and heart disease prevention and treatment. <https://newsroom.heart.org/news/mental-health-is-important-to-overall-health-and-heart-disease-prevention-and-treatment>