

# 5 Ways to Practice Optimism

When you are hopeful and feel good about the future, the world, and yourself...that means you have optimism.

Some people are optimistic a lot of the time. Others may be this way some of the time. And some people became optimistic with practice.

If you tend to focus on the negative or you feel that you're just being "realistic," something called realistic optimism may work for you.

Realistic optimism is a way to look at the bigger picture of what's happening—good and bad—and then exploring what's realistic. You also figure out your role in how to make things go as well as possible.

You can then move forward focused on your strengths. Optimism and positivity are choices you can make.

Here are five ways you can learn to practice optimism.

**One:** Focus on what's going well. You can do this by writing down three things that recently worked out the way you wanted. Describe why it worked out, and give yourself credit for your role.

It can be something big, like getting the job you interviewed for. Or something small like, "I made that phone call I was putting off." Yay you!

**Two:** Practice gratitude. Now, to some, this may seem like magical thinking or just not your style, but a lot of people find comfort in the practice. Each day—when you wake up, right before you go to sleep, or anytime, really—write down three things that you are grateful for.

And some days, it may be as simple as being grateful for the shoes on your feet, a comfortable bed, or your dog's eyes. The point is that this helps you focus on what's already good in your life.

**Three:** Learn from your past. Look back through your life. Remember the wisdom and strength you gained from a challenging experience.

And then write about it. Here's a tip: When you write down the positive things that happened, use larger handwriting or highlight them with a favorite color so the "positive" really stands out.

**Four:** Expect good things to happen. You can do this by imagining yourself doing something that feels good or turns out well. This can help you look at the future with a more positive outlook.

**Five:** Discover what brings you hope. Hope can connect you to an inner strength that can help be your guide. You can build hope by doing something every day that gives your life meaning.

This might be prayer, meditation, or spending time outdoors. Hope can also mean looking forward to a time of doing things you enjoy, such as a vacation or a visit with family.

So that's five things that can help you develop optimism: Focus on what's going well; practice gratitude; learn from your past; expect good things; and discover what brings you hope.

Do any of them sound like something you could try? Try one. If it doesn't feel right to you, it's okay. Try something else. It doesn't take much. Little things—like being thankful while watching a sunset—can add up.

Now it's not always easy to feel optimistic. It takes practice. And if you need help feeling optimistic, you can always talk to a counselor.

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Remember that optimism isn't about pretending or being untrue to your feelings. It's a choice you can practice. And when you practice optimism, you may find that you feel better about your life, your future, and the world.