

Optimism Challenge Worksheet

During a stressful situation, you could be holding yourself back without even realizing it. It's easy for pessimistic thoughts to sneak into your everyday life, even for the most optimistic people. The Optimism Challenge can help you identify these negative thoughts holding you back, figure out how to make them more optimistic and help you deal better with difficult situations.

Before you begin the exercise, take a look at the difference between optimistic and pessimistic thought patterns.

Situation	Optimist's Thought Pattern	Pessimist's Thought Pattern
Specific Versus Global Causes	"I should have asked someone else to review my memo before I sent it."	"I'm a stupid idiot!"
Internal Versus External Causes	"I need to improve my ability to read customers' special sensitivities."	"I'm a stupid idiot!"
Stable Versus Modifiable Causes	"I need to improve my skills so I will be better prepared to make a move when the job market improves."	"I'll never get a decent job that uses my special training and skills."
Evidence	Tries to improve the evidence behind their interpretations of events.	Seeks no evidence to support or challenge the statement, "I'm a stupid idiot!"
Alternatives	Looks for alternative and equally likely influencing factors.	Latches on to one or few explanatory factors, commonly the most demoralizing ones.
Implications	Focuses on specific, modifiable implications.	Focuses on catastrophic implications.
Usefulness	Thought patterns are useful/helpful.	Thought patterns are detrimental.

Now, let's see which thought patterns you have in challenging situations. For each scenario, write down how it makes you feel - and be honest! Then read through each to identify any pessimistic thoughts you had. When you find one, challenge it and replace it with a more productive one. This will help develop a habit to challenge negative thoughts throughout the day!

Scenarios

You have just started a new job with a 90-day trial. Your manager said they would like to take you to lunch to become more familiar with the rest of the team. After six weeks the lunch is yet to be scheduled.

How does that make you feel?

A neighbor you have been on good terms with no longer stops to chat when you see them coming and going.

How does that make you feel?

After a gathering of longtime friends you rethink something you said and believe that you may have offended the spouse of one of your good friends.

How does that make you feel?

You are in a long line at the motor vehicle department and your license expired yesterday. You are not sure if you have all of the necessary paperwork with you.

How does that make you feel?

A friend promised to spend a day with you this weekend, and they have just called to cancel. This is the third time they have cancelled and then re-arranged, and their excuse isn't really clear as to why they keep putting off your time together.

How does that make you feel?
