
Analysis of the Benefits of Optimism

"Clouds come floating into my life from other days no longer to shed rain or usher storm but to give colour to my sunset sky." - Rabindranath Tagore, *Stray Birds*, 1916

Since the beginning of time, the human need of fulfillment has had an important role in the search of happiness. People have always chased success, fame or some form of approval to feel good about themselves. As a person's confidence depended more and more on these non-physical "materials", the void that needed to be filled has grown. Nowadays, the world has become a place where happiness is viewed as a quantity to be measured by achievements, which results in failures being dismissed. By changing our point of view and evaluating good and bad experiences in a neutral way, we can maintain a positive perspective and furtherly, this may help us see life as a whole, and finally, make us feel whole.

People who have a positive outlook on life tend to feel happier about their life choices. This is mainly associated with their mental health. According to Berler (2016), "Happiness helps people be more successful." That is, being optimistic will result in a more satisfying personal and professional life. A person who is optimistic will see the positive in every challenge they face, and they will get motivated about life as they overcome them. Meaning that, they will not view hardships that life brings as obstacles, they will view them as steps to move to the top. Consequently, one of the biggest attributes that is earned by being optimistic is psychological resilience. As Karpel (2017), who is a licensed clinical psychologist, reveals, "Pessimists are more likely to die within the first six months after the death of a spouse, while people who are optimistic about their own aging live an average of 7.5 years longer." In other words, a person who has a positive state of mind is less likely to get affected by loss and unfortunate events as others. This relationship between point of view and emotions can bear resemblance to a boat on a rough sea. Waves will not affect optimists as others, and they will not care if their boat is rocking, because deep down, they know that they will eventually reach to the shore. Additionally, as stated by Kamen & Seligman (1987), optimism has been seen as a shielding factor from mental conditions such as anxiety and stress, but mainly depression. Depression is a psychological disease which every person can experience in any stage of their lives. It may cause people to become isolated. Being optimistic can make tremendous changes in such a case. According to Karpel (2017), optimism increases endorphin releases, which are natural mood boosters and sedatives. Positive thinking helps people live their lives freely and allows them to start anew.

In addition to mental issues, optimism can be linked to physical health as well. Through the years, there have been many studies about having a positive standpoint reducing the risk of

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suffering from various diseases. For example, a study in 2001 of 1,306 men showed that those who were the most optimistic were less than half as likely to develop coronary artery disease compared to others. Although this does not mean that all optimists are healthier, it indicates the idea that optimism is deeply correlated with happiness; therefore, happy people tend to live more attentively. They know their life's worth, they get better medical care and put in an effort to preserve their health, which results in better health conditions in the long run. Optimism has also been associated with the process of recoveries from illnesses. For example, in a sample of patients who have gone through an aortic-coronary bypass, optimism was one of the biggest factors that determined their quality of life in the six month period after the operation. The optimistic patients have shown more clinical improvement while they were staying in the hospital and a quicker return to daily routine after leaving. The motivation and self-assurance obtained by being optimistic help people carry on and encourage them to hold on to life more and more.

All and all, having a positive perspective can help us see the bigger and better picture. It can help us broaden our horizon and notice all the possibilities life can offer. When we feel cornered by the negative aspects of life; it can accompany us, and help us explore new ways to keep going. Everyone has different expectations and different priorities in life, yet everyone wants to be happy. So, on the road to happiness, why not let optimism lead the way?

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