



Good Luck or Bad Luck? Who Knows!

There was once an old hard-working farmer, who had a son and a prize horse.

One day his horse ran away.

Everyone said: “Such bad luck.”

The wise man replied: “Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?”

The next morning the horse returned along with a herd of wild horses.

Everyone said: “Such good luck.”

The wise man replied: “Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?”

*When his son was attempting to ride one of the untamed horses,
the boy fell off its back and broke his leg.*

Everyone said: “Such bad luck.”

The wise man replied: “Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?”

*Soon after, military officials came to the village to draft young men into the army.
Seeing that the son’s leg was broken and that he would not be of much use in the army, they let
him off.*

Everyone said: “Such good luck.”

The wise man replied: “Good luck or Bad luck? Who knows?”

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, Trust Headquarters, 350 Euston Road, Regent’s
Place, London NW1 3AX

Telephone: 020 3214 5700 www.cnwl.nhs.uk

OPTIMISM AND HOPE

When situations in life are open to interpretation, optimism can be useful. Some psychology *studies* have found many advantages of adopting an optimistic viewpoint. These studies have found that

Optimists:

- *seem to be more productive at work and in other activities;*
- *adapt better to negative events and experience less distress, when dealing with difficulties in their lives and suffer less depression and anxiety;*
- *focus on problem solving, making plans and humour;*
- *do not tend to ignore or deny serious problems and hence usually discover them earlier on;*
- *tend to exert more continuous efforts, do not give up, assuming that the situation can be handled successfully;*
- *display more health-promoting behaviour and are less likely to develop physical ill-health.*

To start “rewiring” your brain to create positive spirals, consider the following questions:

- 1) *Do you expect more good things to happen than bad?*
- 2) *Do you usually expect the best in uncertain times?*

People, who respond “yes” to these questions are characterised as optimists.

Optimism can be learnt using:

- ✚ **Disputing strategy** => through careful monitoring and recognition of our thoughts we could consciously dispute our pessimistic thoughts and look at possible alternative outcomes.
- ✚ **Explanatory style changing** => avoiding only blaming yourself, when things go wrong, but considering external circumstance, too, and leaving one’s self-esteem intact.

Beliefs to adopt that allow promoting optimism:

- *Taking everything into consideration, mostly good things are going to happen*
- *Positive solutions are more enduring over time and problems are only temporary*
- *People around me are doing a lot to improve things*
- *Life is good and it will only get better in the future*

HOPE

Hope could be described as an ability to plan pathways to desired goals, and motivation or agency to use this pathway, despite obstacles.

Hope is related to optimism, but they are not identical.

It is critical for psychological health as it buffers against interfering, self-deprecatory thoughts and negative emotions.

Hope helps individuals and groups to develop problem-solving strategies.

Regarding physical health, higher levels of hope help people focus more on the prevention of diseases.

To **generate hope** in a particular situation:

- *identify what you want and formulate clear goals;*
- *break large vague problems into small clearly defined and manageable problems;*
- *produce numerous pathways to get there;*
- *start to pursue your goals and keep on going, while reframing obstacles as challenges to overcome.*
- *develop incentives to help you to value **NOT ONLY THE PRESENT, but also the FUTURE...***

"It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves."

W. Shakespeare

"The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure, but from hope to hope."

S. Johnson

