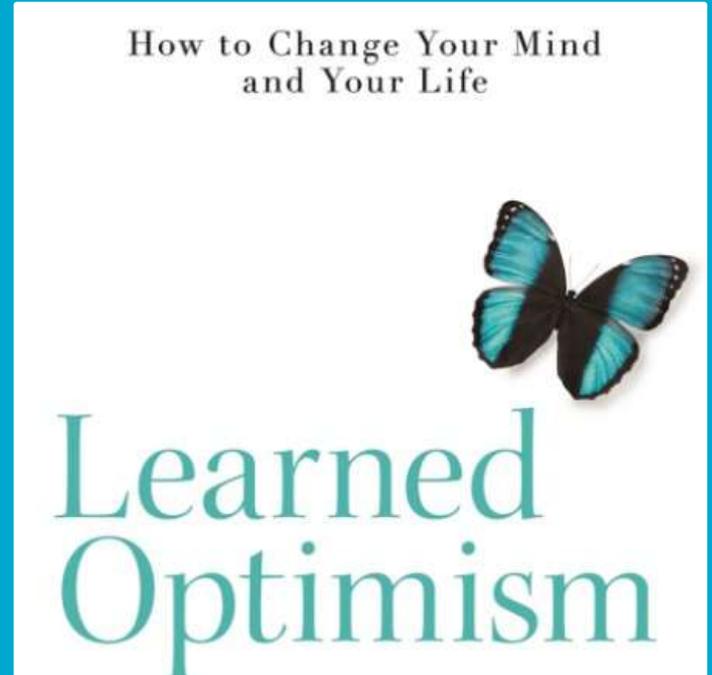


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# Learned Optimism

**Key lessons from Martin  
Seligman**



**What is it?**

**Why do we care?**

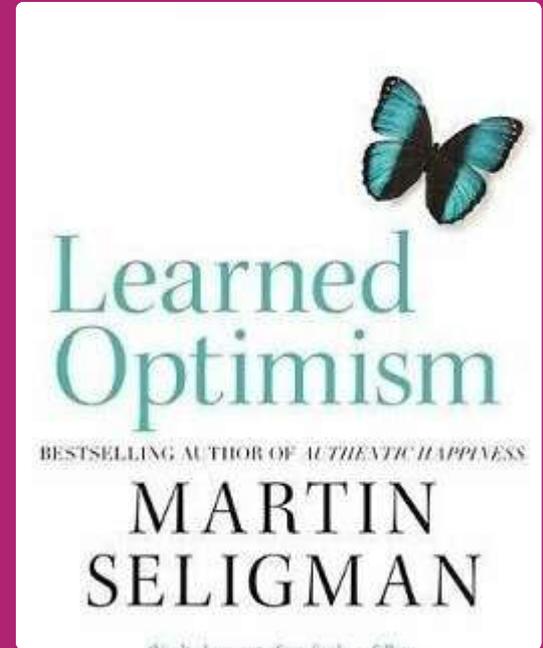
**What can you do about it?**

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# What's it about?

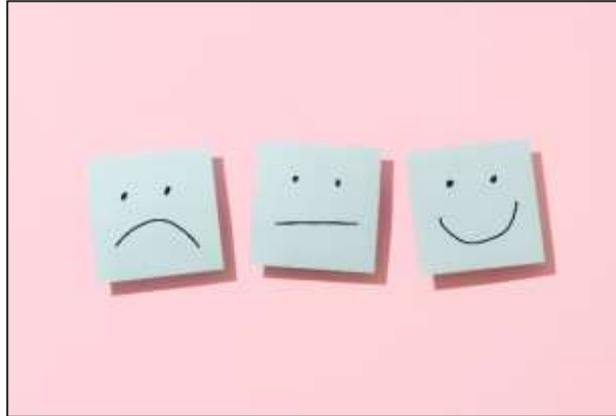
## Key lessons



# Pessimists and Optimists

## Pessimists

- tend to believe bad events will last a long time, will undermine everything they do and are their own fault
- tend to think that good things happen by chance, which can lead to imposter syndrome



## Optimists

- tend to believe that defeat is just a temporary setback, that its causes are confined to this one case, defeat is not their fault
- perceive bad situations as challenges and therefore try harder

# Optimistic and pessimistic mindsets are based on beliefs about ourselves, the people around us and the future.

## “Pessimistic”

1. I’m bad or inadequate and there is nothing I can do about it
2. The environment is hostile or wretched and lacks any sources of help
3. The future looks grim and there is nothing I can do about it

## “Optimistic”

1. I’m fundamentally a good person who is capable of learning from and engaging with adversity
2. The environment has some sources of support
3. There is a better future available which I can move towards if only in small steps

# Learned Helplessness



- If you learn that nothing you do matters, you expect that no action you take in the future will matter and therefore you stop engaging in action....

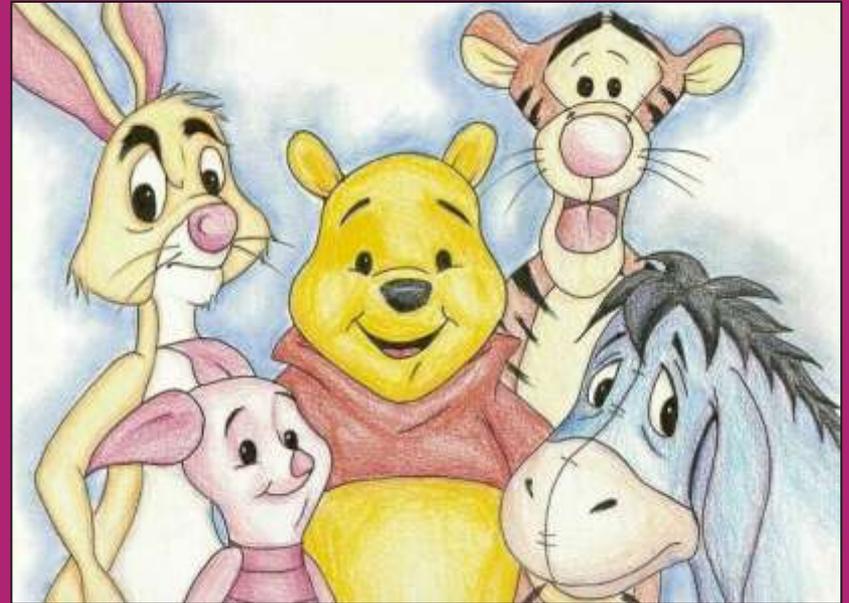
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**The earlier in life we learn that our actions make a difference, the more effective immunisation against helplessness is**



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**Each of us  
carries a word  
in our hearts:  
either 'no' or  
'yes'**



# Explanatory Style

- Your habitual way of explaining events (both negative and positive) is called your explanatory style. There are 3 crucial dimensions to this:



- Permanence

- Pervasiveness



- Personalisation

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## Emotion comes directly from what we think

- Think 'I am in danger' and you will feel scared
- Think 'I am lost' and you will feel sadness
- Think 'I am amazing' and you will feel happiness and enthusiasm!



# Benefits of Optimism

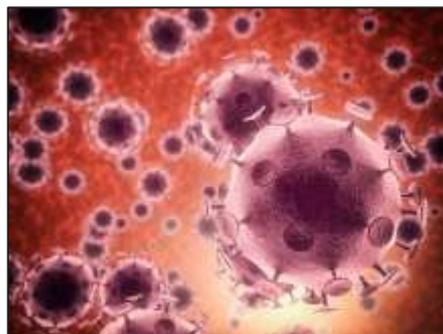
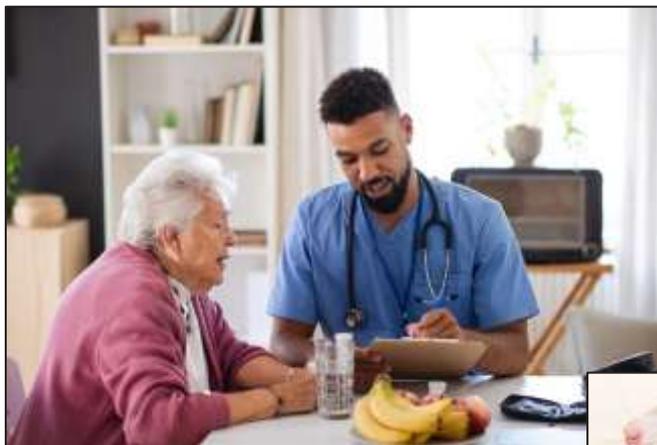


Optimists are more successful in:

- Education
- Work
- Sports
- Health



# Health Benefits



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**If you change your  
habitual beliefs  
that follow  
adversity, your  
reaction to it will  
change**



# Notice what you notice: self reflection – three good things in the last 24 hours



Smelly & Expensive

# Distraction and Disputation

- Stand up and walk around
- Tell yourself to 'Stop!'
- Concentrate on an object e.g. a small stone - notice how it feels, its weight, its smell or taste, tap it to see how it sounds
- Schedule a time later in the day to focus on the issue worrying you
- Write down the troublesome thoughts as they occur - this validates them and allows you to dispose of them
- Distance yourself from unfounded accusations / pessimistic explanations
- Analyse the evidence for the thought - is it helpful / generate alternatives
- Understand the implications of any thought that may be true
- Detail all the ways you can change the situation in the future

# What to do when you catch yourself telling a pessimistic story

## Activating event

- What has happened that triggered the unwanted thoughts or feelings - be objective!

## Belief about the event

- What beliefs do you have about the meaning of the event?

## Consequence

- What emotions, physical sensations and behaviours were triggered?

## Dispute of the unhelpful belief

- What assumptions and biases are you using?
- What is the evidence for and against the beliefs?

## Effective new belief

- What is a more helpful and balanced interpretation?

- We often fall into a pessimistic narrative without realising
  - Our brain picks up ambiguity/uncertainty and seeks to resolve this by filling in the gaps using assumptions and biases
  - Addressing the underlying emotions and the beliefs that have provoked it can prevent this
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# Pessimism is not all bad!



# Benefits of Pessimism



Pessimists are often skilled in:

- Spotting problems
- Accurate judgement of control and skill level
- Accurate memory of events
- Ownership of both failure and success

# Optimism & “Noptimism”

Choose optimism when...	Be more balanced when
You're trying to achieve something	Planning something risky or uncertain
The issue will be protracted or your health could suffer	Offering support to someone dealing with a bleak future
Your role is leadership & inspiration	You need to project sympathy and empathy



# Summary

- Pessimistic versus optimistic styles
- The dangers of learned helplessness
- Your explanatory style includes your view on the permanence, pervasiveness and personalisation of events
- Your brain controls your emotions by how it thinks
- Benefits of optimism, especially in health
- Hints and tips for changing your style to be more optimistic
- Benefits of pessimism

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# Any questions?

Do you have any questions,  
comments or thoughts?



# Your feedback

Please scan the QR code or  
use the link in the chat



Learned Optimism: Key lessons  
from Martin Seligman's



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# Thank you

