

Helping kids to be positively optimistic

Optimists do better academically, socially and have better health than pessimists so it makes sense to promote the skills of optimistic thinking to children. Optimists look at the flip side of negative events for some good, some hope and some reason to be positive.

The basis for optimism is in the way that a person thinks about causes of events, which is reflected in the way he or she explains events.

Recent American research indicates that children learn optimism or pessimism from their experiences of success and through their interactions with parents, teachers and other significant adults. Parents and teachers model optimism and pessimism for children.

Adults model an optimistic or pessimistic attitude by the way they react to both adverse or positive events that happen in their lives.

Optimists explain adverse events in the following ways:

- Adverse events are temporary. 'It takes time to

find a friend' rather than 'No one likes me'.

- Situations or causes are specific, not global. 'I am not so good at soccer' rather than 'I am hopeless at sport'.
- Blame is rationalised rather than personalised. 'I was grounded because I hit my sister' rather than 'I was grounded because I am a bad kid.'

Adults can also encourage children to use positive self-talk. An 'I can do it' attitude begins with the messages that they repeat to themselves. This positive way of thinking is the basis for optimism as it tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.



Quick Parenting Quiz

1. Which of the following two statements would be made by an optimist?
 - a) You didn't win this time but think how good you will feel when you win next time.
 - b) Ali invited me to her party because I am popular.
 - c) I passed the test because the questions were easy.
 - d) I hope the questions are easy in this test.
2. Teenagers and parents are generally unhappy with their relationship. True or False

Answers: 1a) and b) 2. False. Most studies indicate a healthy level of satisfaction with relationships between adolescents and parents.

Vitamins for parents

Four steps for shifting negative thinking:

1. **Develop awareness. Hear the negative self-talk while it is happening.**
2. **Stop the negative self-talk.**
3. **Challenge your beliefs and assumptions. Are they as bad as you think?**
4. **Make up and repeat a more positive, realistic message.**

Bright idea



Looking on the bright side

Teach children to look on the bright side by challenging them to look for a positive side to every negative situation or disappointment. It is good practise for both kids and adults.

Wise & Witty Words

"Insanity is hereditary. We get it from our children."

Anonymous

"There is no sadder sight than a young pessimist."

Mark Twain