



# TIPS TO LEVERAGE YOUR OPTIMISM ADVANTAGE

By Terry Paulson, PhD

Wouldn't you rather be an optimist than a pessimist? It's time to sharpen your attitude, your self-motivation, and your positive focus. It's time to claim your *optimism advantage*! What are you waiting for? Choose optimism by using these tips to control your attitude and increase your batting average in the great game of life.

**You Can't Win if You Don't Get in the Game.** It's better to be doing something than doing nothing. If you start doing something, you are changing the rules of the game in your favor. To have a great idea, have a lot of ideas. You miss 100% of the shots you never take. In short, optimists are the first to get in the game!

**There Is Never *Nothing* You Can Do.** The only relevant questions are whether a given action will work and whether additional different actions will be required. Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do. Invest any worry time in constructive action to improve your results today. Make a move.

**Don't Expect Life to Be Easy.** It may not be as easy to succeed as it used to be, but realize that earning success never has been easy. In fact, an easy life is a liability. Earning success the hard way builds strength of character. Achievements earned are appreciated. Where do you need to persist even though you feel like giving up?

**Turn Adversity and Setbacks into a Search for Opportunities.** Identify and argue with your own negative beliefs that stop you from achieving success. When struggling with catastrophic thoughts that "everything is going wrong," think of these thoughts as if they were being said by some external person whose mission in life is to make you miserable. Actively dispute those thoughts because most negative beliefs that follow adversity are inaccurate.

**Keep Perspective.** Reframe adversity with a simple question—"In five years, will this matter?" Then get busy turning your setback into a stepping stone for better results. After all, if ruminating about adversity doesn't lead to an action you can add to your to-do-list, set it aside and get busy doing something that does.

**Be a Problem Solver.** You don't escape the responsibility for tomorrow by evading it today. Avoiding problems drags you down while facing them lifts you up. Become a problem solver not a problem evader by doing something early in the day to start tackling anything you've been avoiding.

**Invest Your Worry Time in Constructive Action.** When there are obstacles, be pragmatic—find new tactics, new directions, new alternatives, and take advantage of unexpected

opportunities. Optimism thrives on the art of the possible. Everyone faces difficulties; not everyone looks for the opportunities in every difficulty. In the darkest room there are often doors ready to be opened.

**Trade Perfection for Progress.** Beat the myth of perfection on the way to increasing your batting average in the game that counts for you. Focus on the vital Three P's: Position, Perform and Persist. You're looking to find your own sweet spot of success—that intersection of your personal passion to serve, your skills, and your mission.

**Stay in the Game.** Failure doesn't come from falling down, but from staying down. NO is ON spelled backwards! In the good times, you may get results for every ten attempts. In the tough times, it may take many more. Persist. Stay in the games worth playing.

**Stop Being Your Own Worst Enemy.** You wouldn't talk to others the way you talk to yourself. Treat yourself like you treat those you care about. Just as you would forgive others, forgive yourself. Make room for your mistakes as valued learning opportunities that help you grow. Everyone makes mistakes; the best learn from them. Optimists look for ways to use their mistakes to make necessary adjustments on their journey to success. What course-corrections can you make today to get you back on track?

**Catch Yourself Being Effective.** You may be winning and not know it unless you're keeping score. Don't forget to also catch yourself being effective. End your day by scanning for what you did well. Journal that accomplishment in an email to yourself. Collect your "positive" evidence to read when you need a lift. What did you handle well today that you could write in your email? Send it...

**Spend Time with the Right People.** Some people bring you up; some take you down. Decrease your time with people who bring you down. The people with whom you most want to spend time you have to schedule time to even see. The people you want to see least have a knack of finding you wherever you are. Make dates with your resident cheerleaders, your emotional support network, your colleagues and key customers, and anyone you enjoy spending time with.

**Control Your Moment.** Use your attitude adjusters that break the worry cycle—take a walk, listen to upbeat music, take time with your pet, read an inspiring book, or enjoy a hobby. Engaging in simple pleasures provides an oasis-like experience in your daily life. A few moments of escape from a monotonous or stressful day can change your attitude. You don't control the world, but you can control your moments. Do something this moment to lift your mood and energize your momentum.

**Serve and Be Served.** You can't sincerely help another without helping yourself. Whether you're offering a smile with an encouraging word, taking the time to complete a random act of kindness, or serving a customer, you transform your own optimistic attitude when you make a difference for others. Where and how can you serve others today?

**Learn, Unlearn and Relearn.** Be good at what's needed. It's easy to be optimistic when you have the competencies that match your future opportunities. Build a history of lifelong learning—

refocus and retool. At any age, you become an old dog when you stop doing new tricks. Always be investing five percent of your time in developing your “what I will do next” plan. What new competencies do you need to develop to be positioned for the future?

**Bring Happiness to Your Day.** Instead of waiting for something to make you happy, choose to be happy every day unless something happens to warrant being unhappy. Even then, get busy dealing with whatever happened so you can reclaim your joy.

**Choose Gratitude over Gripping.** Start your day by listing five things you are thankful for. By taking the time to *collect joys*, you’ll learn that worry and grateful thoughts are incompatible. So, instead of just griping about the biggest hurdles on your to-do-list, start your day by taking a few minutes to actually count your blessings. Every day has the potential of becoming the best day of your year. Every day is a gift. That’s why they call it the “present.” Claiming that daily gift will unleash the power of gratitude in your life. What would you put on your list of blessings?

**Let Faith Give You Strength.** Faith in God is a consistent source of strength for millions. Instead of blaming God for problems; try calling on His peace and presence to help you overcome adversity. Prayer may not change God, but it very well can change you. How does your faith bring you strength for daily living?

**Take Your Life Seriously and Yourself Lightly.** Develop the eye of the loon by looking for humor in your life and laughing every chance you get. Laughter interrupts the panic cycle of life. Playing your “joker” card can make even a poor hand a winner. And even if you don’t win, you have a heck of a lot more fun playing. Don’t worry about the doses. Laughter is a non-fattening, contagious, pleasant tranquilizer that doesn’t have any major side effects. Everybody has used the expression, “Someday we’ll laugh about this.” Why wait? Make room for laughter today.

**Keep a Long View.** Reframe every so-called “disaster” or setback with this question—“In five years, will this matter?” Then get busy turning your setback into a stepping stone for future success. If your worry doesn’t lead to an action you can add to your to-do-list, set it aside.

**Excitement Lies in Tomorrow.** Life is like a moving vehicle with no brakes. There are no available off-ramps. There’s no reverse, and you can’t turn the car off. That’s why your rearview mirror is smaller than your front window. So, don’t live your life trapped in the rearview mirror! Learn what you can from the past, but concentrate on what you can do now to shape your future.

**Live the Action Imperative.** The most difficult shift is moving your goals into action. Claim your own action initiative. Stop the head nodding and do something! Focused action beats brilliance. Start by doing what’s necessary, then what’s possible, and soon you’re doing the impossible. Now, get busy claiming your optimism advantage.

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