

The Practicing Optimism Tool

Purpose

To enable you to build the realistic optimism of yourself and your colleagues.

Perspective

Contrary to what many people believe, optimism is a learned behavior. A realistic sense of optimism is an essential tool to navigate through challenging times. Without optimism setbacks can appear to be insurmountable and block progress. Pessimism can cause us not to take credit for successes depleting our motivation to move forward. Optimism enables innovation and problem-solving. The chart below summarizes the differences between Pessimistic and Optimistic Perceptions in the face of Set Backs and Wins.

Pessimistic Perceptions	Optimistic Perceptions
Set Backs	
Set-backs are permanent	Set-backs are temporary
Set-backs are pervasive – they are a sign of an overall weakness	Set-backs are limited to a particular set of circumstances.
Set-backs are my fault	Set-backs are overcome by my talents and motivation
Wins	
Success doesn't last	Success encourages me
Success doesn't change everything	Success builds on itself
I got lucky	I set myself up for success

Instructions

When you experience a set back or failure complete the form on the following page: summary of the set back; three key questions. Once you have completed it discuss the set back and your responses to the three questions you answered with a trusted colleague or friend. Listen carefully to their feedback as to whether your answers to the questions are realistic or not.

When a colleague experiences a set back or failure suggest they complete the attached form and then discuss it with you.

For Further Information

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The Practicing Optimism Worksheet

Describe your set back in great detail:

1. Is this really a permanent set back? Won't its importance fade with time?

2. Does this really impact everything that is important to me? Or is it limited to one area of my life or career?

3. Can I apply my skills and focus my motivation on moving forward?