

Oxygenating Our Optimism Worksheet

Step 1:

Identify a recent event that felt frustrating or unpleasant.

Step 2:

How did you react when it happened? Write down the words and language that appeared in your thoughts:

What emotions did you feel when it happened? Try to be as specific as possible:

Did you take any actions on the day that it happened?

Did you take any different actions on the day *after* it happened?

Did you reach out or talk to anyone about what happened? If yes, who? Why them?

Step 3:

Reflect on the words/language/actions you wrote above. Using the chart below, circle actions in either column that characterize your response to the event.

| Optimistic Tendencies | Pessimistic Tendencies |
|---|---|
| Actively seize and anticipate the positive | Confirmation bias: only notice the negative |
| Spot opportunities and invitations to grow | Spot threats and downsides |
| Assert control (yet honor realistic boundaries) | Passively acquiesce and cede control |
| Generate solutions and options | Ruminate and wallow |
| Stride into resolute action | Take the “ostrich” approach → avoid |
| Connect with others | Sequester from friends and family |

Step 4:

Assess whether you currently have a tendency to lean toward a pessimistic or optimistic approach. Either is okay right now—because we CAN change our natural tendencies!

Step 5:

Let's run the same scenario through a framework of optimistic questions:

| | |
|--|--|
| What benefit(s) could this circumstance possibly generate? | |
| What can I learn, or how can I grow, from this experience? | |
| What aspects of this circumstance can I direct/drive/control? | |
| What boundaries or limits of my ability to control the scenario can I embrace (so I am not wasting mental or physical energy on them)? | |
| What resources can I activate to make the situation better? | |
| What action-oriented steps can I take today? | |
| Who is the best person (or people) to help me focus on positive outcomes, solutions, growth, and forward movement? | |

To make optimism a *habit*, we can repeat these queries each time we encounter a challenge.

Charts adapted from Reivich, K., & Saltzberg, J. (2021). *Positive psychology and individuals: MAPP 708 Spring 2021* (Power Point slides).