

Being Optimistic about Life

Confidence requires an optimistic outlook on life. Being optimistic is looking on the bright side “seeing the glass as half-full” as opposed to “half empty”. An optimistic outlook is about expecting things to be well and to go well for you. This helps us to deal with things when they go wrong; we can brush it off as unimportant and can tell ourselves it won’t have a long lasting effect. For example, “I didn’t pass the exam because I didn’t study hard enough for that one, I’ll be able to pass it next time.”



Being pessimistic is “seeing the glass as half-empty”. It means expecting things not to go well. So when something goes wrong this adds more evidence to your dim view of the world. For example “I knew I wouldn’t pass that exam because I am stupid and am useless at exams”.

Practice thinking optimistically. If you are optimistic you can influence the way those around you think. Try:

- To look on the bright side whenever possible. When it’s raining, don’t talk about what you can’t do, instead think about something interesting you can do indoors
- When you achieve success, don’t play it down. Take the credit for a job well done. This will help you believe in yourself more, which leads to optimistic thinking.
- When things don’t go so well, don’t dwell on it or beat yourself up about it. Keep things in perspective, persevere and look forward to future successes.
- To focus more on the good things that happen to you rather than the bad. Don’t deny your negative feelings though as they can be important sometimes.



Help young carers to notice and focus what is good in their lives and what’s going well for them. This may be difficult for some young carers to do so you need to be as positive as you can. Don’t deny that sometimes things will, and do, go badly for them. They can learn from these things too. But help them not to get too bogged down in thinking about what’s going badly.

It is important to remind young carers that how they feel about something is not just caused by what happened, but by the way they think about what happened. Talk to the young carer about the thoughts they have when things go wrong for them. Help them to see that these thoughts are just thoughts and may not be true. Such thoughts can have a big effect on their mood and behaviour. If they think in a negative way about something bad that happens, they won’t feel good. If they try to see things in a more positive light, they will feel better and may be able to cope better or come up with a solution more quickly.

When a young carer talks about negative thoughts help them to create a more accurate way of thinking about things. If they young carer fails a test, for instance, you could help them to remember success in the past or in other parts of their life. Be honest and realistic with them and acknowledge that they did fail the test, but that doesn't mean they are a total failure. Help them come up with alternative reasons why they didn't pass the test, e.g., maybe they didn't study enough, or spend enough time on their homework. Help them to plan how they could change that situation.

If you working with a young carer and they put themselves down, maybe by saying "I'm no use at anything", ask them what they would say to their best friend if their friend was thinking this way. This can help them see how hard they are being on themselves and will show them how to be more gently and kind towards themselves. When young people practice treating themselves the way they would treat their best friend, they start to focus on their strengths, not their weaknesses.



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