EMBRACING OPTIMISM

Presented by Cigna Employee Assistance Program
• Explore what influences a person to be more optimistic or pessimistic
• Understand self-defeating thoughts and how to respond to them
• Learn about mindfulness and how it relates to optimism
• Develop strategies to embrace optimism
• Know the benefits of your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
WHAT IS OPTIMISM?

Optimism is a hopeful, positive outlook on the future, yourself, and the world around you. It is a key part of resilience, the inner strength that helps you get through tough times.
THE OUTLOOK CONTINUUM

Optimism

Pessimism
NATURE OR NURTURE?

Optimism / Pessimism

• Brain activity differs
• Possible genetic basis
• Early experiences play a part
• Can be altered
KEEPING IT REAL!

Realistic optimism

- Recognizing that life comes with uncertainty and change
- Confidence that you have the resources to cope and adjust
- Belief that you have control over your life

(Seligman, 1991)
DID YOU KNOW?

Optimism can help you to...

- Better manage stress
- Be more resilient
- Improve your physical health

Optimism can be contagious!

(Bergland, 2013), (Seligman, 1991) (Forrest, 2015) (Sharp, 2012) (Chow, 2009),
SELF-DEFEATING THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS

- Small picture thinking
- All or nothing thinking
- Negative magnet thinking
- Dark cloud thinking

A key to being more optimistic is to recognize and modify a tendency toward negative thoughts or irrational beliefs.
PUT A SPIN ON IT!

- Review the evidence
- Put things in perspective
- Hold off on hasty judgments
- Give yourself credit
- Replace negative thoughts
Event: Someone cuts you off in traffic

Thought: You think....

Feeling: You feel....

Substitute thought: A new way to think about it is....

New feeling: Now you feel....
RETRAIN YOUR BRAIN

A mindful approach can help you...

• Be more able to “see the gift”
• Build ability to live with imperfection
• Learn to embrace the moment

MINDFULNESS

“Paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment to moment.”

(Kabat-Zinn, 2011)
MINDFUL MOVES

- Practice observing vs. judging
- Move toward distress, not away
- Name your emotions
- Imagine yourself as your own friend

Commit to some form of regular mindful meditation practice to reap the most benefits.
PUT IT INTO PRACTICE!

Challenge yourself to...

- Focus on what’s going well
- Find the benefits
- Imagine a bright future
- Find your positive people
- Take care of yourself
- Believe in yourself

Try a smile! Smiling, even if you don’t feel happy, triggers your brain to release positive neurochemicals.
“A PESSIMIST SEES THE DIFFICULTY IN EVERY OPPORTUNITY; AN OPTIMIST SEES THE OPPORTUNITY IN EVERY DIFFICULTY.”

- Sir Winston Churchill

What do YOU see?
BENEFITS OF THE EAP

Benefits vary by employer. Please check with your HR for your specific EAP benefits.

• Face-to-face sessions
• Confidential
• Prepaid
• Unlimited telephonic consultation
• Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
• Household benefit
• Work/life support such as elder care, child care and pet care
• Convenience services
• Financial services
• Legal services
REFERENCES


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