



# Optimism

## Definition:

“Optimism is living with a positive attitude. This enables us to lead meaningful lives with purpose and direction. We are living positively when we are grateful for everything we have, use our strengths and are engaged in activities.”

Peer Support Australia, 2009.


A great deal of time and research has been carried out in an attempt to define happiness. Whilst this has proven to be an elusive concept to define, there are a number of things which can be said to have a direct impact on our levels of happiness.

Positive emotions include confidence, optimism and hope. These provide students with effective counters to negative emotions; resisting depression during periods of stress, increasing concentration, work output and physical health. Positive emotions provide an element of perspective when reflecting on past experiences, an enjoyment of the present when ‘in the moment’ and a sense of possibility when projected forward.


According to Positive Psychology, the forms of happiness gained through engagement and meaning are of lasting benefit.

Seligman, 2002, suggests one way of becoming engaged more often during our lives is to identify and regularly use our particular strengths.

The happiness which endures longest is the one which has been created through altruism and service. Service for the benefit of others provides a lasting feeling of wellbeing is increased by subsequent experience. This can be further enhanced with the measure of gratitude. The process of expressing genuine gratitude to others provides mutual benefit and generates positive feelings in both the giver and the recipient.



If we remember  
our **strengths**,  
**persevere**,  
use **positive self talk**  
and **participate**  
in activities  
we can live  
**positively.**



## Living Positively

This 8 session module focuses on **optimism** and develops the skills and knowledge for students to approach life with a positive attitude, use their strengths, engage in enjoyable activities and show gratitude to others.

Students will be given opportunities to identify which areas of life represent personal strengths and how they can feel happier and more fulfilled by taking advantage of these strengths. Three important strengths focused on throughout the module are *curiosity, kindness and teamwork*.

Students will work with a model to assist them in developing the skills of optimism.

- ♦ I laugh
  - activities I enjoy
- ♦ I live
  - my strengths
- ♦ I love
  - showing appreciation to others

*Living Positively* focuses on developing the following skills:

- resilience
- coping
- critical thinking
- planning

## Aims of *Living Positively*:

- identify and use individual strengths
- enjoy life by engaging in activities
- practise positive self talk
- develop coping strategies
- demonstrate perseverance
- work towards their goals
- develop resilience
- demonstrate gratitude for all they have in their lives

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