

CHOOSING OPTIMISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Participant's Workbook



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Participant's Workbook

Developed for:



1994

by:

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CHOOSING OPTIMISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Preface:

Welcome to one in a series of individualized Optimist International Skills Development Modules. Our goal is to help you, our members, learn and apply practical skills to deal with the opportunities and issues in your life. This series of modules is not designed to deal with "theoretical" issues, but rather to provide a practical "hands on" approach.

Each of these modules is to be used, written in and applied. You can learn skills on your own, or join with others in a collaborative learning venture. Each module contains an instructor's guide in addition to a separate participant's guide which can be duplicated as often as necessary to supply the needs of your Club members.

Future modules will deal with individual as well as group-oriented skills, all of which are designed to help individual Optimists enhance their personal leadership ability in any chosen field of activity, i.e., employment, home, school, and volunteer activities. This is a significant development for our organization in its service to its own members, and we hope that participants will provide feedback about each module to the International Headquarters (c/o Leadership Development). In this way, we can maintain our focus on providing meaningful leadership training to Districts, Clubs and individuals throughout our Optimist organization.

We truly hope you enjoy the journey to self-improvement.

CHOOSING OPTIMISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

OBJECTIVES

Our objectives are to learn and to recognize the choices we have in adopting optimism as our philosophy of life and to acquire some of the skills of optimism that will empower our lives.

Participants will become more “in touch” with their positive/negative attitudes. Participants will explore barriers to success and learn techniques to overcome these barriers. Participants will learn techniques to develop a personal sense of self esteem. Participants will learn ways to share their optimism with others in a beneficial way. Participants will explore ways to channel their “uniqueness” to make a difference for a better world.



OVERVIEW

Introduction

Optimist Assessment Quiz - Where are you now?

Choosing Optimism - Promise and Commitment

Developing Self Esteem

Sharing Optimism with Synergism

Self Concept - Your Uniqueness

Your Mission - for a better world

Appendix

INTRODUCTION

“More than at any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly.” - Woody Allen

What a depressing choice. But we don't have to choose pessimism. As Optimists we have the ability to find a positive choice in any situation!

As Optimists we share a common philosophy and creed that can lift our spirit, can lift the spirit of others and can ultimately affect attitudes of all for a better world.

Currently thousands of volunteers in North America have formally chosen Optimism as their philosophy of life. By joining others in Optimist International, they strive to make our world just a little better place to live.

The acquisition of “optimism” as a philosophy goes beyond acceptance into any organization. It is a journey, an endeavor to make a choice between optimism and pessimism in every situation we face and with every word we utter.

Any such endeavor must begin with ourselves. If we choose to have a positive self image, we can enhance the self image of others. If we outwardly practice the principles of optimism, they can become part of our habitual routine. If we live by the Optimist Creed, we can rejoice with the power of optimism!



I. WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

OPTIMIST ASSESSMENT QUIZ Complete this “entrance” quiz to assess your personal reaction to positive/negative situations that occur in your life. Answer each of the following questions with “Usually,” “Sometimes” or “Seldom.” (Re-take it 3 months after this course to measure improvement.) Keep this quiz confidential.



	<u>Usually</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>
I am in control of my life.	_____	_____	_____
My destiny is in my own hands.	_____	_____	_____
I set goals for myself.	_____	_____	_____
I achieve my goals.	_____	_____	_____
I don't abuse chemical substances.	_____	_____	_____
I am at my ideal weight.	_____	_____	_____
I have a positive mental attitude.	_____	_____	_____
I value the benefits of being optimistic.	_____	_____	_____
I greet each new day with hopeful anticipation.	_____	_____	_____
I see the negatives but choose the positives.	_____	_____	_____
I don't worry about what happened yesterday.	_____	_____	_____
I don't get angry with those closest to me.	_____	_____	_____

	<u>Usually</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>
I am not afraid of what others might say.	_____	_____	_____
Every day I welcome new challenges.	_____	_____	_____
I see positive solutions in difficult situations.	_____	_____	_____
I can see myself achieving the things I want.	_____	_____	_____
I learn by my mistakes.	_____	_____	_____
I laugh with people, not at them.	_____	_____	_____
I know what I can change and what I cannot.	_____	_____	_____
I recognize that I have special talents and abilities.	_____	_____	_____
I appreciate my friends and I tell them of their value.	_____	_____	_____
I smile when I meet someone.	_____	_____	_____
I feel the power of optimism working in my life.	_____	_____	_____
I am happy and make others happy.	_____	_____	_____
I am making our world a better place to live.	_____	_____	_____

Add up your score: 2 points for each “usually,” (2 x _____) (1 x _____) (0)
1 point for each “sometimes” and none for “seldom.”
Maximum points are 50. The higher the score, the
more optimistic you are. Keep your scores
confidential.

TOTAL _____

Your Notes

ACTIVITY:

Each participant introduces himself and tells something specific that he likes about himself.

DISCUSSION:

What is optimism?

DISCUSSION:

What is the value of optimism to you and those around you?



II. CHOOSING OPTIMISM - PROMISE & COMMITMENT

Your Notes

In Of Dreams and Deeds it is recorded that founders of Optimism began a tradition by making a conscious choice to form the first Optimist Club in Buffalo, New York in 1911. In 1919 our founders made another choice to adopt the International name and hold their first Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. In 1922 Optimist International chose optimism as a philosophy of life by adopting the "OPTIMIST CREED" at the Convention in Kansas City, Missouri.

For each of us life holds many choices. Choices can be as complex as choosing a career or as simple as how we greet the new day.

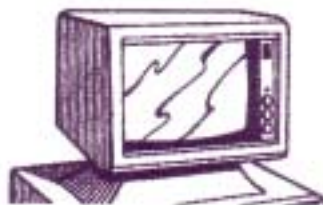
Upon waking we can face the alarm with a smile, leap out of bed, throw open the window sash and say, "Good morning, God," or we can curse the alarm, shun the new born sunlight and say, "Good God, it's morning." We can choose optimism or choose pessimism.



To emphasize the fact that these choices may be conscious, pioneers of "Positive Mental Attitude" Napoleon Hill and W. Clement Stone consider the mind as carrying an invisible coin. The letters PMA are emblazoned on one side, and NMA (negative mental attitude) on the other.

DISCUSSION:

Your only television will be in the repair shop for the next three weeks. Discuss some positive reactions to this situation.



POLLYANNA OPTIMISM

Of course, not every choice is easy, nor will every choice produce the results you hope simply because you take the positive tact. Pollyanna Optimism expects positive outcomes without regard for the options or the odds. Alan Loy McGinnis writes in The Power of Optimism, "There is a soft-headed type of thinking that masquerades as optimism, but it is quite different from the practical approach that brings success. Some people who believe things are getting better feel foolish when things get worse. As a result, they often become disillusioned and cynical. But tough-minded optimists are aware they live in an imperfect world in which love ends, innocent people are cheated, and sick people die...The true optimist sees the negative possibilities but chooses the positive."



PROMISE YOURSELF

At one time you chose to be a member of Optimist International. You now have the opportunity to make a deeper commitment adopting and living its principles. You can promise yourself to not only recite but to habitually live by the tenets of the "OPTIMIST CREED." That is why we begin our Creed with "Promise Yourself." The benefits you gain from our Creed are in direct proportion to your dedication to live by its tenets.

"If it is to be, it is up to me."

III. DEVELOPING SELF ESTEEM

REMOVING BARRIERS

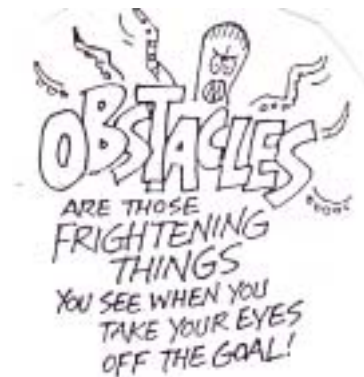
“To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.”

EXERCISE:

Each participant should list things he worries about, things that are causing anger, things he fears and things that are causing trouble in his life.



Your Notes



ACTIVITY:

Each participant gets a balloon, a $\frac{3}{4}$ " X 3" piece of paper, and a 3X5" index card. He should write on the paper his personal worry, anger, fear or trouble that he would like to get rid of right now. Roll up the paper, put it inside the balloon, blow up the balloon, release the balloon simultaneously with others.

Each participant picks up someone else's balloon, removes the paper, and writes a supportive response on the 3X5" index card. Clip this card to the original paper and place it on a back table. At a break or end of the session, each participant should find his paper with it's response.

DON'T SIT ON YOUR "BUTS"

Barriers exist in the way you talk as well as how you act. Listen as you and others respond to questions and situations. "I would have done that but. . .," "I should have gone there but. . .," "I could have said this but. . .," are examples. Does this sound familiar?

Les Brown contends that many of us are held back because we are sitting on our "buts." "But" is an argument for our limitations and justification for retreat. Les Brown encourages us to figuratively get off our "buts" and release ourselves from their relatives, "couldn't, wouldn't and shouldn't."

Your Notes

SELF-TALK CYCLES

Shad Helmstetter in The Self-Talk Solution suggests that positive affirmations set the tone for further development, assessment, and achievement of a goal. If you say it, your subconscious mind will believe it, and you will achieve it.

The best affirmations include the pronoun “I,” present tense verbs and “action” modifiers.

EXERCISE:

Restate some of these negative “self-talk” expressions in positive terms.

Each participant takes a turn to change one of these negative statements into a positive affirmation.

- a) I’m no good at remembering names.
- b) Every time I talk with him we end up arguing.
- c) I just don’t know what’s wrong with me today.
- d) I can’t seem to control my weight.
- e) We tried that before and it didn’t work.
- f) She can’t be relied upon when it counts.
- g) Some of our members never come to meetings.
- h) This year’s president doesn’t seem as nice as last year’s president.
- i) I can’t help myself.

Your Notes

EXERCISE:

Write down something you would like to achieve in the next few weeks.

Write one or more affirmations about yourself that will set the stage for the realization of this goal.

**OPTIONAL EXERCISES:**

Exercise a) Go around the room sharing with others some of these affirmations.

Exercise b) Each participant says one tenet of the "OPTIMIST CREED" as a personal affirmation. Take turns going around the room, e.g. "I am so strong that nothing can disturb my piece of mind," etc.

Y o u r N o t e s

SEEING WITH THE MIND'S EYE

“To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.”

“Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve.” - Napoleon Hill

Visualization or imaging is the ability to see something in the “mind’s eye.” To harness this power means to create positive mental images which will enhance future perceptions and performance.

EXERCISE:

Write a brief statement of the kind of person you would like to be. Close your eyes and picture yourself as that individual.



Your Notes

NEVER GIVE UP

“To think only of the best, to work only for the best and to expect only the best.”

Les Brown announces, “Well, if someone told you life was going to be one smooth, easy ride, I’ve got a special announcement; THEY LIED!”



Your Notes

FAILURE BREEDS SUCCESS

Some believe failure is often necessary in order to master an ability or goal. Babe Ruth struck out more times than 90% of those who ever played the game of baseball. Terry Bradshaw threw more incomplete passes than 90% of the quarterbacks who played football. Both of these men, however, are remembered as among the best.

Consider the failures of this statesman: failed in business, defeated for Legislature, failed in another business, elected to Legislature, sweetheart died, had a nervous breakdown, defeated for Speaker, defeated for Elector, defeated for Congress, defeated for Congress, defeated for Senate, defeated for Vice President, defeated for Senate, **ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, ABRAHAM LINCOLN.**

LET THE PAST PASS

“To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.”

We learn from our mistakes. We evaluate, assess, and then put them behind us, remembering the lesson but forgetting the incident.

According to Les Brown, “When life knocks you down, you should always try to land on your back because if you can look up, you can get up!” Forgetting means to pick yourself up and to face the challenges ahead with a renewed sense of optimism.

PEACE OF MIND

“To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.”

SERENITY PRAYER: “Lord grant me the courage to change what can be changed, the patience to accept what cannot be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

EXERCISE:

As a group list some things you can change and some things you cannot change.



Your Notes

IV. SHARING OPTIMISM WITH SYNERGISM

“To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet.”

The founding members of Optimist International recognized that optimism, when shared with others can have even greater benefits. Originally, optimism was shared in a “networking” arrangement between businessmen. However, today’s Optimism has far exceeded the “businessmen’s club concept.” Now, wherever volunteers gather in service to kids, the name “Optimist International” is likely to be heard.

When two or more people confront a situation, there can be a winner and a loser. The true optimist looks for the circumstances that allow all to be winners. This win/win concept is explained in detail by Stephen R. Covey in The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

EXERCISE:

One Optimist member is inviting a friend to join his Club. Set up a win/win situation by having the group list the advantages to both the new member and the sponsor for this invitation.

Y o u r N o t e s

FRIENDSHIPS - RECIPROCAL EMPOWERMENT

“To make all your friends feel that there is something in them.”

EXERCISE:

Each participant in the room should publicly tell someone else in the room what they like about them.

SMILE

“To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.”

Les Brown says, “You can’t get out of life alive. So why not enjoy it and help others to enjoy it as well.” Sharing optimism with others begins with a warm greeting.

EXERCISE:

Turn to the person next to you and give them your best smile for 4 seconds without talking. How do you feel?

HUMOR AS A HEALER

Medical stories are full of miraculous improvement in health for people who really enjoy life. Some even go so far as to prescribe “laugh therapy.”

EXERCISE:

Think of the funniest joke or story you’ve heard lately. Share it with a friend.

A SMILE

written by Monica Hunter
when she was 10 years old

To give a smile means, “You’re OK.”
To get a smile will brighten your day.

A smile can turn the world around,
Or cheer up someone who’s feeling down.

And, if you happen to disagree,
Just give a smile and you will see!

Your Notes



BEING ENTHUSIASTIC

“To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.”

The word “Enthusiasm” is derived from the Greek word meaning “in God.” The Greeks believed that someone showing an enthusiastic spirit was showing a God-like quality that lived within that person’s soul.

ACTIVITY:

Ask participants to list the signs of an enthusiastic person. Can these be learned or are they natural features?



ACTIVITY:

Divide the participants in the room in two (or three) sections. Each group alternately says a tenet of the Optimist Creed with increasing enthusiasm.



Your Notes

V. YOUR UNIQUENESS - SELF CONCEPT

“To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.”

“ATTITUDE DETERMINES ALTITUDE”

Past Optimist International President John Reel shares his experience in aviation with the following analogy: In aviation terminology there is a term called “attitude.” Attitude in this instance refers to the position of the aircraft, whether the nose of the plane is pointed upward or downward. If the attitude is up, the plane climbs. If the attitude is down, the plane descends. Similarly, individuals with an upward attitude can climb whereas those who point negatively will descend.

Past International President Charles Wiles expands on the analogy by explaining how we can climb to new heights with the “wind” of optimism beneath our “wings” as we “Soar with Optimism.”

YOUR COAT OF ARMS

EXERCISE:

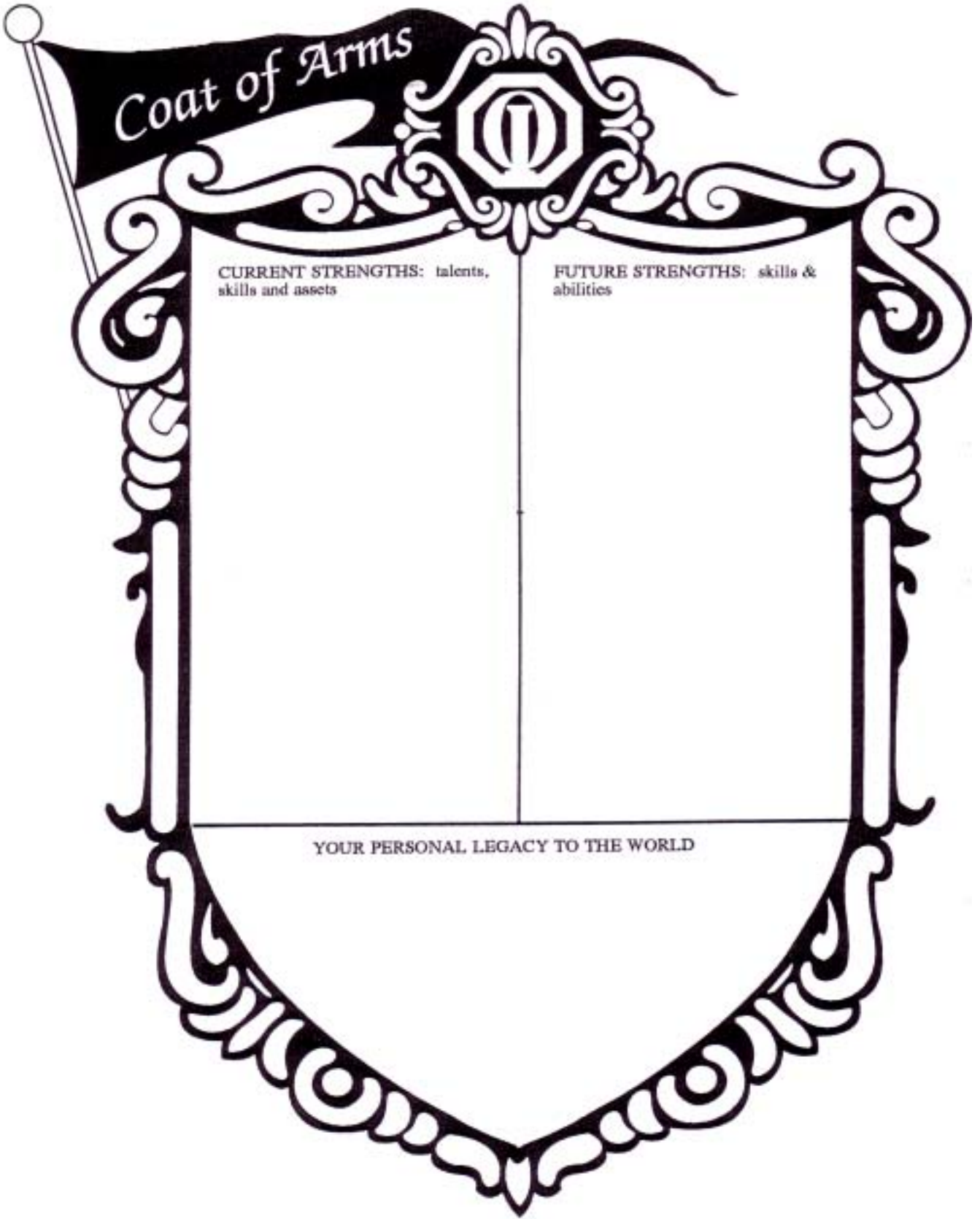
Complete your “COAT OF ARMS” on the next page by listing in the space provided: a) Your current strengths, talents, skills and assets, and b) the strengths, skills and abilities you can develop. The final block of the “COAT OF ARMS” is your personal legacy to the world.



OPTIONAL EXERCISE:

Share your legacy with the group. Group responds, “You deserve this legacy.”

Your Notes



VI. YOUR MISSION - FOR A BETTER WORLD

“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.” - George Bernard Shaw

When speaking of these values, Notre Dame Philosophy Professor Tom Morris asks you to consider your values, “Will it provide immediate physical safety? Will it give foreseeable personal comfort? Will it create long term financial security?” Or is it more meaningful to ask, “Will it provide ultimate personal fulfillment? Will it change the lives of young people? Will it foster a more caring community? or Will it make for a better world?”

Choosing the path of optimism is not always the easy choice. Optimism is a journey and choosing its path means some sacrifice. It can, however, be the path toward true inner happiness and fulfillment, toward defining our worth as an individual, and toward leaving our legacy to future generations.



Your Notes

APPENDIX

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EXERCISE:

Learn the first tenet of the "OPTIMIST CREED." Consciously think about it for 30 seconds at least three times a day for one week. Think about it especially when you are entering a different physical space or greeting a different person. Repeat this exercise for every tenet.

The Optimist Creed



Promise Yourself --

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet.

To make all your friends feel that there is something in them.

To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.

To think only of the best, to work only for the best and to expect only the best.

To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.

To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.

To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.

To give so much to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.

To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

**FIRST PLACE WINNER
OPTIMIST MEMBER ESSAY CONTEST
1993-94**

“How a Philosophy of Optimism Has Affected My Life”

By Brandt Baker

Optimist Club of Uptown, San Diego, California

Looking back, each of us can isolate a moment in our lives that defines who we are. For myself, that moment occurred one blustery winter day in 1968. I was a nine-year old kid attending the funeral of my 20-year old brother. Stan was the oldest brother of four, and he had gone off to Vietnam to fight a war I was too young to understand. It was a moment I will never forget.

Faced with crisis, all of us have choices. Which direction will we go? Which path will we choose? Faced with crisis, I had many options. I could have turned my back on the world, my family, and myself. That day I made a choice that will forever define who I am. I chose optimism. By optimism, I don't mean a sense of positivism, hoping for a better tomorrow. In the midst of my tragedy, optimism meant something more.

Optimism is more than finding the sunny side of any circumstance. It means understanding life is temporary and precious. Optimism means savoring each moment of life as one would relish the sweetest fruit of the most breathtaking sunset, understanding this moment of bliss might never come again.

Optimism is more than smiling at everyone we meet. It means treasuring others as you would treasure the rarest gem or the finest painting. It means building relationships that prosper and endure.

Optimism is more than a philosophy of life; it is a philosophy of living. It is the acknowledgment a life is only lived when it is lived to its fullest. Optimism is more than just a way of thinking. It is a way of being.

When my brother's casket was lowered into the ground, I was changed forever. I vowed to make a difference. Just as my brother left behind a legacy of patriotism and love, I want to leave behind a legacy of “optimism.” I want the people I leave behind to remember my life. It is unimportant whether or not a “philosophy of optimism” has impacted my life. What is important is whether or not it has impacted the lives of others.

The Optimist vs. the Pessimist

by William Arthur Ward

The optimist turns
the impossible into
the possible.



The pessimist turns
the possible into the
impossible.

The optimist
pleasantly ponders how high his kite
will fly.

The pessimist woefully wonders how
soon his kite will fall.

The optimist sees a green near every
sand trap.

The pessimist sees a sand trap near
every green.

The optimist looks at the horizon and
sees an opportunity.

The pessimist peers into the distance
and fears a problem.

To the optimist, all doors have
handles and hinges.

To the pessimist, all doors have locks
and latches.

The optimist promotes progress,
prosperity, and plenty.

The pessimist preaches limitations,
liabilities, and losses.

The optimist accentuates assets,
abundance, and advantages.

The pessimist majors in mistakes,
misfortunes, and misery.

The optimist goes out and rings the
bell.

The pessimist gives up and wrings his
hands.

I. WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

OPTIMIST ASSESSMENT QUIZ Complete this “entrance” quiz to assess your personal reaction to positive/negative situations that occur in your life. Answer each of the following questions with “Usually,” “Sometimes” or “Seldom.” (Re-take it 3 months after this course to measure improvement.) Keep this quiz confidential.



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I achieve my goals.	_____	_____	_____
I don't abuse chemical substances.	_____	_____	_____
I am at my ideal weight.	_____	_____	_____
I have a positive mental attitude.	_____	_____	_____
I value the benefits of being optimistic.	_____	_____	_____
I greet each new day with hopeful anticipation.	_____	_____	_____
I see the negatives but choose the positives.	_____	_____	_____
I don't worry about what happened yesterday.	_____	_____	_____
I don't get angry with those closest to me.	_____	_____	_____

	<u>Usually</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Seldom</u>
I am not afraid of what others might say.	_____	_____	_____
Every day I welcome new challenges.	_____	_____	_____
I see positive solutions in difficult situations.	_____	_____	_____
I can see myself achieving the things I want.	_____	_____	_____
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I feel the power of optimism working in my life.	_____	_____	_____
I am happy and make others happy.	_____	_____	_____
I am making our world a better place to live.	_____	_____	_____

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