Applied Positive Psychology
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Week 3
Lecture 8: Optimism: Concepts and interventions

I welcome you all to module three of this course, which is titled Applied Positive Psychology. Today we are studying module three, and we'll be covering two concepts. One is optimism and the other is hope. So in today's lecture, which is lecture number eight and the first lecture of this module, we'll be talking about the concept of optimism. We'll try to understand the concept of optimism, and we'll also see what the possible interventions are for the concept of optimism.

So, before we talk about today's lecture, let me give you a brief recap of the last lecture. So, in the last lecture, which was part of module 2, we discussed the concept of social comparison and how it influences our happiness, our self-evaluation, and so on. So, we discussed what the functions of social comparison are and why people tend to engage in social comparison. We also discussed what the processes involved in it are, as well as the types of social comparison that we engage in, such as upward comparison, upward social comparison, downward social comparison, and so on. We also discussed how different types of social comparison influence our self in various ways. We also discussed some of the empirical findings related to social comparison and happiness. And at the end, we discussed how social comparison has become much more prominent in today's world, especially because of the presence of social media and how it influences our happiness levels. All these concepts were discussed in the last lecture. So let's talk about today's lecture.

In today's lecture, we'll be focusing on some of these main concepts, such as the meaning of optimism and its benefits. We'll be talking about different types of optimism. We'll also talk about each type and its roots and findings associated with them. We'll also talk about something called unrealistic optimism; we will also discuss whether pessimism can be a good thing. And we will discuss some of the research-based tools for enhancing optimism at the end.

So, this will be the structure of today's lecture. Let's start today's lecture. So the concept of hope and optimism is related to a broader concept called future expectancies. Both hope and optimism are connected with certain expectations for future expectancies. So the broad term under which both of these terms come is called future expectancies.

So let us try to understand what the meaning of future expectancies is. So once we identify goals, we can evaluate our likelihood of achieving them based on our expectations about the future, which is called expectancies. So when we set certain goals in our lives, we try to understand to what extent we will be able to achieve them and so on. So in the future, we have certain expectations to reach that goal. To express future expectations about goals, we can generally refer to them as expectancies. Now, Victor H. Broom provided a very elaborate theory on expectancy, and this theory is called expectancy theory, which was proposed in 1964. We will just briefly discuss the major points associated with this expectancy theory proposed by Victor Vroom. This theory summarizes very beautifully in terms of the factors that can influence the kind of expectations we have about our goals. The number one important point about this theory is that individuals need to believe they can successfully perform the necessary actions, which Broome termed performance expectancy. It is also referred to as efficacy expectancy. So, in order to successfully perform actions to reach a goal, one important thing is that the individual should have something called performance expectancy or efficacy expectancy, which basically means they should believe that they can perform the task to reach that goal in the future. So if they believe that they can perform a task successfully to achieve the goal, then they have something called performance expectancy. For example, a student aiming for an A grade in the final exam may lack motivation if he or she doubts his or her ability to study effectively. So let us say the target of a student is to get an A grade in the final examination, but that student will not be motivated to perform the necessary actions to get an A if that student believes that they lack the ability to study and actually achieve something called an A grade.

If that person does not believe that they can achieve that goal, then obviously they will not be motivated to pursue it because they don't have any performance expectancy. So this is one thing that influences our motivation for future goals. The second important factor is that people must believe their actions will yield the desired result, known as

outcome expectancy. Another important factor that is related to the motivation for working towards the goal is called outcome expectancy. So it basically means, for example: if the student feels capable of studying, she might not commit to it if she thinks the exam is unfair, rendering her efforts useless. Now, even if a person has a performance expectancy, they may not be motivated to work towards a goal if the do not have outcome expectancy. For example, a student will not be motivated to study despite the performance expectancy if they believe that whatever effort they put in, they will not be able to reach that goal because the exam can be unfair or there can be other factors because of which they will not get the due credit for their performance. So even if the student feels capable of studying, she might not be committed to the study if she thinks that the exam is unfair or that exams are generally unfair. The required right kind of answers are not given the due marks and so on. Even if the performance expectancy is there, if there is no outcome expectancy, the student will still not put in the effort, or they will not be motivated to put in effort to reach a goal.

The third factor is called the desired outcome, which must be valuable to the individual, known as the valence of the outcome. So, the outcome should be important to the person; otherwise, the person will not put in the necessary effort. So, in the student case that we are discussing, even if the student believes that he/she can study and that studying would improve her grade, he/she may not be motivated to put in the effort if the person does not care about receiving a high grade. So performance expectancy is present, and outcome expectancy is also present. But still, the student may not put in the effort if the person feels that an A grade is not important to them. Or if that student believes that a grade is not at all important to me. So there will be a lack of balanced outcome. Then there will also not be motivation.

So those were the three main important ideas behind this theory, which discusses how expectancies are influenced and how they influence our motivation for future goals. Since Broom's initial work, additional expectancy-related concepts have emerged, particularly relevant in positive psychology. So after that theory, many other concepts have also evolved, which are related to future expectations and how they influence motivation and so on. Among these constructs, such as optimism and hope, which provide a framework for understanding and enhancing motivation. So, two such concepts that will be discussed in this module, which are related to future expectancies, are optimism and hope. So today we will talk about optimism in detail. So, what is optimism now? Psychologist Michael Shearer and Charles Carver presented their definition of optimism, which they described as a stable

tendency. It's a tendency to believe that good rather than bad things will happen to you in the future.

So if you have a tendency to believe that good things will happen, that is called a state of optimism. You believe something good will happen compared to believing that something bad is going to happen. So, you are optimistic if you believe that something good will happen in the near future based on whatever circumstances you have. So optimists have a generalized sense of confidence about the future, characterized by the broad expectation that outcomes are likely to be positive. So this is a general tendency that doesn't mean optimists will be thinking of a good outcome in every situation. But there is a general tendency that most of the time such people have a sense of confidence that something good is going to happen in the future. So it's a broad expectation that outcomes are going to be positive. So that is the meaning of optimism. Optimistic people have these characteristics. Pessimists, on the other hand, have a generalized sense of doubt and hesitancy characterized by their anticipation of negative outcomes. So they are just the opposite of optimists. They have a general tendency. Most of the time, they doubt that something positive will happen. So they are expecting more negative things to happen in their life. So there is anticipation of negative outcomes for the things they do.

So if people have this generalized tendency, we can call them more likely to be pessimists. The question now will address why it is good to be an optimist. Generally, the research shows optimism have certain advantages and certain positive outcomes in life. So let us see some possible benefits of optimism. So some of the research shows that an optimistic mindset has many benefits. For example, optimism enhances emotional resilience. What that means is that optimists tend to experience less distress than pessimists do. When faced with life challenges, individuals show lower rates of anxiety and depression.

So when you are an optimist, your state of mind, your emotional state, is more likely to be positive. Because if you are a pessimist, obviously, if you see something negative or dark or something unfavorable is going to happen, it will increase a lot of distress in your life. Whether it happens or not, that's a question the future will decide, but in general, if you tend to think only about the negative outcomes, it will enhance a lot of the negative emotional state, like anxiety and depression. Optimists are less likely to experience them

because they are expecting something positive, so emotionally, at the thought level and at the emotional level, it has an advantage that makes people more resilient if they are more positive in challenging situations. You are more likely to face them effectively and function in a better way. So that's called emotional resilience. Another advantage of optimism is that it helps you adapt to adversity. It helps you adapt to the negative events of your life. So, optimists demonstrate better adaptation to negative life events, including serious medical challenges like coronary artery bypass surgery, breast cancer, AIDS, and so on. So many terminal or very negative life events related to various serious medical illnesses generally affect people who are optimists; they are able to adapt to such situations in a better way compared to pessimists, so they cope better with the challenges and difficulties of life and difficult situations. They cope better following significant changes such as childbirth, where optimists have been shown to guard against postnatal depression, and so on. There are many specific research evidences that show that optimists are more likely to cope better, or they are more likely to cope effectively in challenging situations in life, including, you know, serious medical illnesses and so on. Another thing that is connected to the earlier concept we have already discussed is that it promotes effective coping strategies, so they are more likely to use effective strategies as compared to pessimists. That is why they are more likely to be successful in dealing with the problems of life.

So constructive coping mechanisms like problem solving, humor, planning, and reframing situations positively are all healthy coping strategies that help us in the long term in dealing with situations. So optimists are more likely to use them compared to pessimists. When challenges are beyond their control, they show a higher acceptance of reality, allowing them

to learn from adverse situations rather than avoiding them. Optimists are also more likely to accept reality and learn from a difficult situation rather than avoiding it. So, that is another aspect that has been found.

Another advantage is that they have a realistic engagement with the situation. Unlike pessimists, who often distance themselves from problems, optimists rarely resort to denial. So optimists generally try to engage with the situation and do their best to deal with it. Pessimists generally run away from the situation more than optimists. So when you are not even facing the situation, obviously you are not dealing with the problems of your life which will come back again and again if you do not deal with it.

So, optimists are more likely to engage with the problem and deal with it using whatever resources are available. So, that is another difference. Persistence and resilience mean that optimists are generally more likely to put in effort again and again when things are not working out because they have hope and a positive outlook that things will turn out well. If you don't even have an expectation, naturally they will not even try; they will not even attempt to do something if they don't have expectations.

So optimism, because they have an expectation of a positive outcome, makes them more likely to put in effort again and again. So that persistence is going to be much greater in the case of optimists as compared to pessimists. So that will make them more resilient, as they will bounce back quickly and again put in effort and function properly. Optimism can also influence health and lifestyle choices, which basically means optimists typically engage in more health-promoting behaviors, such as maintaining a balanced diet and attending regular medical checkups. This contributes to physical health and so on, so optimists are more likely to have better healthy lifestyle choices.

Additionally, productivity is also influenced by optimism in the workplace context; optimists tend to be more productive, likely due to their resilient approach and persistent effort. Because of the other qualities that we have discussed, they are more likely to be productive in the workplace, and so on. So these are some of the possible benefits of optimism. So, an optimistic state of mind has a lot of benefits that can help us facilitate many positive things in one's life, particularly in dealing with difficult situations. Now let us see what types of optimism are discussed in the literature.

So over the past decades, two approaches in terms of operationalizing optimism have emerged in the research literature: one is optimism looked at as a personality trait, which is also called dispositional optimism, and the other approach is viewing optimism as a way of thinking, which is also called learned optimism. So, you know, there are two approaches: one is dispositional. One is learned, so these are the two frameworks that are available, and both have their own validity in their own ways. So let us see what these are. When we talk about disposition or optimism, we are talking about optimism as a characteristic, as a trait.

This is a general characteristic of the person. The person is like this most of the time. This is all inbuilt characteristics. So disposition basically means that some inbuilt characteristics are present when we refer to it as dispositional characteristics, which is essentially talking about it as a personality trait. So dispositional optimism is basically linked to a personality trait that reflects a general tendency to expect positive outcomes across various aspects of life. The person is generally optimistic. So that means this is a kind of trait. It is an inbuilt characteristic that has happened because of many factors in their lives. It essentially describes how likely people are to believe that good things will happen to them, regardless of the specific circumstances. Regardless of the circumstances, they are more likely to believe that good things are going to happen in their future. People with high dispositional optimism tend to approach life with a hopeful and confident outlook, expecting success or improvement even in challenging situations. So, because this is a general tendency within themselves, they tend to expect positive things, improvement in situations in the future, and so on. So that is something called dispositional optimism. Scheier and Carver (1985) developed a self-report instrument, which is available for research and so on, called the Life Orientation Test (LOT), which measures this particular aspect of dispositional optimism and the inbuilt characteristics that one can test using this particular measure. Later, they revised it; also, LOTR was revised, which generally has 10 items. Items included things like, "Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad," and "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best," and so on. These are some of the items on which you have to, you know, describe your agreement or disagreement, and so on. So according to them, optimism is a generalized outlook on life, meaning it extends across various life domains rather than being confined to one area. So when optimism is discussed, it is generalized to all life domains. So if somebody is optimistic, that basically means the person will be optimistic in

most areas of life. It is not limited to specific domains. So the true optimist expects positive outcomes broadly, not just in isolated areas like school or work. So people who are optimistic are generally broadly optimistic, especially those with dispositional optimism. So dispositional optimism operates as a stable personality trait. It's a disposition that tends to remain steady over time. So the person will most of the time be like this, and it is generally stable. It doesn't change. Obviously, in some situations, people will have differences, but generally, a person's tendencies are like this. Even though daily thoughts and emotions can vary, a person's baseline level of optimism is generally consistent or stable. This means that while specific circumstances might influence how optimistic someone feels from moment to moment, their overall tendency towards optimism is unlikely to shift dramatically from year to year. So obviously, moment to moment, there can be some changes based on emotions and so on. But generally, there is a stable baseline level around which they function in terms of optimism.

So, what are the roots of dispositional optimism? Why does someone become dispositionally optimistic while someone else does not? Some of the reasons are that there can be genetic influence. Some research suggests that optimism has both genetic and environmental causes. Scheier and Carver's concept of dispositional optimism appears to be influenced by genetics, but it is also shaped by early expectancy. Obviously, there can be some genetic influence. So, which can, you know, kind of facilitate certain tendencies of becoming optimistic? And obviously, genetics is never 100% responsible for psychological traits. So there can be environmental factors, such as how a person experiences life situations, how they were taught, and what kind of models they encountered in their life. If their parents are optimistic, it will likely influence the child's mindset in terms of whether they also become optimistic or not. Thus, both environmental learning and genetic influences will also play a role. Determine whether someone is dispositionally optimistic. Second, the early attachment style and support from parents can also influence whether someone is optimistic or not.

So drawing from Erickson's development theory, Carver and Scheier (1999) proposed that a secure, trusting attachment to parental figures can foster optimism, aligning with other theories like Bowlby's theories on attachment. So if people generally have a very secure, trusting relationship with their parents, this generally gives a more optimistic mindset that can foster optimism among the kids and may also remain in later adulthood. So attachment style can also influence parental support, and it can also influence

optimism. The third factor that can also influence optimism is childhood socioeconomic conditions and experiences. What kind of background you are born into can also influence, as childhood socioeconomic conditions also impact optimism.

 Studies show that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are exposed to more stress and a negative emotional environment, leading to lower optimism. So it is also possible that you know if a child from their birth is experiencing a lot of stress and negative environmental conditions where they don't have much control over life, and if they face a series of negative events, then that will also influence their mindset, and they may become very pessimistic because they don't see much hope in their life. Therefore, those socio- economic conditions can also influence the mindset and affect their level of optimism. Initially, especially the socio-economic conditions during childhood, can have a very deep impact. Even though this may set their optimism level, it may improve later, despite the socioeconomic condition.

 So childhood experiences play a much more important role. Further evidence also links positive childhood experiences to optimism. So obviously, if negative experiences can lead to pessimism, positive experiences can lead to optimism. For example, one study found that college students with high dispositional optimism scores were often attributed to beliefs in a just world, religious and spiritual faith, privileges, and feelings of hope. All factors are often rooted in positive early life experiences and supportive parenting. All these factors were found to positively impact optimism, and they can all be linked to positive early life experiences.

 So, both genetic influences as well as environmental influences and parenting influences can collectively contribute to and shape whether a person is dispositionally optimistic or not. Now, the second concept we are discussing is that there is another aspect of optimism, or another type of optimism, which is called learned optimism. Now, learned optimism is a concept developed by Martin Seligman. Which refers to the ability to cultivate a positive outlook and expectation of good outcomes, even if one initially has a more pessimistic view. So this is a learned optimism, which means you learn to become optimistic because of certain life experiences. It is not something inherent to you. You learn to be optimistic. So you cultivate an ability within yourself by learning. Not because it was genetically influenced or something like that. So you learn to have a

positive outlook on life. Expectations of good outcomes can occur even if initially a person is very pessimistic; they may decide to become optimistic. Thus, even if a person is initially pessimistic, they can change into an optimistic person by learning from their environment. This is called a learned aspect of optimism, so one can learn to become an optimist as well. So, unlike dispositional optimism, which is a relatively stable trait, learned optimism is an acquired skill; you learn it by practicing and observing things. Seligman's work is grounded in cognitive behavioral principles, where individuals can actively change their thought patterns to interpret situations more positively. So basically, one can learn to become optimistic by changing their thought patterns. Changing their interpretation processes and so on, one of the main things that influences whether somebody is an optimist or a pessimist is something called an explanatory process or style.

What is the style in which you explain the things that happen to you, whether success or failure? How do you explain these factors, positive things or negative things that happen? We tend to explain why this has happened. What is the style of explanation that will influence whether you are an optimist or a pessimist? So, one can learn this thought process. So, let us see what this explanatory style is that can influence learned optimism. So, psychologists use the term explanatory style to describe the tendencies of some individuals to habitually use a certain type of explanation for events.

People can have different styles of explanations. Some people have a tendency to explain positive things in a certain way and negative things in a certain way whenever they happen. Whenever something negative happens, some people have a natural tendency to explain it in a way that suggests they cannot do anything about it, and they will always be bound to such things. They often experience negative events in life, leading many people to develop

certain explanatory tendencies, which shape their explanatory style. What is your style of explanation? This style can depend on three important factors: one is whether you explain things based on internal or external factors. Do you explain things based on factors that are stable or unstable? Or do you explain things that are based on factors that are global or specific? That will determine what your explanatory style is.

So let us explore this a little bit more. So when we talk about internal and external dimensions, this addresses whether individuals attribute the cause of an event to themselves or external factors. So whenever some event happens, positive or negative, where do you see the cause? Do you see the cause within yourself, or do you see the cause outside of yourself? That is called internal and external. If you see the cause of a failure or a success within yourself, then it is an explanation using internal factors; or if you see the cause of a success or failure in outside factors, then this is called an external explanation. For example, A poor grade on a paper might be attributed internally when you explain that I lack ability or skill. I don't have the skill and ability; therefore, I got a bad grade. Then it is an internal explanation. On the other hand, you can also explain the same situation externally by saying, for example, that the professor was very strict, and because of his unfairness, I received a lower grade. So then you are attributing the cost to someone else outside. So that is called an external explanation. So, people who frequently use internal explanations are more likely to blame themselves for negative events and those beyond their control, and so on. So whether you explain things based on internal factors or external factors, it will have many consequences depending on the situation. We'll see them a little bit later. So this is one way of explaining. You can explain using internal factors or external factors, and accordingly, it will have some influence.

Another dimension is stable and unstable factors. So how do you explain successes, failures, positive events, negative events? Whatever the cause of that event, whether it is stable or unstable. When we say something is stable, we are saying that factor is relatively permanent. This factor cannot be easily changed. Then it is a stable factor. If these factors can be changed easily, then they are unstable factors. So an unstable cause is temporary, such as when I am not able to write well because of a distraction. So when you say. I could not write well on this exam because I was distracted.

So, this is a temporary situation. If distractions are removed, you can write well. So the factor is very unstable, meaning very temporary. On the other hand, when it is a stable course, you say things like permanent, like, you know, I like writing skills. I could not write because I lack writing skills. So that means this is a permanent skill. So writing skills cannot be developed overnight. You cannot change it overnight. So it's a skill that you need to develop. It may take a lot of time. So then it is a stable explanation. The factors are stable. But many times we explain things based on stable factors. Sometimes we explain things based on unstable factors. The last factor that can influence your explanatory style is whether the explanation for the factors or causes of an event is global or specific. So this dimension distinguishes between causes that affect many areas of life globally and those that affect only specific situations. Sometimes we explain things that are only related to a particular situation. Then it is a very specific factor. Causing an event, on the other hand, when we explain things using factors that are very global means it will influence almost every aspect of your life; then it is a global factor. For example, believing one cannot write at all is a global explanation when you say that I am not good at writing or I perform badly in a writing task simply because I am not good at writing. So, this is more of a global explanation implying poor performance in any writing task. So that means it's a more global means that will influence many situations in your life. Any writing task you will be performing poorly at. While thinking, one struggled only with a particular paper, which is a specific explanation. When you say in this particular paper that I could not perform well simply because there was something in the paper that I was not well prepared for. Then your explanation is specific only to this particular task or this particular paper. Then they are more specific explanations. So you can explain using either global factors or specific factors. Now individuals may develop an explanatory style based on these factors when they habitually explain using some of these factors. So, based on that, we can have a pessimistic explanatory style; we can also have an optimistic explanatory style. So how can we say when one becomes optimistic in style and when it becomes pessimistic? An explanatory style featuring stable, global, and internal explanations for bad events is termed a pessimistic explanatory style. So when you explain negative things, failures in life using stable factors, it means you are saying the reasons for my failure are very stable; I cannot change them. For example, when you say, "I failed because I lack skill" or "I lack ability." So this is an important factor. Then global means you explain things by saying that I failed because, again, ability is a global factor. So I don't have the abilities to perform well.

So that means in most situations I will fail in my life. internal explanation. I failed because, again, ability is an internal factor. So when you say I failed because I lack intelligence or ability. So this is again an internal factor. So when people generally tend to have a pessimistic explanatory style, they explain negative events or failures in their lives using stable, global, and internal factors in their explanations. When opposite factors are included, it becomes an optimistic explanatory style; that is, when people use bad or negative things or failures in their life, using unstable factors, specific factors, and external explanations, then for bad events it is termed as optimistic.

So when you say, "I failed because the factor was unstable," maybe because you say, "I failed because I..." I have not done the necessary hard work. So, hard work is a very unstable factor. Today I can do a lot of hard work. Tomorrow I may not be able to do it. So, depending on the situation, I can change it. It is under my control. So let's say I fail because of a lack of hard work. Specifically in this particular situation, I could not put in effort. It has nothing to do with the other aspects of my life. And then many times, people also use external explanations. Things like, you know, there are so many other factors influencing it. Others external to me were responsible for something, you know, the bad performance. So you don't blame yourself too much. So this makes people more optimistic in their outlook, and so on. So the pessimistic explanatory style and the optimistic explanatory style are very different; they are opposite to each other. A pessimistic explanatory style is based on internal, stable, and global factors, especially for negative events or failures in life. So they generally say it's going to last forever in my life. I cannot change it. It's going to undermine everything they do. And whatever I do, I will fail, and so on, something like that. So it becomes a more global explanation. So these kinds of factors are present when negative things happen for a pessimistic explanatory style, which are related to internal factors, stable factors, and global factors. Optimistic explanatory style, on the other hand, has an opposite pattern for negative things when they happen. They use more external things, more unstable factors, and more specific factors. So they say this is a temporary setback, a temporary failure. I can change it next time. I can change it. It is just this situation. I can, in other situations, be not as bad, and so on. So they only explain things related to the situation. So this is an explanation of what is called optimistic style. So this is how they differ in terms of explanatory style: some more examples are given when a bad thing happens.

The pattern observed by both pessimistic and optimistic people is that they use different patterns for positive things. Their explanations again change dramatically. This is how it is shown when a bad thing happens, how optimistic people explain it, and how people with a pessimistic style explain it. On the other hand, when good things happen, how do both of this particular type of category of people explain things? For example, when bad things happen, optimistic people will say they're external.

It's not just because of me. Many other things were involved in it. So I don't have to be completely blamed. It is unstable; it is just a temporary setback. Specifically, it is just this one situation, as we have already discussed. A pessimist will think, "It's me; I could not do it. It's going to last for a long time; it's going to undermine everything I do". For the other thing, the same failure is going to come, and so on for the bad things and the good events. Optimists will just change the pattern in the opposite direction, so they will do it more internally, like "I did it because of my ability" or "whatever stable." I can do it again because, you know, this is something I did globally, so life is good. In a sense, other aspects of life will also have a similar pattern. For pessimists, they will have an external perspective: "It happened to me". So this will be more of an unstable factor for a positive thing. It is a good one-time thing only. So here they are saying it is unstable for bad things. They are most likely to explain it using stable things. They are more likely to use external factors for positive outcomes. For positive things, they will see some reasons outside of themselves. They will not take credit for it. So that makes them more pessimistic in that context. Specific explanations are provided in situations. It is just this one situation. When a good thing happens, optimists tend to think every aspect of their lives is going to be good.

Pessimists are more likely to think that this is only the situation. Other aspects are still not very good. So that is how this forms a general pattern in which people can differ in terms of tendencies. That doesn't mean every situation will be like this. But this is a general tendency in terms of differences in patterns, in terms of how people look at things or explain things when it happens in their lives. So this learned optimism or explanatory style, which is an indicator of learned optimism, can be assessed using a scale called the Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ), which was developed by Peterson and colleagues in 1982. So this is a very, very popular scale that can be used to measure what kind of explanatory style you have, whether it is optimistic or pessimistic.

This self-report questionnaire presents respondents with hypothetical events involving themselves and asks them to identify the one major cause for each of these events if they occur. Respondents then rate these causes of the dimensions externally, stability, or globally based on these factors, and one can identify what kind of explanatory style one has. So, for good events, there are separate factors. You know responses are combined for bad events, and responses for good events are also combined, and then the patterns are found out regarding what kind of patterns this particular person uses in terms of explanations. So, this explanatory style, based on attributions for bad events, typically shows a stronger correlation with outcomes compared to the explanatory style based on good events.

So, generally, the explanatory style for bad events is a very strong indicator. People are generally more consistent in explaining bad events. For good events, it is generally not that strong in terms of predicting life outcomes. For negative events, optimists and pessimists are very consistent in their explanations. For instance, when individuals attribute bad events to internal, stable, and global causes, there tends to be a correlation with increased symptoms of depression.

So this pessimistic explanatory style has shown a very strong correlation with symptoms of depression and so on. However, conversely, when the attribution of good events is made to internal, stable, and global causes, the correlation with the absence of depression occurs when the opposite has happened. So the absence of depression is not that strongly correlated. So that means for negative events, the explanation seems to be a stronger predictor and a more reliable indicator in terms of categorizing people as optimists and pessimists. Rather than in the good situations that sometimes occur, the bad situations or explanations of bad things are a much stronger predictor.

People also use something called a content analysis procedure known as the cave process content analysis of verbatim explanations. When people are asked to write about things that happen in their lives and causes, then obviously we can find patterns in their writing as well. So this content analysis can also be used for written or spoken explanations provided by people. We can also identify what kind of explanatory style a person uses. Now, let us look at some of the mental and physical health benefits of optimism, which

have also been linked to some.

These are some of the research findings. It has been linked to reduced distress and better adaptation. We already explained some of these things: lower depression and anxiety, greater problem-solving efforts, and successes in areas like academics, sports, work, and politics. Relationship, and so on. So it has been linked to various positive outcomes in terms of physical and mental health. Research also shows that optimism predicts positive physical health outcomes, including improved immune function, lower cardiovascular risk, better cancer and pregnancy outcomes, and reduced pain. So when you are optimistic in a very challenging or difficult physical health situation, optimism has been found to be a better predictor of many health outcomes.

It may improve your immune functions, lower some of the risks, and facilitate recovery, among other benefits. Optimists have longer telomeres, which are biological factors that relate to cellular health, stress, and aging. So optimism is also biologically linked to greater cellular health and so on. Optimists have also been found to have a 30% reduced risk of coronary death over eight years, highlighting the role of optimism in preventing diseases; even if being an optimist doesn't come naturally, adopting an optimistic outlook can be valuable, especially for staying motivated towards goals. Even if somebody may not be dispositionally optimistic by tendency, they can still learn optimism through learned optimism, which helps them stay motivated towards their goals and continue expanding their efforts.

Now, when we talk about optimism, we need to understand that sometimes people become unrealistically optimistic. We need to understand the difference between actual optimism and unrealistic optimism. So, people are generally considered unrealistically optimistic when they predict that a future personal outcome will be more favorable than indicated by objective standards. When you don't follow any objective standard for some realistic expectation and you expect something out of the blue to happen, which is very unrealistic and unlikely based on the objective standard that you think is possible, then that optimism can be called unrealistic optimism. Here, because you are not looking at the objective realities of life and you are just expecting something miraculous or whatever it is, it can be called unrealistic optimism because it doesn't match the objective standard of what is going or likely to happen. It also arises when people overly believe

that their outcomes will be better than their peers; people also have many times unrealistic optimism in terms of believing that their certain outcomes in life are much better than their peers, when objectively that may not be true.

 So we can have basically two types of unrealistic optimism: one is unrealistic absolute optimism. This occurs when individuals believe their outcomes will be more favorable than what objective data, like base rates or statistics, suggest. You believe in something that is not actually indicated by objective data, such as statistics or rates, whatever is available. Then it is called unrealistic absolute optimism. For example, studies show that students often overestimate their future grades or starting salaries.

 Financial advisors are overly positive about economic forecasts and so on. Many times, we become overly optimistic in various situations in life where the data does not match. Then it is called unrealistic absolute optimism. This can also appear in people's low estimates of personal risk for outcomes like divorce, STDs, unplanned pregnancies, and so on. Many times, people also become unrealistically optimistic about many negative things in their lives that will not happen. They feel like a risk of divorce, a risk of many diseases, and so on. The second type of unrealistic optimism is called unrealistic comparative optimism, which involves the mistaken belief that one's personal outcome will be better than those of others. So when you compare yourself with others and have an unrealistic expectation about your own life, it is called unrealistic comparative optimism. Researchers typically document this bias by asking individuals to compare their risk of an event such as a fatal heart attack to that of others, then comparing their estimates of personalized, data-driven risk assessment. In one study, 56% of participants were unrealistically optimistic, 25% were unrealistically pessimistic, and only 19% were more accurate about their heart attack risk compared to others, based on some data.

 So similar patterns have also been observed in studies on breast cancer risk, smoking-related diseases, and so on. At many times, we become unrealistically optimistic in a comparative sense. Compared to others, we think things will not go wrong in our lives and so on. So it's a kind of expectation that people have. So why are people sometimes

unrealistically optimistic? There can be some reasons.

Motivation plays a very important role, as people often want to believe they are less likely to experience negative outcomes. So it is an internal motivation that we don't want to think that something bad is going to happen in our lives. So we are motivated to reduce that possibility, and we think something good is going to happen many times in an unrealistic way. Because it enhances your self-esteem. When you think bad things are going to happen in your life, your self-esteem will decrease.

So there is an internal motivation to maintain or enhance your self-esteem by thinking that all these negative things will not happen in your life. So that motivation can play a very important role in why sometimes people become unrealistically optimistic. Another is that individuals often know more about themselves than others, which influences their risk estimates. When we compare ourselves with others, we know about our own life, but we don't know the details of others' lives. So we generally make errors when comparing ourselves to other people.

So this is based on personal knowledge, history, and plans, but lacks comparable information about others. So when provided with similar information about others, people's unrealistic optimism tends to decrease. Because we don't know much about others, we tend to think we become more unrealistically optimistic about ourselves compared to them. Also, the person positivity bias suggests that people judge the average person as more prone to negative outcomes, as a vague label is less relatable to their own self-perception. So when we look at others' lives, there is a sense of bias within our decision-making process or judgment that the average people we think of as average is a very abstract category.

We generally think those things are going to happen to those people, especially the negative outcomes. So there is a bias in terms of judging ourselves. Lastly, the cognitive process affects unrealistic optimism. One such process is representative heuristics, where individuals compare themselves to negative stereotypes. When we compare ourselves, we generally tend to compare in a negative context, focusing on people who are stereotypical and on some specific cases of negative things, and then generalize it to all

other people, concluding that they themselves are at a lower risk because they see only typical, specific, stereotypical cases. Another process is the tendency to convert a comparative judgment into a personal one, focusing on one's own low perceived risk and assuming it is lower than that of others.

So basically you just focus on yourself because you have more information and there is a positivity bias towards ourselves for maintaining self-esteem and so on. So these are some of the things that can influence why sometimes people become unrealistically optimistic. So this unrealistic optimism may reduce anxiety and encourage persistence towards goals, while such unrealistic optimism can also have a problem in the sense that it can increase risky behaviors and lead to negative outcomes due to insufficient preparation. When you become unrealistically optimistic, you don't become cautious; you don't become careful. You tend to engage in riskier behaviors because you think negative things will not happen to you. And you will not prepare well when facing certain situations either. So one has to understand whether optimism is realistic or unrealistic. Sometimes even pessimism can be good. Let us see. Pessimism can sometimes be crucial for safety and preparedness; you know. As we have seen in certain situations, some amount of pessimism can be good in the sense that it makes you more cautious and careful in dealing with situations, and you prepare yourself in a much better way because you think something can go wrong.

So you prepare yourself in a better way. So optimism, while generally good and positive, can lead to risk underestimation. As we have seen, sometimes people underestimate the risks of negative things. While they become optimistic, it makes optimism more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as unprotected sex or reckless driving, and so on. In many situations, people can engage in risky behavior simply because of optimism, particularly unrealistic optimism. In high-stakes situations like a pilot assessing flight conditions during an ice storm, cautious realism is often safer than optimism.

So when situations can have a high chance of going wrong, cautious pessimism or a more realistic assessment is much better than just becoming optimistic and so on. In a traumatic event, optimists may struggle when their positive outlook is shattered, although they may eventually rebuild it. So especially when negative things happen,

optimistic people may experience it more distressfully because they are not expecting it whereas, pessimistic people generally expect such things to happen, so the impact of such an event will be more optimistic, but obviously, because of the tendency, they will rebuild it again.

So in that sense, there can also be some differences in the impact. Additionally, research highlights defensive pessimism, a strategy where individuals have low expectations to manage anxiety. For defensive pessimists, imagining possible failures actually improves performance, and trying to stay positive may hinder their outcomes. So some people, also in certain situations, may become defensively pessimistic. Where they use a strategy in which they set low expectations to manage their anxiety, they don't even expect too much, so the expectation itself is low, and thus the anxiety is also low, and so on. That is also a possibility in certain situations. Over time, defensive pessimists often perform better, feel happier, and achieve more personal goals than equally anxious individuals who do not use this strategy. So all these things can be good in certain contexts.

So one has to be careful in terms of how one is using all this context. Optimism is also good. Pessimism in certain specific situations can be good. Unrealistic optimism is not good in a sense because then you are not in touch with reality, and so on. Now, at the end, let us discuss some of the possible strategies that can be used to enhance optimism, especially in the learned sense. We can learn to be optimistic, especially if the people who are very pessimistic experience a lot of negative emotions and so on.

So let us see some of these research-based tools that are available. One tool called ABCD analysis can be used to enhance optimism, as proposed by Martin Seligman. So this tool actually includes suggestions like, over the coming week, take time each day to reflect on a situation you found challenging or stressful. Following this step, over the coming week, take time to stay and reflect on the situation you found challenging. Whatever some challenging situation you recently faced, reflect on them, especially taking one by one.

First, identify what the antecedent event is that lead to this particularly distressing event. So describe the difficult event objectively, focusing only on what happened without adding personal judgment.

Just describe or write about it in terms of what the event was that was very challenging. Just describe the event. Don't add your own personal layers of interpretation. B. Find out what the beliefs associated with it are. Now record your beliefs about the situation. How you interpreted the event and the explanation you told yourself when that negative thing or challenging event happened. Now you have identified that. Now try to see what the beliefs associated with that event are. How did you think about that event? What are the thought processes or belief systems activated by this event? Then last C. What were the consequences of that event? Note your emotional response to any action. How did you feel when this event happened? Note all this. A, B, C. Now... One of the main concepts here is that, you know, actual events never actually cause emotional consequences. So whether a positive thing happens, a negative thing happens, and then we experience emotions. If a negative thing happens, we feel depressed, sad, and so on. Now this ABCD analysis or this cognitive perspective says that events actually don't cause any emotional consequences.

It is how you believe and what your thought processes are associated with it. so if something you fail in an event and you say I am a failure, I will not be able to succeed again Now, you will feel depressed because of this thought, not because of failure, because many people may fail in the same situation and they may not be disturbed by it. So how you think about the situation will influence the outcomes or consequences. So you need to understand the explanations that the belief system is associated with or triggered by the event and work on that in terms of changing it.

So that's basically called an obesity analysis. It is a part of the cognitive therapy process. One can change especially the negative thoughts and beliefs that led to all these negative emotions by replacing them with positive and more optimistic thoughts. One can use things like distraction, distancing, and disputation. Distraction is what happens when too much negative thought comes; one can distract themselves by intentionally shifting their focus

away from negative thoughts. A simple technique could include saying "stop" out loud while hitting the table.

So, if the thoughts are too overwhelming and uncontrollable, one can very loudly say "stop," even while hitting the table. So it will help you distract yourself and at least, you know, create a space to look beyond those thoughts. Snapping a rubber band on your waist, it is just wrist just to basically make you a dramatic or very loud thing so that, you know, your mind get distracted and at least it stops for some time. Looking at a flashcard with "stop" written on it. These are all different strategies. Writing down pessimistic thoughts immediately or scheduling time to revisit the thoughts in a more controlled environment, and so on. So you can use all these distraction techniques to create a distance from the negative thoughts and look beyond them; whatever works for people, you can use some of this distraction to just stop the diminishing and uncontrollable thoughts because that is very important. Then only can you change them into positive thoughts.

Then comes another technique called distancing. So here we remind ourselves that the current beliefs are just one way of viewing the situation. That is very important. Whenever a particular thought pattern starts, we generally identify with it and believe that this is the only reality. But the thing is that a particular thought shows only one aspect, one way of interpretation.

There can be many other ways to look at it. So try to look at other possible interpretations. So current belief is just one possibility. There can be many other possibilities for looking at the same thing. So recognize that your pessimistic interpretation is just one possibility and that an alternative, more optimistic perspective may also be just as valid because thoughts are not facts.

You are just manufacturing them. Your pessimistic thoughts are one way of looking at it. There may be many other ways to look at it. And some of these things can be much better and healthier thought processes. So that is called distancing. Create more alternative ways of looking at things.

Another very important strategy for changing thought processes from negative to positive is dispute. So challenge your beliefs by questioning their evidence. Challenge yourself: what is the evidence for the thoughts that I am having? That when you fail an event and you say to yourself, "I am a failure," what is the proof that I am a failure? Just failing in one event, does it make me a failure for my whole life? There is no evidence for it because I have been successful in many other areas. How can failing in one event make me a failure? Because there is no evidence for it.

It is just my thought that is telling me. So dispute that thought. So consider whether there are other, more positive ways to interpret the situation. Even if your initial belief is accurate, assess the actual impact. Is it truly catastrophic, or just a temporary setback? Even if some of your thoughts are correct or you think they are realistic, are they that problematic that you cannot tolerate them, or are they just temporary? Most of these things are temporary, so look at your thought processes in a more realistic way. Finally, ask which perspective is most helpful in lifting your mood and decide for yourself what kind of interpretation you should have. Should you go with things that lift you? Lifts my mood in a positive way, or should I just stick with all this pessimistic thought and feel depressed about my life and so on? You can kind of dispute like this and try to change it in certain situations.

So many times, people themselves are not able to do all these things, so some professional counselors actually help you do all these things. Social support from people who are older actually helps to change your thought processes. So they will advise you, don't believe that, don't do this, think like that. All the support networks are actually doing a lot of these things. If you can do it on your own, that is also very good because then you don't need any external support.

So these are some of the ways by which we can change our thought processes, and actual intervention can be done in terms of learning more optimistic thoughts and so on. So, with this, I will stop here. Thank you.