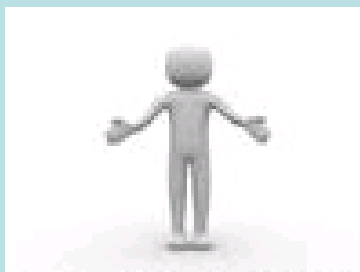


# NQT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

**28<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

Darlington  
NQT Development  
Programme





# Building Optimism and Positive Mind Sets



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# Why is Optimism Important?



## The Journey To Excellence

<http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/resourcesandcpd/research/summaries/rspositivethinking.asp>

### Research summary - positive thinking

#### What is positive thinking?

Positive thinking is an umbrella term for a range of ideas and techniques associated with the psychology of achievement. It is the main idea that lies behind the self-help movement that originated in the United States and has since become very influential worldwide.

Positive thinking aims to help people be more aware of the **power of their thoughts and words, and how to manage them in order to lead happier and more successful lives.** The central idea is that it is not what happens to individuals, which leads them to be happy, healthy or successful, but how they interpret what happens to them, and the extent to which they believe that it is possible to influence such events.

Advocates of positive thinking believe that it is possible for individuals to make conscious decisions about how they are going to view the events in their lives, to learn to be optimistic rather than pessimistic and exercise more control.

While positive thinking has traditionally been viewed as a strategy for helping people to deal with problems, an increasing number of schools are implementing positive thinking programmes in order to improve the quality of learning and achievement in young people. The underlying principle is that positive thinking (sometimes referred to as 'learned optimism') leads to better learning.



#### The growth of positive thinking

*It is not things in themselves that trouble us but our opinion of things.* Epictetus (243-210 BC)

*There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.* Shakespeare, Hamlet (Act 2, Scene ii, 1601)

The idea of positive thinking has been around for a long time. In the modern world, its roots lie mainly in cognitive psychology and cognitive therapy, but it also draws on other branches of psychology, physiology and physical medicine.

Cognitive approaches developed in the United States during the 1970s as a means of providing practical solutions for depression and other psychological problems, which, it was claimed, behaviourism and other value-based psychological systems could not.

Over time, however, positive thinking has developed far beyond the treatment of psychological problems. It forms the basis of a set of personal development techniques known as 'Sears Linguistic Programming', which claims to provide **simple, step-by-step** procedures to help people achieve excellence. It has **sometimes been described** as 'the new science of personal achievement', 'the psychology of achievement' and 'the psychology of excellence'.

In recent years, positive thinking has become increasingly popular in the corporate sector and in the world of sport. Self-help books feature prominently on bestseller lists and there is a growing number of motivational 'gurus' such as Anthony Robbins in the United States and Jack Welch in the UK.

#### Optimism

One of the most prominent advocates of positive thinking is Professor Martin Seligman - an American psychologist famous for his work on learned optimism. Seligman's work emphasises happiness rather than success and he believes that optimism is one of the most important factors. What matters, he argues, is the way that people interpret what happens to them, and how they think about positive and negative events in their lives.

All people have an internal dialogue - we talk to ourselves constantly, analysing situations, making judgements about events and either questioning or reinforcing our perceptions of the world around us.

According to Seligman, when faced with an event where something negative happens, people can choose to place either a temporary or a permanent blame around it. People have an internal dialogue where they might say to themselves, 'This is my fault. It's going to get worse and there is nothing I can do about it. It will last forever.' Often, however, they might say to themselves, 'What happened was not of my control. The situation is only temporary and, I can change things for the better.' The reverse holds for when people experience good events, the pessimistic thinker views the effects as temporary, whereas the optimistic thinker will embrace the positive situation and place a permanent blame around it. Seligman's believes that optimistic learners achieve more during their school years and throughout their lives.

#### Explanatory style

Seligman calls the way we interpret these events our explanatory style, and he identifies three main elements: permanence, pervasiveness, and personalisation.

**Permanence:** Is the situation likely to continue? Might it happen again? Is it permanent or temporary? If it is a bad thing, the optimist tends to think it is a one-off. If it is a good thing, they tend to think it is permanent. The opposite holds true for the pessimist: good things are the one-off events and bad things are more likely to recur.

**Pervasiveness:** Is the situation 'specific' or is it 'universal'? This considers whether we believe an event applies to everything in our lives, or just a single occurrence. With a good event, the optimist is more likely to extend it to his or her whole life. When something bad happens, an optimist will regard it as specific to that situation. A pessimist, however, will view good events as a fluke. If something bad happens, they think it sums up their whole life.

**Personalisation:** Did I cause this to happen? This aspect considers whether we believe that we are responsible for an event, or if it was something **outside** our control. When something good happens, an optimist congratulates himself for doing a good job. A pessimist, however, is more likely to attribute the success to luck, other people's hard work, or something else outside of his control. When something bad happens, the optimist looks to external factors to explain the event - it **might be put** down to simple bad luck. A pessimist, however, will usually be willing to take responsibility for the bad event.



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# What might children say?

When children are being optimistic they say or do..... When children are being pessimistic they say or do.....



# Learned optimism

## The 'so what' of optimism

### Learned optimism

Seligman's extensive research across a number of sectors and industries shows that people who have an optimistic mindset achieve more positive outcomes than those with a negative mindset.

Applying this to a school setting, learners who are optimistic about events and situations will frequently achieve more than those who are pessimistic. For optimistic learners, failure to achieve a learning outcome or to pass a test will be a one-off event, specific to that test, perhaps bad luck or an off day. For pessimistic learners, such failure will be viewed as ongoing, typical of their lives, likely to occur again and most certainly their own fault.

Optimistic learners are, therefore, much more able to overcome barriers to learning and persevere until learning outcomes are achieved. Pessimistic learners, by contrast, internalise failure and usually stop trying.

One of the underpinning principles of Seligman's work is that people can learn to be optimistic and to change the nature of their internal dialogue so that they react positively to events, regardless of whether they are good or bad. Schools that have implemented learned optimism programmes deploy a range of strategies to enable young people to think more positively. They help learners to recognise and understand their typical responses to different situations and develop new, more effective ways to interpret events and overcome perceived barriers to their learning.

Such schools recognise that the language that we use to communicate with others and with ourselves can have a major influence on how we think and feel. Proponents of learned optimism believe that by changing our habitual vocabulary, we can change the way we think and feel and consequently achieve more positive outcomes. The use of positive language is an integral part of learned optimism programmes.

Schools also recognise that for young people to achieve success, they must be able to develop persistence - the ability not to give up in the face of failure. Seligman believes that optimistic self-talk (internal dialogue) is the key to developing persistence.



# How do I do optimism? What are my strategies?





# What are you already doing?

1

10

Not at all

Consistently

**(fact), (fact), (fact) and (as, while etc.)**

**A 'Yes' set. Three facts followed by a statement increases the chance the listener will accept the statement as true.**

**E.g. We're sitting here now, the sun is shining, we've just eaten lunch and you can relax as you reflect on all that you have learned today so far.**

**... makes ...**

**The feeling of wanting to finish  
a job on time makes you  
determined to start quickly.**

**... means ...**

**The ideas you have shared  
means you are ready to move  
forward.**

**Language of possibility**

**You might...**

**I wonder...**

**I'm curious to know...**

**Just imagine...**

**Just suppose...**

# What have I learned about Optimism?



# Evaluations...

<https://eu.surveymonkey.com/r/20NQ21T>

# Digging: what have we learned?

- How have I been a good learner today?
- How has my learning been supported?
- How has my learning been personalised?
- Thinking about growing emotional intelligence, what have I noticed about myself and others?

